

AMARCORD: ANALOGY AND ARCHITECTURE¹

Ever the pragmatist, Eduardo Souto de Moura makes clear how analogy works for him. It is the process that converts images, drawn from memory and personal belongings, into architecture. Visual and literary references construct a “mental Neufert,”² sparking correspondences during design. Like a secret weapon, this operation reconciles professional obligations with biographic indulgences. “The only biography is of an unproductive life,” wrote Roland Barthes.³ In order to solve this contradiction, recollections are used as a repertoire for projects. Analogy allows for the transfer since “no sooner is a form seen then it must resemble something: humanity seems doomed to Analogy and, finally, to Nature.”⁴ Thus, Eduardo Souto de Moura is able to merge the public and private spheres of his life. Throughout, analogy has always been a muse. This text examines its presence along the timeline of the architect.



Analogy can be defined as the similarity between things otherwise unlike, bound by a sense of proportion. This meaning derives from the Greek origin of the word, *analogia*, evolving into the relation of features increasingly complex and abstract. As noted, “it emerged as a form of dialectics attempting to bridge the seen and the unseen, the known and the unknown.”⁵ A case in point, Saint Thomas Aquinas was able to equate the attributes of God to those of earthly creatures. These parallels seek to explain the phenomena of the world according to a ratio that connects them. In other words, A is to B what C is to D. Images are at the heart of this mode of cognition. They make visible ideas hard to grasp, giving rise to insight. Hence, their combination becomes an alchemic quest

1. Diogo Seixas Lopes, “Amarcord: Analogy and Architecture,” eds. Pedro Bandeira and André Tavares (Porto: Dafne, 2011 / Zurich: Lars Müller, 2012)

2. Eduardo Souto de Moura, “Biographic Interview,” interview by Monica Daniele in *Eduardo Souto de Moura* by Antonio Esposito and Giovanni Leoni (Milan: Electa, 2003), p. 438.

3. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p. 6. “Car tel est le sens théorique de cette limitation: manifester que le temps du récit (de l’imagerie) finit avec la jeunesse du sujet: il n’y a de biographie que de la vie improductive.”

4. Ibid., p. 48. “Parce que l’analogie implique un effet de Nature: elle constitue le ‘naturel’ en source de vérité; et ce qui ajoute à la malédiction de l’analogie, c’est qu’elle est irrépressible: dès qu’une forme est vue, il faut qu’elle ressemble a quelque chose: l’humanité semble condamnée à l’Analogie, c’est-à-dire en fin de compte à la Nature.”

5. Barbara Maria Stafford, *Visual Analogy: Consciousness as the Art of Connecting* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), p. 8. For an historical overview of analogy see James F. Ross, *Portraying Analogy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

for knowledge. An atlas, like the one presented in this book, collects and sorts them with the same purpose. It is an intellectual laboratory, where new materials are fabricated.

When applied to architecture, analogy enables the transposition of disparate facts. Scale, location, and time can be exchanged with each other in order to outline a particular reasoning. A notable example of this possibility is the equivalence established by Leon Battista Alberti regarding the city and the house: “If (as the philosophers maintain) the city is like some large house, and the house is in turn like some small city, cannot the various parts of the house – atria, *xysti*, dining rooms, porticoes, and so on – be considered miniature buildings?”⁶ The analogy served to convey general rules of design but also a bond between *domus* and *polis*, fundamental to Humanism. Centuries later, another famed comparison also encapsulated an epoch. In *Vers une architecture*, Le Corbusier juxtaposed Greek temples – Paestum (600 BCE), Parthenon (447 BCE) – with automobiles – Humbert (1907), Delage Grand-Sport (1921) – to illustrate the notion of standard.⁷ This quartet composed a visual rhetoric, typical of Modernism. Embracing a discourse of progress, culture and technology subsumed to the credo of the “state of the art.” Again, analogy was instrumental to depict this thought.⁸

Today, it is no longer possible to be so assured about ideas and images. Despite systematic attempts to classify them, their dissemination provokes inevitable ambivalence. Nevertheless, analogical association looks for significance among particular instances. Therefore, it is still a way to find a form for solutions. When problems concern architecture, this implies a course of action in the expanded field of the discipline. As Oswald Matthias Ungers argued,

If, for instance, designing is understood purely technically, then it results in pragmatic functionalism or in mathematical formulas. If designing is exclusively an expression of psychological experiences, then only emotional values matter, and it turns into a religious substitute. If, however, the physical reality is understood and conceptualized as an analogy to our imagination of that reality, then we pursue a morphological design concept, turning into a phenomena which, like all real concepts, can be expanded or condensed; they can be seen as polarities contradicting or complementing each other, existing as pure concepts in themselves like a piece of art.⁹

6. Leon Battista Alberti, *De Re Aedificatoria* (c. 1486) / *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, tr. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 23.

7. Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* (Paris: Crés, 1923), pp. 106-107.

8. For an extensive analysis of this and other architectural analogies see Jean-Pierre Chupin, *Analogie et théorie en architecture. De la vie, de la ville et de la conception, même* (Gollion: Infolio, 2010).

