

Siza Baroque. Retroactive Architecture

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Abstract

Faced with the current impasse in contemporary architecture, we here propose a retroactive return to the values of the city and Baroque architecture. Based on critical analysis of three projects by Siza, all dating to 1980, we seek to rebuild the baroque thematic in his thinking, from our perspective, a core facet to understanding the contemporariness of his work today. Furthermore, such research leads us to duly consider the fundamental distinction between '*Chronological Baroque*' and '*Ideological Baroque*' with the latter currently remaining active. Taking into account the scope for the existence and persistence of a timeless idea about the Baroque, we seek to convey how Baroque architecture and contemporary architecture, while distant in time, nevertheless overlap in the perception that they share of the city, approached as a collective artefact. Hence, methodologically, this defends a step away from the excessive enthusiasm over the '*iconic*' and '*unprecedented*' in architecture, which shall only ever come about through defending a detachment in relation to originality (the '*zero imagination*' of Siza). In this aspect, the current times, we believe, are a sham in providing us with entirely distinctive buildings that are competing so hard with each other to be so unique that, in practice, they emerge as fairly identical in their respective repetition of '*stereotypes*', lacking in any synchronicity with contemporary life. What we alternatively propose is a return to some of the fundamentals of the field that the chronological Baroque period inaugurated and that, in our perspective, Siza continued.

Article

(Fig.1)

1. What makes architecture Baroque?

First and foremost, in order to grasp our perspective, we must duly clarify the meaning of the term 'Baroque' in both art and architecture. Indeed, we would clarify how for the idea we propose here, thus, the approach to critically reconstructing the work of Siza based on Baroque as a timeless idea, we immediately encountered the need to reclarify some of the overly simplifying and simplistic '*clichés*' that Baroque architecture was swiftly ensnared by. In accordance with the cultural movement of the Renaissance, with its origins incorporating a reconsideration of the *classical*, the Baroque repositioned its relationship with classical art, spurning any type of servile adoration of the classical forefathers, thus, denying that supposed '*authority*' born out of the position of loyally worshipping the Classical. Rowing against the

tide of this conservative perspective, dominant in that time, turned towards perpetuating the feats of antiquity by rewriting and redesigning their morphological appearance, there emerged, and in open opposition, the simplified reputation of the supposedly always eccentric and original Baroque. However, and as we shall strive to portray, the Baroque is far more than just this and, in its full extent, reaches beyond what convention has termed it and which, in effect, reflects nothing more than its critical point of departure.

The touchstone for the Baroque theory set out by Severo Sarduy¹ openly places its emphasis on invoking the term “*retombée*”² that he tentatively seeks to describe as: “*acronical causality, non-contiguous isomorphy or the consequence of something yet to emerge, resembling sometimes that does not yet exist*” (Sarduy, 1974, p.9). Therefore, this highlights the prefigurative character, thus, the project as an anticipation of a future that requires project³, in Sarduy’s invocation of the French “*retombée*”. With a view to understanding the position of this author, we would put forward the following opportunities for the translation (clearly literal to a greater or lesser extent) of what Sarduy was striving to state:

Retombée, in the sense of resume;
 Retombée, as a relapse;
 Retombée, as the scope for returning;
 Retombée, as a recurrence;
 Retombée, as resonance;
 Retombée, as the repercussions of something;
 Retombée, as a retroactive action or thinking;
 Retombée, in the sense of rebuilding something, a critical reconstruction (we would add).
 (Fig.2)

*“All the texts on the Baroque – Sarduy warns – were produced considering the origins of the word ‘Baroque’. Here, in critiquing them, this text confirms this mania, this vertiginous origin that attributes philology with excessive knowledge and highlight their own logocentric limitations. The nature of things – it is supposed in advancing in this way, that they have – would be substantially written, as if some meaning, even while forgotten, present in the words that name them: thus, of Baroque there persists the nodular image of a large, irregular pearl – of the Portuguese ‘Baroque’ –, the harsh, rocky conglomerate – of the Spanish ‘berrueco’ and ‘barrocal’ –, and later on, as if in denial of this brutal character, of the coarse material, left unfinished, Baroque appears among the jewellers: inverting the primary connotation, no longer designating the immediate and the natural, stone or pearl, but rather the elaborate and the minute, the chiselled, the application of gilding. Debatable later affiliations insist on the meaning of rigor, a patient armature: baroque, a figure of syllogism – the precision of mental jewellery (...)”*⁴. (Sarduy, 1974, p.15) Sarduy also draws attention to the somewhat worrying fact of academics having apparently exhausted the history of the Baroque:

¹ A poet, literary critic and Cuban thinker of the 20th century fundamental to grasping the origins of the term.

