

eikonocity

Publisher: FeDOA Press- Centro di Ateneo per le Biblioteche dell'Università di Napoli Federico II
Registered in Italy

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
<http://www.serena.unina.it/index.php/eikonocity/index>

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To cite this article: Couceiro, J. (2017). *Lisbon Story, from the Pombaline Architect to Siza*: Eikonocity, 2019, anno IV, n. 2, 103-118, DOI: 10.6092/2499-1422/6282

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6092/2499-1422/6282>

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Lisbon Story, from the Pombaline Architect to Siza

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Abstract

The role of the façade in Lisbon was so important that in the reconstruction made after the 1755 earthquake the Baixa area was defined with hundreds of designs for street fronts, gathered together in the Pombaline cartulary. Two and half centuries later, after the 1988 fire, the same principle dominated the reconstruction of Chiado by Siza, a project that was accused of being post-modern façadism in the Pombaline style, a hasty and ill-informed conclusion, as this essay seeks to show.

Storia di Lisbona, dall'architetto Pombalino a Siza

Il ruolo della facciata nella progettazione di Lisbona è stato così importante nella ricostruzione dopo il terremoto del 1755, l'area Baixa fu definita con centinaia di progetti per i fronti delle strade riuniti nel Cartulario Pombalino. Due secoli e mezzo dopo, lo stesso principio dominava la ricostruzione del Chiado dopo l'incendio del 1988 fatta da Siza, un progetto accusato di essere façadismo postmoderno in stile pombalino, un conclusione affrettata e male informata, come questo saggio cerca di mostrare.

Keywords: Chiado, Alvaro Siza, façadism, style.

Chiado, Alvaro Siza, facciatismo, stile.

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Received September 25, 2019; accepted December 6, 2019

1 | Introduction

The theme of the façade and its ornament leads to a confusion of so-called *historical styles*, the central problem in the research for my doctoral thesis about Siza's intervention in Lisbon's Chiado district [Couceiro 2018]. The role of the façade in the design of the city was so important that, once the reconstruction strategy had been established after the 1755 earthquake, the city's Baixa district was essentially defined with hundreds of drawings of street fronts now gathered together in the important Pombaline cartulary (*Cartulário Pombalino*).¹ Two and a half centuries later, and after the 1988 fire, the same principle dominated Siza's reconstruction of Chiado.

Siza recovered, and gave continuity to, this old theme based on the legacy of its pre-existing features, with the apparent imitation of the *Pombaline style* -as defined by José-Augusto França [França 1977, 163-204]- being confused with the idea of *façadism* in the pejorative sense of the word -just as we have grown used to being the case with any *-ism*- [França 1981, 63-68].

However, what is of interest here are the lessons of the masters (both ancient and modern) about a device whose potential has, in my opinion, either been forgotten in architecture and construction, or else remembered for the worst reasons.

The radical transformation of the interior of the buildings or blocks to be found in historical centres, while maintaining their façade intact (naked, frail, temporarily shored up by complex structures, during the course of the construction work) may give rise to questionable results, something that has happened quite frequently in our cities.

¹ «This is a series of 70 façades for the reconstruction of the city of Lisbon in accordance with the guidelines of the Marquis of Pombal's building programme, accompanied by an index made in a later period. (...) On almost all of the pieces, there appears the signature of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo [who was later to become the Marquis of Pombal] or his noble titles. There are also occasional pieces that also bear the signatures and initials of many of those who worked on the designs of the Casa do Risco».

² José-Augusto França was the first academic researcher into *Pombaline Lisbon*, a phenomenon that, until then, had not been given its due importance in the history of Portuguese art, architecture, or even in the national culture itself. He presented the result of his research at *École Pratique des Hautes Etudes de Paris* in 1963, under the supervision of Professor Pierre Francastel. His study was published immediately after its public presentation and the first edition (in French) included a preface by his supervisor. The publication was also translated into Portuguese and Italian, in a collection coordinated by Manfredo Tafuri, and, due to its widespread dissemination, it has had several editions over time, with the most recent of these being revised and updated. This seminal work in the study of Lisbon's Baixa district and of the cultural phenomenon of Pombalism paved the way for further studies that have since been undertaken by other authors. The importance of this continued research has also had the practical effect of legitimising the art and heritage of the *Baixa Pombalina*, which was recognised in 1978 as an area of public interest; more recently, an application was submitted to UNESCO in July 2017, for its consideration as World Heritage.

2 | The problem of *façadism*

The term *façadism* has therefore acquired a negative connotation, but the History of Architecture (to which I have dedicated my attention in recent years) shows that it has not always been like this.

By way of example, the Doric frieze, created by the Greeks, already contained a certain idea of *façadism* (the triglyphs are a mere ornament, intended to be a representation of the beams of the temple roof sculpted into the façade itself, an abstraction arising from the petrification of the construction system [Smithson 1966, 557-563]. What we actually find in the design of the Doric frieze is a problem of *façadism* resolved through recourse to the ornament, another concept that has been wrongly maligned by our discipline.

However, in his essay *Ornament and Crime* -the title has frequently been mistranslated and interpreted as *Ornament is Crime*-, Adolf Loos [Loos 1993, 346-355] comes very close to what may appear to be the position defended in relation to the problem of the ornament by Alberti, an author who dedicated practically half of the chapters of his Treatise to this subject, which was also very evident in his design practice.

The Rucellai Palace may be summed up as the design of a façade and its respective ornament, but this work's contribution to the city is so great that it still offers many possibilities for further exploration, even today.