² As the author indicates in the opening epigraph of his book entitled *Barroco*.

³ That constitutes the purpose underlying all projecting actions, particularly especially in the case of the architecture-project).

⁴ This and the translated quotes that follow are the authors' responsibility.

“There has been little denunciation – Sarduy states – of the persistent prejudice, maintained above all by the obscurantism of dictionaries, that identifies the Baroque with the bizarre, the eccentric and even with the cheap, without excluding its more recent avatars as ‘camp’ and ‘kitsch’. This renouncement of the apparent aesthetic innocence hides away a moral attitude: ‘(...) Morality distinguishes between the capricious and the extravagant. The first may be the fruit of the imagination; the second results from character... This moral distinction may be applied to architecture and the different effects that the capricious and the extravagant generate in this art... Vignola and Michelangelo sometimes accepted capricious details into their architecture, Borromini and Guarini were masters of the extravagant genre’⁵” (Sarduy, 1974, p.16).

Having identified the problems, Sarduy then proposes an alternative understanding of Baroque art based upon the impact that scientific discoveries produced on non-scientific activities, especially in art and architecture. His theory therefore provides us with pairs of scientists-and-artists: Copernicus and Ucello, Galileo and Cigoli, Galileo and Rafael, Galileo and Tasso. This clearly conveys (in our perspective) the fruitfulness of the arts in keeping with scientific discoveries. Furthermore, in his development of this idea interconnecting the prevailing worldviews and artistic creativity, Sarduy forms another pair that unexpectedly, counterbalances not a person (as in the previous formulations), not an author-architect, but rather an alternative, a collective idea: the idea of the Baroque-city⁶. Among all the different facets to his book, two in particular – 1) the idea of *“retombée”*, understood as a reflective action that enables advancing based upon some resonance or some echo (Sarduy refers specifically to the *“echo chamber”*); and 2) the idea of the Baroque-city as an anonymous artefact of collective manufacture and open to the exception and to the rule, to difference and to repetition – are factors that not only are not mutually annulled but also become, by definition, essential to any singular existence, thus enabling the affirmation that the Baroque in architecture has necessarily to point in a direction able to extend beyond the commonplace, the paradoxical, the unexpected eccentricity⁷.

(Fig.3)

2. Chronological Baroque ‘versus’ ideological Baroque

The Baroque city is not merely, as many would believe: excessive, festive, exalted, encumbered, iconic, celebrative, theatrical and rhetoric, in summary, superlative. Indeed, like Baroque architecture itself. The perspective that we here defend, stems from our understanding,

⁵ Quatremère de Quincy (1832) *Dictionnaire historique d'architecture*, quoted by Severo Sarduy (1974).

⁶ There subsequently follows – we refer here to section III of the book *Barroco* by Sarduy – El Greco, Rubens, Borromini, Góngora and Velázquez. On this list, there is only one architect out of all the architects from the Baroque period, Sarduy chose perhaps the most Baroque ever: Borromini.

⁷ In the pre-introduction chapter – entitled “Zero. Echo Chamber” – Sarduy explains the following:

“The notes that follow seek to highlight the ‘retombée’ of certain scientific models (cosmologic) in symbolic and not scientific production, whether or not contemporary. The resonance of these models is heard, without any contiguous or causal effects: in this chamber, sometimes the echo precedes the voice.

History lapses when read in reverse; an account without dates: a dispersion of sanctioned history – Sarduy concludes.

Boomerang: outlining the surveying of the echo chamber, the map of repercussions, certain models, whose ‘retombée’ are detected, demonstrating their reverses (...).

To elucidate on the symbolic field of the Baroque, ‘retombée’ is defined as the opposition of shapes – the circle of Galileo and the ellipse of Kepler (...).” (Sarduy, 1974, p. 13)

corroborated by various authors – although, even in these cases not always with the purposes and the objectives that we propose –, unveils an alternative to the iconic architecture of that referred to as the ‘*star system*’, to a certain extent and, due to the error in parallax referred to at the beginning, founded in the very core of the idea of the Baroque in art that, retrospectively and with slow certainty, still today remains both actual and operational.