Resulting from the joining together of several houses in the fifteenth century, the new façade, designed by Alberti, unifies the whole (working in favour of the city), offers new urban connections and simultaneously corrects all of the pre-existing mistakes and misalignments (namely in the levels of the different floors).

The problem of the façade really only began to be posed during the Renaissance, reaching its greatest complexity in the baroque period. Today, however, it finds its vocation being neglected, not to say subverted, particularly in the case of rehabilitation projects. Have architects become caught up in the polarity between originality and archaeology and forgotten the lessons of the masters of modernity?

As an architectural feature with a certain autonomy, the façade allows for a formal discord between the exterior and the interior of buildings (floors and storeys), reconciles the scale of the city with the human scale, catalyses the design of the public space and the space of intimacy, stimulates harmony between the urban and domestic environments, and makes it possible to breathe natural air and condition the air inside the building.

The example of Siza's reconstruction of Lisbon's Chiado district, a project that has recurrently been accused of being *post-modern façadism* imitating the *Pombaline style* (in the plural acceptance of styles, which I do not subscribe to), seems to me, however, to be a hasty and ill-informed accusation. I shall attempt to defend such a thesis in this essay.

3 | It isn't easy to like the *Pombaline style*

This is a provocation similar to the one made by Paulo Varela Gomes at the start of a short book about the Baroque [Varela Gomes 1987, 5].

The provocation is a good one, and it may, in fact, be applied here, although for almost completely opposite reasons.

It isn't easy to like Pombaline architecture, and, although this heritage is considered today to be of public interest,² this has not always been the case. There is no shortage of examples throughout history that clearly illustrate this feeling of displeasure and disappointment

with the Pombaline image in reference works, in particular *Guia de Portugal*, published by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1988 (curiously the year of the fire in Chiado), where Raul Proença gives a general description of the city as «fustigated by countless earthquakes, the last of which, in 1755, reduced it to a state of almost complete ruin, destroying buildings that had stood for many centuries [Proença 1988, 178]». He further tells us:

«Lisbon does not stand out among European capitals because of its rich monuments or because of the noble architecture of its churches and palaces. Compared, from this point of view, not with grandiose metropolises, such as London or Paris, or even with some second-rate capitals, such as Brussels, for example, the impression of crude banality, coldness, or aesthetic ‘deafness’ is most disheartening. The earthquake was followed by Pombal’s efforts at reconstruction, in which the opening up of new streets obeyed an orderly geometrical arrangement and the creation of new edifices adhered to a uniform building plan. (...)»

New avenues were opened, the city was given greater respite and breathing space, but the buildings erected along these new arteries are irritating because of their vulgarity or their heavy and tasteless pretentiousness. And, if we didn’t have the Jerónimos monastery, that surprising model of Manueline architecture, the tower of Belém, with its marvellous stone lacework, Terreiro do Paço, undoubtedly one of the most magnificent squares in Europe, and the occasional noble and imposing, although imperfect, church doorway, such as the one of the Igreja de São Vicente, we would have nothing to present to travellers that could impress them so vividly through its architectural lines, the grandeur of its design or the richness of its material [Proença 1988, 178-179]».

Raul Proença’s reaction to Pombal’s Lisbon is one of great disappointment. The *Pombaline* style does not impress him, and, perhaps because of this, because of its plain, pragmatic and functional (I would say, rational) image, he feels disillusioned. In the architecture of the city’s reconstruction, ornament, namely in the form of sculptural decoration (what Raul Proença sees in the *lacework* of the Torre de Belém), had been reserved for exceptional buildings, with all the rest having been constructed according to a banal logic of repetition. The men chosen by Manuel da Maia for the difficult operation of rebuilding Lisbon all had military training, or, in other words, they were heirs to a building tradition that was closely linked to the *Aulas de Fortificação* (Fortification Classes).³ It is therefore not surprising to find that the construction of the new buildings was based on a principle of solid and highly resistant structures, all the more so since the city had just experienced an earthquake that had profoundly shaken its very foundations. This is perhaps the main explanation for the Pombaline blocks, in which the unit of the small building gives way to the unit of the block. In this way, by being conceived of as a whole, and with a layout whose scale allowed for a certain compactness, the block was more effective from the point of view of its construction and structure (taking the form of a kind of fort with a small courtyard in the centre), in which the various constructions were joined together and counterbalanced one another in an equilibrium of forces.

The block (with its various lots), ended up being thought of as just one single dense building, as echoed in the architectural expression of its façade facing the street: a large eleva-

³ Manuel da Maia, the kingdom’s chief engineer, was placed in charge of the *Casa do Risco*, the central office set up by the Marquis of Pombal, the Secretary of State for the affairs of the realm, with the aim of creating a team of specialists to draw up the Reconstruction Plan.

This headquarters for the reconstruction of Lisbon, which became known as the *Casa do Risco das Obras Públicas* (the House for the Design of Public Works), brought together a vast team of highly competent architects and engineers, «almost all of them with military training, including most notably the names of Eugénio dos Santos e Carvalho, the Architect of the Senate of Lisbon City Council, Carlos Mardel, the Architect of the Royal Palaces and the Military Orders, Miguel Angelo de Blasco, the Chief Engineer of the Kingdom since 1769, José Monteiro de Carvalho, the Architect of the Works of the Treasury Council since 1760, Mateus Vicente, the Architect of the Senate of Lisbon City Council, since 1761, Gualter da Fonseca, Francisco Pinheiro da Cunha, Elias Sebastião Poppe and António Carlos Andreas, among many others. The coordinator of that team was Manuel da Maia, a man of an advanced age and wide experience, who occupied the position of Chief Engineer of the Kingdom until his death in 1768».

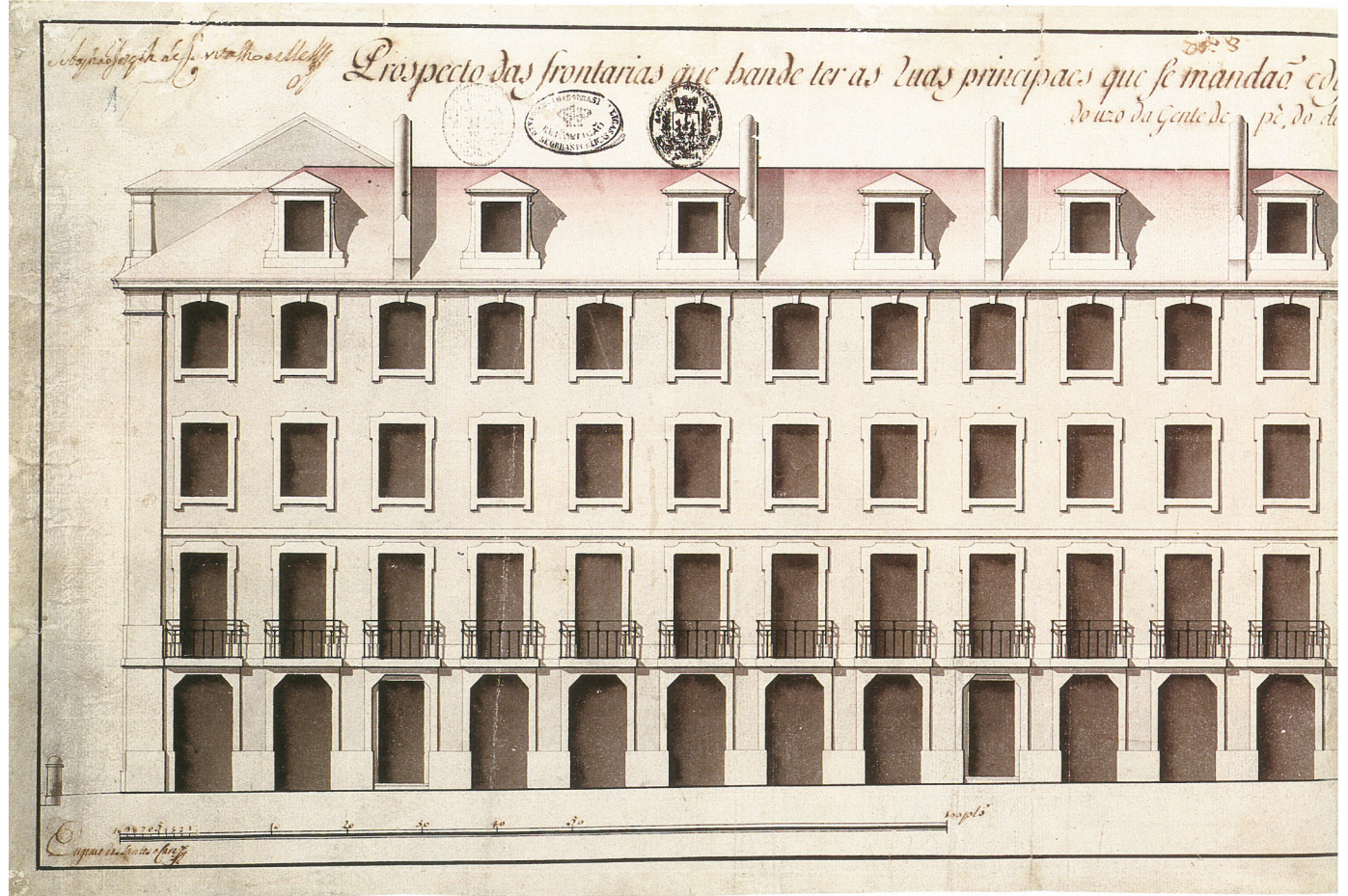


Fig. 1: Model of Pombaline Façade, *Pombaline Cartulary*, drawing 01.

tion without any decoration, dotted here and there with doors and windows with modest-looking mouldings, whose most prominent features were the stone pilasters marking out the corners (the various lots could only be distinguished from one another through the protrusion of the party walls above the roof, which, in this way, helped to prevent the spread of fires).

«The view of the façades of the main streets that are to be built in Lisbon's ruined low-lying area, divided by colonnettes designed to separate the space to be used by pedestrians from that of the carriages» depicts the model of Pombaline architecture in its ideal condition [Cartulário Pombalino]

The design is representative of the rental apartment building and summarises, in just one drawing, the detailed façades for the dozens of kilometres of streets that the *Casa do Risco* [Couceiro 2018] was to develop and which we find gathered together, in part, in the Pombaline cartulary.

It is for this reason that I highlight this drawing in particular, since it shows the value of a model and, at the same time, of a type. Or, to put it another way, since it occupies an intermediate position between the domain of the real and that of the abstract, being much more operative than either of these concepts understood in isolation.



While, in many people's eyes, the *design of the main streets* represented a *pragmatic, monotonous, harsh-looking and insipid architecture*, at the same time its incongruencies, asymmetries and apparent design flaws (which I shall not go into here) freed it from a strict rigidity and raised it to the status of a conceptual statement.

By giving shape to a political programme and an urban plan, that *façade* materialises an architecture, and, at the same time, an idea of a city.