Hence, to grasp our point of view first of all requires the acceptance of a terminological and conceptual division fundamental to understanding the ‘*actuality of Baroque*’ today.⁸ This division encounters resistance, especially in the field of Historiography and scientific studies leveraged by certain deeply rooted methodologies in particular sectors of the sciences, that is, the social and human sciences. In these contexts, the chronological and the geographic – ‘*the myth of context*’ according to Karl Popper (1996) –, seem to underpin the terms of the discussion to such an extent that whoever, as an alternative, seeks to contextualise the actions of the present with past actions and thoughts, or from another distant geography, immediately gets accused of setting out to compare the incomparable, a criticism generally accompanied by suspicions of lacking in scientific grounding or, on the contrary, of ‘*essay writing*’ poorly justified and only opinionative (what would Montaigne have made of such criticism? – might always serve as the counter-argument).

Baroque art (and architecture within this framework) truly did take its first steps in the 16th century (the century of Mannerism), advanced in leaps and bounds throughout the 17th century and extends, with a deepening level of creative stability, throughout the entire 18th century at least through to the death of J.S. Bach (1750), thus, until the ‘*swansong*’ of Baroque that, should we have to specify a particular date and place of death, we would propose Paris, 1789, the year of the French Revolution. The ‘*Rocaille*’, which had already begun, and that which would follow, already represents another distinctive reading that the continuity of these two artistic movements does not assist in understanding. For this chronological reading of History, with the identification of the chronological landmarks that then correspond to a formal world of greater or lesser accuracy (with a great deal of relapses and resurgences), we would call the ‘*Chronological Baroque*’. If it were not for the determining of the Baroque appearance and death, then this acceptance of the term ‘*Baroque*’ might be considered scientific in the mathematical meaning of the term. On the other hand, in our perspective, as well as that of various authors prior to us, Baroque as an idea predates this and has thus marked its presence in past moments of History and makes a further claim for its contemporaneity, remaining a valid idea that may still be worked with and on today. This second acceptance of the term, we would label the ‘*Ideological Baroque*’ as a means of highlighting the fundamental nature of the ‘*idea*’ and to the detriment of chronology, geography and the (strict) shapes that this takes on. Significantly, this perspective – that is naturally far more operative for architects such as ourselves, who perceive not only how the experience of past architecture accounts for everything that we have but also everything that we need to continue working today in the ‘*poetic profession*’ of architecture – encountering a very significant echo in the Historiography of certain specific sectors, especially:

⁸ In 2015, Eduardo Souto de Moura spoke on *The Actuality of the Baroque* before again giving this conference speech in 2024 under the auspices of the Siza Baroque Research Project.
Eduardo Souto de Moura, *A Atualidade do Barroco*, Clérigos Church, 28 May, 2015.
Idem, Auditorium of Soares dos Reis National Museum, 20 April, 2024.

- Henri Focillon⁹ (and his reading based on the idea of '*families*' not based on blood but rather '*spiritual*') that bore a major influence on the theses of George Kubler¹⁰ (and his '*shape of time*') that, in turn, bordered close to Robert Smith (a scholar of Portuguese and Brazilian architecture, a pioneer in the study of an architect unrivalled within the spectrum of Portuguese architecture in the north of Portugal and Porto in particular, known in his Portuguese spelling as Nicolau Nasoni)¹¹;
- Jacob Burckhardt¹² (and his defence of the '*essay*' and '*style*' in written criticism of the History of Art), which was influenced by Aby Warburg¹³ (and his '*law of the good neighbour*' for the books in libraries running counter to all the scientific-indexed means of organisation in favour of an '*ideological*' relationship among the books and their authors) and, in turn, Professor Heinrich Wölfflin, who later inherited the former's position at the University of Basel and authored such important works as: *Renaissance and Baroque* (1928) and *Principles of Art History* (1932); and later, authors such as Ernst Gombrich, Erwin Panofsky, Ernst Cassirer, Walter Benjamin, Carlo Ginzburg, Georges Didi-Huberman *et al.*, with all referring to the importance of Warburg to their thinking; Ernst Gombrich and Erwin Panofsky simultaneously identifying the influence of Wölfflin.

Should we accept this deep distinction between '*Chronological Baroque*' and '*Ideological Baroque*', our reading of the History of Architecture does not go untouched as, on the one hand, some of the works chronologically Baroque do not, for ideological reasons, fall within the scope of the idea of a timeless Baroque and, simultaneously, but on the other hand, certain works beyond the strict chronological boundaries of the Baroque are, in their own right, susceptible to reintegration in accordance with an interpretation deploying an acronical reading of Baroque.