In the drawing, the cut-off line, or, in other words, the ground, is extended beyond the limits of the construction and colonnettes are proposed, designed to mark out a public space of decorum – a pavement for pedestrians – between the building and the public space of the city. The actual caption of the drawing is elucidatory and informs us of this fact.

The severity of the *façades*, designed according to a very simple and clear template, made it possible to standardise most of their features (stonework, carpentry and ironwork) and allowed for the mass production of these materials away from the building site.

The architect's work was restricted only to some very particular buildings (namely the churches which ended up being slightly repositioned in relation to their original location, being integrated into the urban grid-like structure) and to the squares (namely the Praça do Comércio, which Raul Proença constantly refers to as an exceptional piece of architecture).

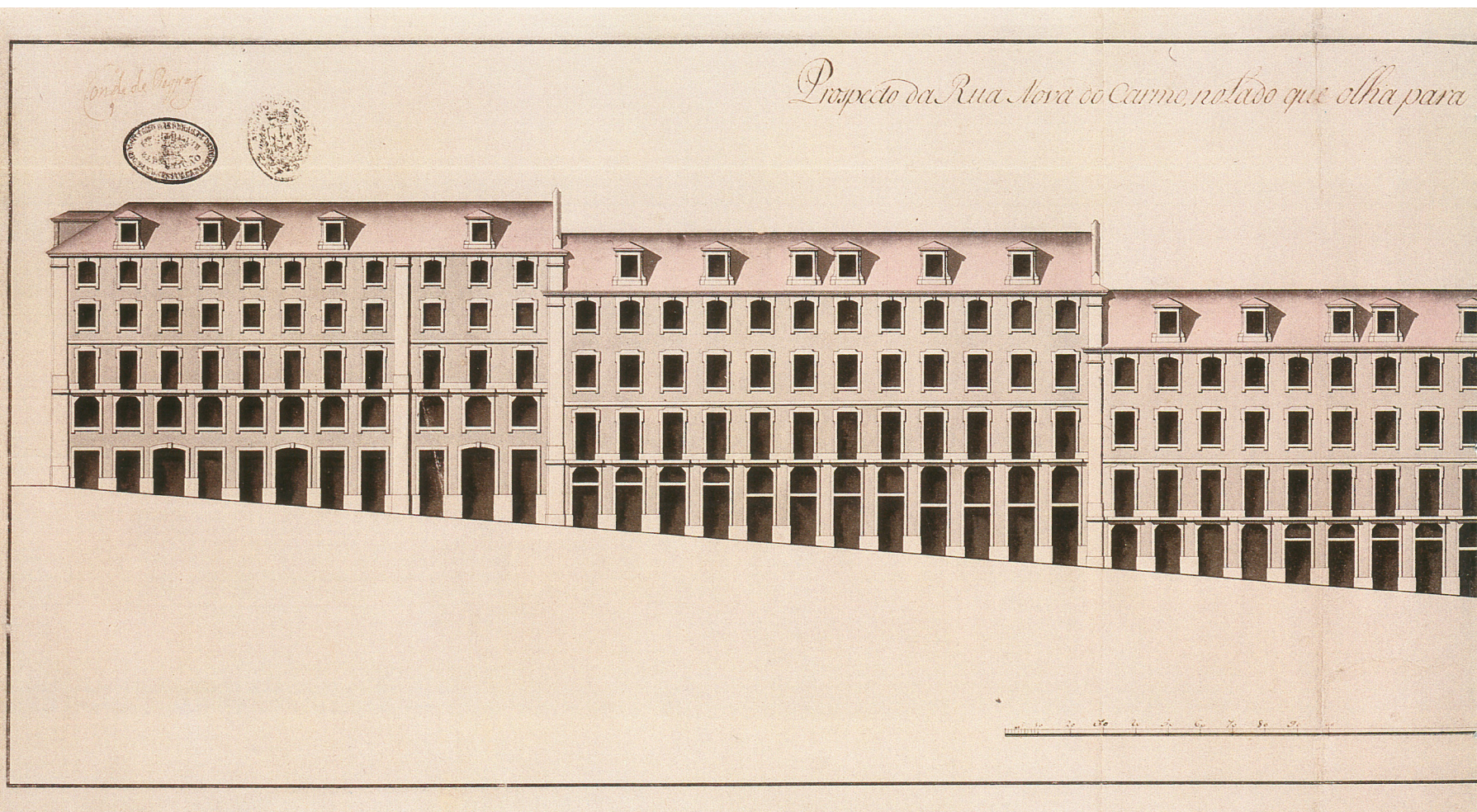


Fig. 2: Façade of Rua do Carmo, *Pombaline Cartulary*, drawing 28.

The uniformity of the solutions and the more economical use of resources both contributed to a certain idea of anonymity, and, since it *does not stand out*, as the author says, it is displeasing.

In 1988, the aftermath of the Chiado fire allowed for a radical intervention.

Immediately following the fire, a debate took place between Gonalo Ribeiro Teles and Tomas Taveira [Teles, Taveira 1988, 14], giving rise to great controversy and revealing a clear divide between the solutions that might be adopted in the face of this new catastrophe.

Whereas Ribeiro Teles defended a *broad consensus* for Lisbon’s Baixa district, Tomas Taveira [Taveira 1988, 14] suggested the design of different *spatial structures*, arguing that it was impossible to maintain the faades and the general overall plan of the group of buildings as a whole.

However, in his reconstruction project, Siza showed how it was possible to continue working from the Pombaline cartulary, while still being modern.

The truth is that although that first drawing, which depicted the *faades of Lisbon’s main streets* and the configuration of the respective public space, defined concrete objects, it was open to unlimited variations, enabling all the architects who passed through the *Casa do Risco* over the years, and lvvaro Siza more than two centuries later, to work from it.