(Fig.4)

Only thus may we understand the deliberate simultaneous presence of Aleijadinho and Lucio Costa in *Brazil Builds* (1943) or the Solar de Bertandos manor house alongside a peasant's rural residence in *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal* (Inquiry into the Popular Architecture of Portugal) (1961). This arises from the perception of how past shapes and forms (Aleijadinho) encounter an echo in the present (Lucio Costa), just as erudite architecture (Solar de Bertandos) does in the homes of countryfolk. Thus, in architecture, the problems may be the same irrespective of their chronology, geography and formal worlds (here including all the technical means and materials, the poor and the rich, aristocratic or mass, erudite or vernacular, etc.). Within this rationale, the very idea of Baroque in architecture acquires a particular statute given that the evidence bequeathed to us (within the scope of its interest in the contradictory and the complex, the ambiguous and the paradoxical) conveys how one of its conquests precisely encapsulates its recognition of the nuances of human life in artistic expression and architectural construction of this collective artefact that constitutes a city and the territory. The

⁹ Cf. Henri Focillon (1948) *The life of forms in art*. New York: Wittenborn, Schultz [1934]

¹⁰ Cf. George Kubler (1962). *The shape of time, remarks on the history of things*. New Haven: Yale University Press

¹¹ Cf. Eliana Sousa Santos (2016) "George Kubler Shifting South: Architecture History Following Geopolitics", *RIHA Journal* 0138, 15 July.

¹² Jacob Burckhardt (1990) *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. London: Penguin Classics [1860]

¹³ Cf. António Guerreiro (2018) "Aby Warburg's library" in *What is the Archive? Laboratory art/archive*. Lisboa: Documenta, p.85.

Baroque city is as much the city of anonymous and repeated architecture, in the day-to-day, as it is the celebrative city, unique and unrepeatable, of the eventual and ephemeral. This involves constructing the Brechtian duality of 'rule' and 'exception'. This is the difference and the repetition, or the Deluzian 'Fold' in *Leibniz and the Baroque* (Deleuze, 2012). Baroque architecture and its cities represent the pinnacle of the simple discovery of how, in the 'architecture of the city', the difference is only affirmed by its exceptionality within the framework of the daily demanded repetition. Times of festivity require ordinary times as much in the liturgical calendar as in urban life. Hence, we propose a retroactive return to the values of the Baroque city and its architecture, a step back from the excessive enthusiasm over the iconic and unprecedented that only achieves substance in defending a profound detachment from originality in architecture (the 'zero imagination' of Siza).

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(In a conference given in 1990¹⁴, Siza explained his creative process as based on two lineages or seams (or, should you so prefer, two lines of power): one in which repetition was the leading creative resource (to this dimension of his work, Siza attributed the significant slogan that "repeating is never to repeat"); the other in which the search for the singular and the individual draws on research into new solutions for eternal problems. In both cases, retroactive and reactive, Siza fearlessly repeated: "In this project, there is zero imagination, imagination zero!", he underlined.)

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Present times are, in this aspect, a sham. Buildings all distinctive in their appearance, competing with each other to be so but, in practice, fairly identical in their repetition of 'stereotypes' unaligned with contemporary life. What we propose is returning to some of the 'commonplaces' of architecture that clearly represents a task that contains its own autonomous field of knowledge. What we propose is the return to the logical principles that, by omission, have today been replaced by the supposed values of the marketplace that architecture, as a tradeable good, has excessively acquired.

Who does not seek a fine window facing the sun in winter and shaded in summer? The question is so universal that only the hemispheres that separate us force the reformulation in which the north and south get reversed. This is called the architecture of the everyday life. However, at the same time, who might imagine a day-to-day without an architectonic place, whether ephemeral or permanent, provisory or petrified, textile or stone, moveable or affixed, that equally allows for festive times? This is what Aldo Rossi termed the architecture of the monument, constituting examples of this nature both his own *Teatro del Mondo*, floating just as much as the Iberê Camargo Museum by Siza is enrooted.

(Fig.5)

Among contemporary architects, we consider Siza has stood out for most vehemently taking forward this purpose. In the same sense, it is worth going back to observe his work through a Baroque lens and thereby sifting through some of his ideas to precisely highlight the return of

¹⁴ Álvaro Siza, *Discursos de Arquitectura* (available on VHS), ESBAP, Porto, 23.03.1990.

the Baroque values. Within this study, the proposed distinction between '*Chronological Baroque*' and '*Ideological Baroque*' emerges as fundamental and with the latter remaining active contemporaneously. This is what we aim to explain, to convey how, after all, Baroque architecture and contemporary architecture are distant in time while close in the idea they share of the city understood as an artefact in which individual and anonymous architects may always reencounter their place that does, above all, result from collective construction.

3. Siza Baroque? Work and method

Approaching this question in ideological terms, within the sense explained above, we need to base ourselves on specific projects or else run the risk of not provide evidence of a decisive moment in the authentic theory-practice of architects: "(...) note that those who sustain themselves in theory on some principle, they are immediately rendered insecure by all of these pseudo-theories that they never wish to prove that, in reality, is that most important to the actual theory: the relationship that exists between the theoretical vision of architecture and its construction (...)" (Aldo Rossi, 1977: 201).

We therefore correspondingly arrive at 1980, the year when Siza: 1) designed the project for the Maria Margarida House (in Arcozelo, Gaia, Portugal); 2) won the competition for *Bonjour Tristesse* (in Berlin); and 3) submitted a proposal, rejected, to the contest for the headquarters of Dom Company (in Cologne, Germany). These three works (the first two, '*built projects*', and the third, a '*lost project*'), in addition to them coinciding chronologically in time, in Álvaro Siza's studio, they are, in a certain sense, due to their differences, complementarities and belonging to the same idea of architecture or, more precisely, to that idea of the '*architecture of the Baroque city*'.

(Fig. 6)

3.1 Maria Margarida House

Siza designed the Maria Margarida house with Eduardo Souto de Moura (his collaborator at the time), among others. An example of rehearsing the '*repetition*' of models present in their own work, "*this small house resumes and develops the theme of the house-patio experimented with in Évora*" (Siza, 1986). Furthermore, on observing the photographic representations, we may identify an unexpected resonance between this house and the Siza project for Caxinas (although already without any colour interference), especially after analysing both these projects and their respective contexts that clearly might have distanced them. What bonds these two projects seems to be the same idea of the Baroque city that Siza appears wanting to inscribe on his domestic works. The Maria Margarida house is positioned in the plot running counter to the dominant current, thus, the urban town surrounded by regulated distance on each and every side. On the contrary, it is set into the extremes of the plot, whether adjoining other houses or adjoining the walls of the surrounding properties (Fig.7). This sporadically opens onto a patio, illuminated to the rear and working the urban presence, at the maximum possible distance from the street, stemming from the consequences of his own '*raumplan*'. In the end, the house is a simultaneously paradoxically symmetrical and asymmetrical composition, especially in terms of its tallest features that endow scale. Formally symmetrical, and in their apparently urban legibility, these elements are distinct both in their purpose (on the righthand side of the elevation, a volume corresponding to an inner room within the house just as '*the other*', apparently symmetrical does not correspond to any appropriable space), and in their

architectonic solution (one is a volume, the other a spare wall, a means that functions as a baroque theatral background). This reflects a compositional exercise of great volumetric sophistication that, given the logical nature of the solution obtained (especially in terms of the urban coordinates, thus, the layout, volumetry, occupation of the parcel, scales, etc.), might be subject to repetition along that entire fragment of urban façade.

As city architecture, the Maria Margarida house is, in its repeatable vocation, architecture from the Baroque city, even if the rules required for it to be able to exist are others – and not those otherwise prevailing –, that the author recreated based on the models of his own making and, especially, according to the idea, to a greater or lesser extent reconstructed by History, of the Roman city with its *domus* and its *villas*, laid out and mutually separated from that which surrounds them by house walls and boundaries walls that define the spatial area and sustain the coverage that renders the domestic interiors inhabitable, even under the open sky, as in the case of the patios. An architecture calling for a determined idea of the city without which it cannot continue to exist can only be, from our perspective, explained by recourse to the Baroque character of its ideology.

The Baroque also emerges in the unexpected staircase that rises to the only house program, on the upper floor. In this device, everything is simultaneously strange and natural. At the entranceway, the body is obliged to skirt round the obstacle generated by the main flight of stairs that implies for the atrium an expressive shape in an ascensional format (Fig. 8, Fig.9). This movement of the body under the stairway is essential to the enjoyment of the house and, simultaneously, that which is indispensable to accessing the room on the upper floor. The body literally behaves like a torso column animated by a vital spiritual power. The suite to which the staircase leads is integrally turned in on scenographic walls that endow scale on the northern section of the house on the upper floor. They are simply walls, without providing liveable interior environments, nevertheless emphasised in Siza's drawings by 'impossible' shadows cast by the north quadrant. This 'error' in representation, difficult to grasp without a compass, is unveiled when we compare the drawn designs with the photograph of the house in *Poetic profession* (1986) (Fig.10).

We would add that the house is located on terrain with a sea view, inalienable, and that the pair bedroom/bathroom, on the open floor, 'openly' prescind from this view, turning in on its own volumetric-parietal composition. We believe this solution to be so complex, paradoxical and contradictory that only a Baroque mind might have ever desired and built it.