4 | Chiado

According to the *Dicionrio da Histria de Lisboa*, Chiado finds a plausible explanation for its name in the nickname of an eccentric and turbulent owner of a tavern *situated on what today is the corner of Rua do Carmo and Rua Garrett*— Gaspar Dias, known as *Chiado* [Valdemar 1994, 273].

Taking the whole for the part (considering that Chiado was originally just that corner), we might say that it is difficult to find traces of Siza’s intervention: the building seems to have always existed in this way, although, as we shall see, this is not true.

On the contrary, on the faades of that corner, we find the expression of the chronological time that I have been talking about, as well as the synthesis of the different architectural manifestations that the *time in-between* (between accidents) absorbed and then gave back to Chiado. Everything there, the material for a research and design project, freely available, and all recorded in one faade.

Let us analyse this faade in a chronological order:

It is an area of transition between the city’s low-lying *Baixa* district and the neighbourhood of *Bairro Alto*, distinguished by its uneven terrain.

In the Pombaline drawing that forms part of the cartulary, signed by the Count of Oeiras, we can see a group of successive buildings adapted to the slope of the street and making the necessary adjustments at the level of the different storeys, openings, gables and eaves in the transition from one lot to another.

The difference in the heights of the openings of the ground floor is resolved with several variations. At first, the door increases in size as we move down the street, then it acquires a fanlight, sometimes with the addition of an intermediate half-storey (mezzanine) or a basement with attic windows in the faade. Despite the apparent rigidity of the so-called Pombaline building, the truth is that the variations (and this is not the best example) can become highly complex.

Furthermore, as far as the design of the faade is concerned, the various groups of buildings generally present a simple ground floor, with a basement or mezzanine (depending on

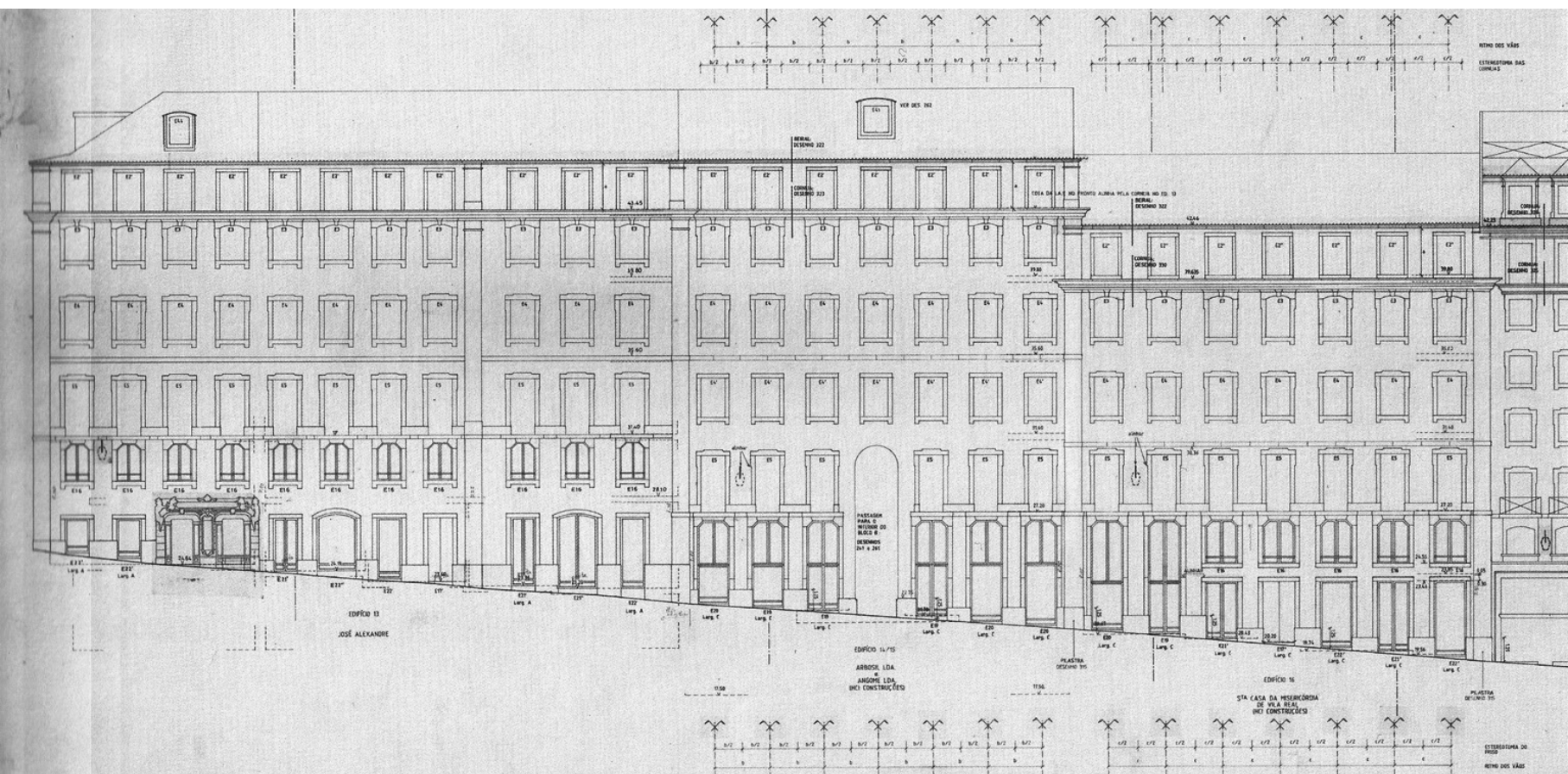


Fig. 3: Façade of Rua do Carmo, Siza drawing.