3.2 Bonjour Tristesse

If we now observe the so called *Bonjour Tristesse* – a far better-known case of the 'corner' that Siza projected for the *Kreuzberg* neighbourhood in Berlin – we immediately understand that this is an example with characteristics of one and other conditions of Baroque cities to the extent that the building is simultaneously current and an exception. Current in the sense that it inscribes into a 'correnteza' of other analogous buildings, all generally mixed as regards their usage, retail on the ground floor and habitation on the upper floors (constituting what convention has since termed rental properties with multifamily habitation). An exception to the extent that a 'corner building' is, inherently, from every point of view, including the morphological, a moment in which the specificity of the situation – the context – suggests and

elicits a special solution (Fig.11). In architectonic terms, the corner is the moment for *'folding'*, with this architectonic folding operation naturally establishing a relationship with the idea of the Deleuzian *'fold'*, producing a rare situation in which thinking and action converge along fairly distinctive paths even while, in both cases, the Portuguese word *'construção'* – *construction* in English –, in all of its Baroque ambiguity, provides us with a notable assertiveness: constructing in the sense of thinking (philosophy) and construction in the sense of substantiating (architectonically).

However, in this case, in order to convey just how Baroque the work of Siza is, we have to evoke the project-and-work process underlying the *'critical reconstruction'* of *Kreuzberg*. Siza is called to plan from scratch for an *'expectant'* urban territory with its destiny having remained *'undetermined'* ever since its *'total destruction'* during World War Two.

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(Similar to the iconic project of Frank Gehry for Prague in the Czech Republic – that referred to as the *'dancing building'* or *Ginger and Fred* –, is so clear and, simultaneously, so perturbing that we cannot but reference the level of contrariness to that which we have been presenting as evidence as the contemporary present of the idea of the Baroque. Some will certainly say that it is this work of Gehry that is Baroque. Our perspective, in fact, goes in the opposite direction, as Thomas Bernhard would say.)

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Returning to Berlin, it is important to explain that that corner in *Kreuzberg* – along with others in the vicinity that still remain so even until today – had been subject to provisory occupation by retail outlets housed in light, single story buildings, predestined for replacement in a near future (Fig.12). We also know that Siza, committed to city reconstruction processes, embarked on a complete design for a project solution (developed on a 1/200 scale) proposing a building that, standing on *'technical pilotis'* (as we might refer to them), would thus save the pre-existing retail outlets from demolition. The solution sought to leave preserved and undisturbed this pre-existence that Siza massively valued (especially, and most certainly, from the sociological and urban point of view), with this nevertheless proving overly complex and the project had to undergo a strategic reinvention. The retail outlets, in their usual morphological diversity, were thereby rebuilt from scratch and integrated into the new façade design that, however, signposted them and endowed them with the individual expression *'of exception'*. In our perspective, this clearly reflects the *"retombée"* described by Sarduy and applied in a building by Siza, thus, with an *"acronical causality, non-contiguous isomorphy or the consequence of something yet to emerge, resembling sometimes that does not yet exist"* (Sarduy, 1974, p.9).

There is a second detail that, for the reasons that explain its existence, deserves appropriate analysis: the enigmatic pillar *'on the corner'* that touches and does not touch the ground, as is known. According to oral history (in addition to other comments made by the architect on different public occasions), this pillar was necessary to affirming the corner of the building on the ground floor (and not for structural reasons), thus counterbalancing the expressionist curve

of the upper volume. However, the problem emerged with the building licencing which, in accordance with the rules prevailing, the pillar could not be implanted at that 'balanced' point of the building, beyond the property limit. Hence, Siza, Baroque (?), decided to build the pillar (and not the peak that 'sustains' it as would have been obvious) itself, 'in balance', which results in an unusual urban situation in which the pillar is interrupted at the base, prior to the natural gravity-based touching with the ground, thus remaining, without ever touching, around 50cm off the public pavement that runs around the *Bonjour Tristesse* (Fig.13). This solution is, more than clearly, Baroque, recalling equally audacious, complex and contradictory solutions, such as that Bernini designed for *Sant'Andrea al Quirinale*, especially the entrance portal, topped by a classical curved entablature that runs counter to all the static logic of as small a span as possible for any architrave. To further hinder the structural behaviour of this device, this also opens onto a large 'thermal' span in correspondence with an arch of entablature at the point where this element might seek additional support and, finally, deploys a statuary feature that thereby raises its own weight: more difficult would seem impossible.

For any Baroque architect, the difficulty provides the challenge that any project should create in its author. In the case of Berlin, Siza also seems to have taken this same path in designing a pillar that, rather than supporting the frontage is, in itself, an additional weight for the structure to support by another means. It is as if the pillar, rather than helping the structure, actually implied a greater effort or, morphologically, as if the pillar, rather than supporting as is its vocation, instead itself becomes supported by the coverage that it was supposed to support. The end of this story is still more refined: when closely observed, whether in photographs or on site, the pillar actually contains a metallic element connecting with the ground. Nevertheless, this is not, as might easily be thought, a structural support to offset the weight above. Once again according to the accounts of Siza himself, this is rather a feature enabling that obstacle in the public space to be identified by blind people. Hence, this represents a type of artefact in which the morphology and the morphogenesis takes us back to the point of departure, creating, as an intellectual and built construction – a corner pillar – a kind of 'Solomonic or torso column by Siza'.

Furthermore, there is a third aspect of *Bonjour Tristesse* that an analogy to a significant Baroque building in Porto may assist in clarifying. We refer here to the built complex of the Clérigos, in particular, its intermediate body, known as the 'house of the Brotherhood'. Greater attention has generally been paid to the elements of exception in this religious architectural set designed by the Italian Nicolau Nasoni, who lived in Porto, given the general trend to overvalue the more iconic and expressive dimension to Baroque architecture. However, it is in the body that interconnects these two symbolic pieces, of a customary Baroque, that we intuit the solution conceived by Siza for the platband and cornice of the *Bonjour Tristesse* (Fig.14). In this building, this classical, and even classicising, element is unexpectedly interrupted, on intercepting with the first four attic windows (as termed in classical language) that frame and finish the building with spans of scale and proportion distinctive to the remainder. With this effect, Siza is communicating to us something along this line: here, there should appear a classical cornice, however, the modernity of the building (whether in the lower ceiling heights or in dispensing with any useless ornament, as Loos would say), requires me to leave it as a broken line and, finally, to erase it from the composition. If, in parallel, we observe with attention the cornice that tops the Clérigos complex, we are surprised by a Baroque solution

(chronologically and ideologically) that, with the greatest of ease, we may interlink with the solution designed by Siza for Berlin (Fig.15). In Porto, the cornice-platband (a complex and emphatic overlaying of the logs, subtractions, rows and filets) experiences a syncopated interruption by the attic openings to endow greater fragmentation on the composition that, in that body, ran the risk of becoming overly emphatic. In both cases, Clérigos in Porto, and *Bonjour Tristesse* in Berlin, Nasoni and Siza, or Siza and Nasoni (it matters not in this case), were Baroque in the contextualisation sought after in their façade drawings.

3.3 Dom

Finally, we come to the project for the headquarters of Dom, a company based in Cologne, Germany. In this case, the tender stipulated a building that, if not iconic, with a certain monumentality. In our perspective, Siza responds with a proposal that represents a Baroque alternative. The project simultaneously foresees a low and compact building (the rule) and an isolated, cylindrical and autonomous building (the exception). While interrelated out of their relative positions, the isolated, cylindrical building inclines to one side (as in Pisa, while happening here due to the ground subsidence). This movement necessarily requires an exercise in redesigning the common relationship between vertical circulations and floors (in this case, beyond the elevators and stairways, the plans included ramps for going up and down, continually, to produce helicoidal spaces) in turn driving an ingenious solution with a classical representation – in layout, sections and elevations – brings for the first time to the tables of Siza's office, a set of variables only determinable through recourse to an innovative (at that time) mathematics calculation program associated with digitally printing curves. As a whole, geometric drawings produced by CAD and software calculated mathematics were entitled in his atelier, as we may read in documents held by the Canadian Centre of Architecture – as the '*Bible*', and interior curves. (Fig.16, Fig.17)

This building (that never got off the drawing board) is profoundly Baroque across every level: as a deliberate design incorporating architectural exceptionality, as an exception to the compositional set for the headquarters of the Dom factory, as an exercise in design anchored in the virtuality and difficulties of curved forms in plan and tri-dimensionally, as the creation of dynamic office space (we would risk thinking perhaps overly so), if we consider that the '*donut*' emerging in plan for each floor would then be divided into subareas (of around 50 m² according to the descriptive memory), developed across horizontal semi-planes, separated by "*glazed panels, radial and moveable*". The resulting continuous space, despite similarities to New York's Guggenheim, by Wright (as Siza points out in his reference list), would be surprisingly, we here lack a word, kaleidoscopic. (Fig.18)

In effect, the solution devised by Siza would once again seem to be profoundly Baroque, a conclusion compatible with the simultaneously basic, abstract and chiselled character of the exterior shape of the building. Thus, should we be right, this project is very particularly Baroque in its preference for a complexity of space and an architectonic solution that is inversely proportional to the excess of formal and ornamental resources. Therefore, this is perhaps a granitic Baroque, a characteristic that many architects who visit Porto immediately recognise as stemming from the material available for working with. The granitic Baroque of Porto demands of the chisel greater abstraction than the ornate to the extent that the Rome travertine provides stonemasons with a smooth material so they may lose themselves in details.