the slope of the street), which might be called the first layer of the composition: the doors and windows, with simple mouldings, are repeated with some nuances in which the door can become wider and the lintel can be transformed into an exaggeratedly depressed arch; on yet other occasions, the arch is segmented (a straight arch with chamfered corners);⁴ at the point where the building meets the ground, a *dado* (appearing as if it has been removed from a pedestal) supports the undecorated mouldings, being transformed, at the lower level of the whole, into a single basement (which gradually gains the height of a storey, given the slope of the street). Between one corner and another, despite the difference in height, the proportion of the corner pilaster remains the same, so that, at its lowest point of the street, this pilaster seems to be standing on an enormous pedestal that corresponds to the already-mentioned basement.

On the first floor, the openings are repeated without any variations; vertical windows with balconies where the projection of the floor slab gives the appearance of an interrupted architrave indicating, in the façade, the change from the first to the second layer; at the same time, and with a certain abstraction, that same projection of the floor of the balcony becomes confused with a canopy that protects the lower openings. I imagine that the repetition of the imagined canopy along the façade (as well as along the kilometres of Pombaline façades) would have represented a challenge for Siza in all of his later work. Between the second and the third floor, a horizontal band separates the third and last layer of the composition. Although the successive lots have four storeys, the façade only represents three layers, with the last layer consisting of two storeys with windows that are less vertical in their proportions. The mouldings of the openings of the last floor touch the cornice of the roof, which, besides protecting the façade, completes the composition at the junction between the (gabled) roof and the elevation of the building. Here and there in the drawing, and without the application of any apparent rule, the roof is dotted with dormer windows, covered with a roof of three slopes, suggesting the existence of mansards in the buildings. This more or less detailed description is of particular interest here, since, despite their importance, the transformations appear invisible to our eyes.

5 | The Façade of Rua do Carmo

The oldest known photographs date from the late nineteenth century. Between these pictures and the drawing from the *Casa do Risco*, there are some discrepancies that may result from alterations made after the construction of the buildings, or from changes made to the design itself when it was being implemented. Let us look at the main differences.

The first, and most immediately noticeable, difference is the replacement of the dormer windows and respective mansards by an attic storey, slightly withdrawn in relation to the façade; the cornice of the roof is maintained in the same position that it had in the original drawing and is reinforced with the metal railings of a continuous balcony, with small partitions that seem to mark out the different lots of the block, at the level of the attic storey. Besides the creation of this storey, the points of transition between the heights of the balcony floors are diminished, so that the slope of the street is not such a gentle one, something that becomes increasingly evident in the line of the rooftops. This effect therefore promotes the idea of a large unitary block in detriment to the image of the different lots implanted on the slope. The composition of the layers also seems to have undergone alterations: the balcony openings no longer occupy the whole height of the second storey

⁴ This lengthy explanation is due to the difficulty that I have in characterising the situation that I wish to describe and which, since it is not a very common one, derives from the kind suggestion made to me by José Quintão, Professor Emeritus at FAUP, who has dedicated his time to the problem of classical vocabulary.



Fig. 4: Corner of Rua Garrett with Rua do Carmo, séc. XIX.
(photo by Mario Morais).

Fig. 5: Corner of Rua Garret with Rua do Carmo, 1942
(Secção de turismo dos Caminhos de Ferro Alemaes).

Fig. 6: Corner of Rua Garrett with Rua do Carmo, nowadays
(photo by Joana Couceiro).



and the band that was placed above them gains greater autonomy on the façade, since it is no longer linked to any alignment of openings.

Given the nature of these changes in relation to the Pombaline drawing, many of which are of a structural nature, it seems to me that most of them were introduced during the building phase.

At the same time, at the ground floor level, which is mostly occupied by shops, we can also observe changes that were apparently made in accordance with the various occupations that the lots had had over time.

On the corner, the first two openings belonged to a ladies' clothes shop, whose entrance was in Rua Garrett. Consequently, the doors designed by the architects from the *Casa do Ris-
co* were transformed into windows and, at the same time, the height of the respective lintel was increased, creating an evident misalignment in relation to the rest of the openings. The new mouldings were thus moved excessively close to the sills of the mezzanine windows, so that we can imagine the existence of a two-storey high wall on the inside. New frames with a single pane of glass were placed on the inside face of the wall, so that the respective openings resulted in a kind of niche in the façade.

In the shop installed in the space corresponding to the next two openings, the intervention is more ostentatious, although, in truth, it is no more than the addition of a sculptural ornament to the façade. This well-known establishment began by being called *Au Bonheur des Dames*, a name that was later changed to *Perfumaria da Moda*. The entrance to the shop is through the first opening, which is already much wider than in the drawing of the *Casa do*

Risco, and the other gained a low sill, transforming it into a shop window. The nature of the sculptural addition, with *art nouveau* motifs, gains extra force in the harshness of the Pombaline wall. Although this decoration is not applied to the openings of the mezzanine above the shop, leaving them apparently intact, the truth is that these no longer have a straight lintel and are now surmounted by a semi-circular arch.

And so on: each shop along the street appropriates the façade at the level of the first storey in order to show its individual character and announce its presence in the city. Shop windows, with varying degrees of openness, detract from the original language of the building, and, at the same time, their constructive logic compromises the very structure of the building as a whole.

Thus, in 1942, in the building on the corner of Rua Garrett with Rua do Carmo, two large openings were made in the façade, resulting from the project developed by the Viennese architects, Beever and Ruczka, for the new headquarters of the *Secção de Turismo dos Caminhos de Ferro Alemães* (German Railways Tourism Department), which was to replace the (still) Pombaline ladies clothes shop. The new installations, opened on 11 November 1942, represented a paradox that Palladio, if he were alive, would quite easily include in his treatise, in the chapter on *abuses*.⁵ The corner of the building was completely gutted: two large panes of glass with iron frames (with little expression in the façade) are fixed to a cement frame that dispenses with the classical stone mouldings. The corner pilaster is thus transformed into a «pilaster-like» pillar that appears to support the whole weight of the building. In reporting on the inauguration, the *Gazeta* (Gazette) of the Railway Company said as follows: «In this way, the streets of Rua do Carmo and Rua Garrett now have yet another valuable ornament for their good presentation as two of the city's main thoroughfares». Did the architects think beyond the ornament, proposing, for example, a structural reinforcement in the openings that they made?

In May, 1943, the commemorative exhibition of the *10th Anniversary of the Third Reich* was held here. Today, the photographs of the inauguration of the exhibition, taken by the photographer Mário Moraes, represent an important historical document.

The 1988 fire found the building in this state of gestation. What was to follow?

The project that Siza prepared for the reconstruction of Lisbon's Chiado district, apparently based on the idea of simple imitation, and, furthermore, accused of mimicking the formal Pombaline language (or *façadism* in the pejorative sense of the term), immediately called for an absolutely important act in terms of design: choice [Tavora 1999, 73].

Although the strategic option – reconstruction – had already been taken, there still remained the question: what was to be reconstructed?

What part of the history of Chiado should one choose to remember?

And – equally important – what part of its history should one choose to forget?

6 | Choosing to Remember and/or Choosing to Forget

Let us now concentrate on Siza's proposal for the façade of Rua do Carmo.

Siza apparently chose to return to the original design prepared by the architects of the *Casa do Risco*, but this is not entirely true.

Siza maintained the attic storey, as well as the new composition of the façade in which the openings of the second layer no longer occupied the maximum height of the inside walls, thus liberating the upper band on the façade which separates the last layers from the rest. In

⁵ The idea developed by Palladio in Chapter 20 of the first book of his Treatise, on abuses (*Degli abusi*), is highly pertinent in the context of this essay and is applied with some justice to the interventions that were made in the various appropriations of the Pombaline buildings, namely at the ground floor level. In that chapter, Palladio explains how some solutions are unnatural, so that they should be avoided. The grossest error, according to Palladio, is the use of broken pediments (above doors, windows and porches) open in the centre, since these exist to protect buildings (and the inhabitants and visitors themselves) from rain, snow and hail. Nothing, says Palladio, could be more contrary to its natural reason. He mentions other abuses, but I should like to draw attention here to something that, being a question of common sense, was forgotten in the post-Pombaline interventions: *a great weight must be sustained by something solid and sufficiently strong to support it*. The various shop windows opened in the facade were an abuse that weakened the structure of the buildings, making them more vulnerable to accidents. Some of these did not survive the fire.



Fig. 7: Au Bonheur des Dames shop (photo by Joana Couceiro).



Fig. 8: Courtyard B, access arch, Siza sketch.

that sense, he returned, not to the Pombaline drawing, but to the eventual original construction (with all the already-mentioned changes made to the design), but with the successive transformations that the ground floor underwent at the level of the façades. The first doors of the building, whose lintels were raised in the first phase (misaligned with all the others) and, in a subsequent phase, transformed into a single opening, were reconstructed just as they had been originally, or, in other words, as they were depicted in the drawing contained in the Pombaline cartulary.

However, immediately in the following openings, he chose to reinsert the sculptural plaque of the *Perfumaria da Moda*, with the nuance of restoring its original name. *Au bonheur des Dames*, the title of a novel by the French writer Émile Zola, certainly appealed more to Siza (I imagine that he thought that the inscription in a foreign language expressed a certain distance in relation to the context and that the French language in particular contained an affinity with the *art nouveau* motifs). Furthermore, *A Parfumaria da Moda*, considering fashion as something ephemeral, was certainly an opposite principle to the one that Siza was defending. As far as the mezzanine windows were concerned, which had already been altered with the inclusion of an opening surmounted by a semi-circular arch, Siza returned to the theme of the segmented arch (or the straight arch with chamfered corners), which existed in the drawing of the Pombaline architect and which ended up becoming a recurrent theme in the whole of Siza's design. Also, in this façade, a few lots further down the slope, is an unusual opening that runs up to the same height as the first two storeys.

«A violent hole, without a front or a frame, a sudden hole [Siza 2009, 64]».

Here, Siza introduced another kind of scale that, for the sake of simplicity, I shall describe as monumental (in the style of a neoclassical architect). In fact, this is necessarily an interpretation of that new order invented by Michelangelo at the Capitulum, or, in other words, a theme from the sixteenth century, recovered by Siza in the twentieth century in his reinvention of the Pombaline architecture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The new opening proposed by Siza finds in Michelangelo, or, in other words, in the history of architecture, a root for its scale, even though the motif that was chosen (a semi-circular arch) clashes with the formal options of the original model [Ackerman 1970]. Between the one and the other, the story was continued, and Siza, the last one, was not indifferent to it. In the neoclassical period, there was a problem of scale: the buildings grew in height, and the orders (and, with them, also the openings) became increasingly slender. The proportions were lost and there was what Maria Teresa Muñoz described as the «stylistic disintegration of architecture [Muñoz 2012]».