In Porto, paraphrasing Loos, the Baroque carved stone (we are referring here to the Chronological Baroque) seems to be telling us *'Whoever can resolve the great plan does not think about perfecting the 'modinatures''*¹⁵.

4. Baroque without rhetoric

In conclusion, we cannot avoid summoning another Siza building, this time in Brazil. The Iberê Camargo Museum, a declaredly iconic building (indeed, as with almost all of the architecture of Oscar Niemeyer, also almost always described as baroque), even if not in itself sufficient to explain our idea of the Baroque in isolation (Fig.19). On the contrary, stripped to the bone, as an exaggerated perspective centred on the iconic dimension hinders understanding all of the nuances of a Baroque project for this field. The perspective that we have here been unravelling conveys how the Baroque, as an idea, was able to inspire in the *'poetic profession'* of architects a project for the everyday and the festive, for the regular and the eventual, for the rule and the exception, precisely here encapsulating its greatest substantive quality.

Hence, what we propose here requires, at least to a certain extent, the shunning of the utilisation of the word Baroque as a qualifying adjective in favour of its alternative utilisation, for the timeless that the architecture of Siza constitutes an extraordinary witness to.

Thus, may be understood our perspective in relation to retroactive architecture today. While true that our proposal involved subjecting the work of Siza to analysis according to a baroque perspective, this made clear that this knowledge also ran in the opposite direction, hence, the architecture of Siza equally contributed to a better understanding of the Baroque (including the chronological).

While the history of art is almost always written as a system of forces from the past prevailing into the present, Lahuerta is not incorrect in expressing precisely the contrary, *"that it is the present that, 'working' intentionally on the great misunderstandings, influences the past (...)."* (Lahuerta, 2021, p.7)

The retroactivity that Lahuerta references would thus seem to return to *"retombée"*, the Frenchism proposed by Sarduy. However, from our perspective, this becomes an *'anachronic causality'* which enables us to place Siza and the Baroque (ideological) on the same level in trying to avoid further misunderstandings.

In closing, we return to the beginning (of our thesis and also to the education of this architect). Siza-student, as is known (and this *'petite histoire'* has been told by him and others on countless occasions), on the recommendation of Carlos Ramos (Director of the Porto School of Fine Arts), purchased three editions of an important architectural magazine of the time – *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*. One was dedicated to Alvar Aalto. Siza tells us how that edition in particular (and not the others) marked him for always. Nevertheless, he also tells how when

¹⁵ Loos says the following in explanation of the Roman position towards the classical Greek orders: *"It is no causality that the Romans were never in the position to discover a new order of columns, a new ornamentation. They were too advanced for this. They inherited everything from the Greeks and adapted it to their own purposes. The Greeks were individualists. Each construction was to have its own modinatures, its own ornamentation. But the Romans thought socially. The Greeks were only able to govern their own cities, the Romans the globe. The Greeks only employed their inventive powers in ordering the columns, the Romans employed them in the plan. And whoever can resolve the great plan does not think about new 'modinatures'"* (Cf. Loos, 2017: 35).

Siza showed his favourite magazine to his colleagues, Aalto's works did not cause any major impression and receiving pejorative comments along the lines of '*too much baroque!*'¹⁶(Fig.20).

At that historical moment (today we know that it was), Siza preferred the difficult position of Descartes who affirmed, without any arrogance, '*do not be impressed by the wisdom of an entire city labouring in error*'¹⁷.

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¹⁶ *Alvar Aalto descrito por Álvaro Siza Vieira: Exposição na Faculdade de Arquitectura do Porto mostra obras de um dos maiores arquitectos de sempre no ano do seu centenário* (Alvar Aalto described by Álvaro Siza Vieira: Exhibition at the Faculty of Architecture of Porto shows works by one of the greatest architects of all time in the year of his centenary), article by Jorge Cordeiro in the daily newspaper *Jornal de Notícias*, Porto, 08.06.1998.

¹⁷ The paraphrasing is entirely our responsibility.

"(The danger of this position is the popular courts, that also exist in philosophy. I confess that I prefer Descartes when – without any arrogance – he states not to be impressed by the wisdom of an entire city labouring in error.)" (Cf. Tunhas, 2006, p.291).