Among other interpretations, that new (and apparently discordant) opening has disciplinary reasons. It invokes the monumental order invented in the sixteenth century and, at the same time, its disintegration in the neoclassical period, revealing the relaxed and fearless way that Siza worked with history (all history).

On the other side, in the courtyard, the long and narrow arch (in Rua do Carmo, it occupies one bay of the façade and stretches over two storeys) recovers its natural proportion. It is a banal, *canonical* arch. The new passageway, «a kind of incomplete funnel, enveloping a precious staircase [Siza 2009, 64]» joins up with the interior of the block at an intermediate level between the Baixa de Lisboa and Bairro Alto. That was the vocation of this hilly terrain, proving difficult for the Pombaline project, which thus remained unfinished, waiting for new architects who knew how to continue it.



Fig. 9: Courtyard B, access arch (photo by Joana Couceiro).

Fig. 10: Courtyard B, access arch (photo by Joana Couceiro).

Fig. 11. Metro vault, Siza sketch.

Fig. 12. Metro entrance (photo by Joana Couceiro).

Fig. 13. Metro exit (photo by Joana Couceiro).



7 | Conclusion: the story that never was

Siza remembers how «walking through the city and observing its landscape and topography, it had seemed necessary to create a path that connected the platform of Chiado to the Igreja do Carmo [Siza 1998, 99]». Later, when he found some old documents showing the direct path to the door of the Convent, which proved the existence of that same path before the earthquake, he filled himself with the courage and conviction he needed to continue to *imagine the evidence*.

«The architect's work therefore becomes the work of a detective, seeking to re-establish old and vital correspondences, traumatically cut off and barely perceptible [Siza 1998, 99]». Based on the knowledge that he had acquired of the terrain, Siza understood that the problem of the Chiado district was not in its architectural language, but in its relationship with the city. The transitions, which had been badly resolved in the encounter of the urban grid with the city's hilly topography, were therefore recovered for the project, a surgical work in the sense of re-establishing essential correspondences for the city.

Reducing the built depths made it possible to open up two inner courtyards inside the blocks themselves, intermediate platforms that link the different levels, as, for example, courtyard A, which establishes the connection with the Escadinhas de São Francisco, and the access, from courtyard B, to the southern entrance of the Convento do Carmo, at a much higher level. As far as the public spaces and infrastructures are concerned, attention should be drawn to the stairs between Rua do Crucifixo and Rua Nova do Almada, arising from the integration into the public domain of a strip of land that was previously occupied



by the Chiado building. This new set of stairs, following the same line as the first set and connecting Rua Nova do Almada to Rua do Crucifixo, where the metro entrance is, allows for an easy and vigorous relationship with the city.

In relation to its functioning as a transition platform between the *Baixa Pombalina* and the hill of *Bairro Alto*, Siza understood that the Chiado was an area that inevitably had to be crossed. That was its vocation.

Understanding this margin (left on the very fringes) of the Pombaline plan as an interface between the upper and lower levels, enabling a link to be made between the two points, was the intention of Siza's proposal from the very beginning.

He therefore opened up passageways, streets and courtyards. He also opened up the city's foundations with tunnels providing access to the metro, making it possible to link the various levels of the Chiado district to the rest of the city. The integration into Siza's plan of a new metro line, with an exit in the heart of Chiado, and another in Rua do Crucifixo, also led to the radical transformation of this transport services link into a main thoroughfare. Siza's Chiado fulfils its vocation: «A distribution platform. A plateau which it is imperative to pass through and stop at, an apparition from where you can see the landscape. The essential Chiado, enormous, above the Rua do Crucifixo [Siza 2009, 63]».

Like a sculptor, Siza reconstructed the area by subtracting from it, which is clearly a paradox. Although this idea of spatial continuity is one of the great themes proposed in the block plan, the construction (or non-construction) of these spaces and these passageways implied an empty space that many people also considered to be an empty space in the design and in Siza's intervention.

Despite the apparent silence of the intervention, Siza undertook many transformations, but his work is surgical, precise and essential.

The façade of Rua do Carmo was never as Siza reconstructed it. If, on the one hand, he recovered old correspondences with the Pombaline drawing (in terms of each window that he put back in place); on the other hand, he fulfilled the idea of hybridity that had meanwhile become part of the project (such as the art nouveau ornament); and he reinvented the Pombaline architecture (in the passageway leading to the courtyard).

He also continued the Pombaline plan of joining the low-lying Baixa district with the higher level, but also of joining this with the remainder of the city, making use of the even lower level that was reached, in the meantime, through engineering.

While appearing to be the same, in reality Siza's Chiado has a new narrative: the Story that never was. Viollet-le-Duc was right, to some extent: «Restoring a building is not maintaining it, repairing it or remaking it, it is re-establishing it in a complete state that may never have existed before [Le-Duc 1854-1868]»

The Chiado that had never existed now exists in the present: between the Pombaline city and the other city, the one that «is slowly rising up, and beginning to peep out, and therefore tearing open the curtains – Tagus, Palace, rigorous poor neighbourhoods, Castelo, Rossio. The Convent's pointed arches are exploding [Siza 2009, 65]».

The journey is most moving, and it is only possible with Siza's project, which establishes yet another contrasting promenade: that of the city that makes its way down, now rather hurriedly, immediately entering into the carriage – distracted people, reflected in the windows, another train that is passing. An endless and essential vault. The journey that Wim Wenders hasn't yet made. The story that never was.

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