9. O. M. Ungers, *Morphologie. City Metaphors* (Cologne: Walther König, 1982), pp. 8-9.

These explanations introduce a series of “city metaphors” listed by the German architect. Pairs of urban plans and photographs, each with a caption, express certain concepts. Similarity: Ivan Leonidov’s Magnitogorsk (1930) next to a chessboard. Stretching: Lucio Costa’s Brasilia (1957) next to an airplane. And so forth. But some of the couplings produce surprising effects, such as the scheme for an ideal town in Kentucky side by side with the picture of wooden crates amid a snowy field. Inside one of the crates, there is an abandoned baby. This disturbing image defies any rationale on the link to its referent. It echoes a description given by Carl Gustav Jung, in a letter addressed to Sigmund Freud: “Logical thinking is ‘verbal thinking.’ Analogical thinking is archaic, unconscious, not put into words and hardly formulable in words.”¹⁰

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Eduardo Souto de Moura has been aware of the disquieting nature of analogy since the start of his métier. The sketches that precede this text are proof. Reminiscent of the Postmodernist exploits of Michael Graves or Charles Moore, these studies show assemblages of columns and pediments. Some of them produce a virtual double, reflected in water. A side note deems unfit the inverted image of classicism while there is also a mention to “fascism as a cover-up.” But the drawings evidence mannerism and irony, like a “guilty pleasure.” They are the antithesis of a project from the same period, the housing for São Vitor in Porto (1974-1979). Eduardo Souto de Moura participated in the design, supervised by Álvaro Siza under the auspices of SAAL. At the time, he viewed the political engagement of this operation as a “promised land.”¹¹ But there was also the desire for “architecture dans le boudoir.” The historicist follies in the sketches evoke the expression coined by Manfredo Tafuri, and his verdict:

Today, he who is willing to make architecture speak is forced to rely on materials empty of any and all meaning: he is forced to reduce to degree zero all architectonic ideology, all dreams of social function and any utopian residues. In his hands, the elements of the modern architectural tradition come suddenly to be reduced to enigmatic fragments, to mute signals of a language whose code has been lost, stuffed away casually in the desert of history.¹²

10. Carl Gustav Jung to Sigmund Freud, March 2, 1910, in *The Freud/Jung Letters*, ed. William McGuire, tr. Ralph Manheim and R.F.C. Hull (London: Hogarth, 1974), pp. 298-99.

11. Eduardo Souto de Moura, October 1980, Apprenticeship Report, Archive Eduardo Souto de Moura, Porto, p. 8.

12. Manfredo Tafuri, “L’Architecture dans le Boudoir: The language of criticism and the criticism of language,” trans. Victor Caliendo, *Oppositions*, no. 3 (May 1974): p. 38.

Remembrance of the past casts a long shadow, indelible from the present. Scattered like debris, heritage distorts any linear narrative of events. Since these naïve beliefs expired, it is necessary to venture into the labyrinths of memory and search for a way out.

Therefore, architecture is destined to be *ars combinatoria*. Analogy is a tool, finding threads between different sources. Such is the case of the House for Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1979), an entry for a competition organized in Japan under the judging of James Stirling. His assignment challenged the imagination:

In the hypothetical situation posited for this competition, after achieving success, Schinkel asks his very brilliant pupil (you, the contestant), to design a family house for him. This pupil is indeed gifted, because he has foreseen in his daydreams the entire development of the modern movement up to 1980. Therefore he (you) can assume that the competition requires a modern or neoclassical house, or a modern neoclassical or classic neomodern, or any mixture he likes.¹³

Eduardo Souto de Moura responded to this eclectic freedom with absolute control. His proposal was an abstract composition using archetypal figures such as the ruin, the grotto, and the villa as ready-mades. Within the boundaries of the house there was also a stream, orchards, woodlands, and a hill. Fully enclosed by walls of stone, these grounds formed a *hortus conclusus*. Placed near the oil refinery of Matosinhos, it used this industrial archeology as an imprint for the residence. The proximity to the Boa Nova Tea House and Leça Swimming Pools by Álvaro Siza underlined pedigree rather than style. All these allusions were intentionally orchestrated throughout the project, as a layer of double meanings. An early trial for subsequent works, this sophisticated collage of ideas celebrated the quintessential nature of architecture. That is, *cosa mentale*.

Direct reference for analogy as a design method lies in the work and the writings of Aldo Rossi. He anticipated the autonomy of this procedure in a seminal essay, discussing his craft as “architecture for museums.”¹⁴ It was heralded with an emblematic painting of Canaletto, depicting Venice. In this *Capriccio* (1755-1759), several projects by Andrea Palladio compose a *veduta*. While none of them actually exist in the city, they nevertheless convey its identity. “Such objects are situated between inventory and memory. Regarding the question of memory, architecture is also transformed into autobiographical experience: places and things change with the superimposition of a new

13. James Stirling, “A House for Karl Friedrich Schinkel,” *Japan Architect*, no. 274 (February 1980): p. 9.

14. Aldo Rossi, “Architettura per i musei,” in *Teoria della progettazione architettonica*, by Guido Canella et al. (Bari: Dedalo, 1968), pp. 123-37.

meanings.”¹⁵ Using recollections to transfigure the real, Eduardo Souto de Moura pursued the same course. Under the avowed influence of his Italian mentor, he settled his lineage: “To be Rossian means to me understanding culture, understanding the history of one’s own city, of one’s own places, of one’s own memory, and intertwine them, following a personal and emotional logic.”¹⁶



Perhaps, heterodoxy is the condition of being Portuguese. Faced with perennial difficulties and the mirage of historical deeds, it is necessary to adjust to great contrasts. Against the odds, some were able to strive for the universal amid such a singular environment.

Eduardo Lourenço emphasized the importance of this trait since “in knowledge or action, philosophy or politics, man is a divided reality. Heterodoxy is the respect for this division.”¹⁷ Throughout an entire career, Eduardo Souto de Moura consistently reclaimed the right to diversity. Naturally, historiography praised the canonical aspects of discipline and continuity. These values spring from the professional reality and are handled with common sense. But there are other ambitions that defy protocol, despite the risk of misunderstandings. “Yet, it is still vital for each and every one of us to take a personal chance into an almost predictable failure.”¹⁸

It is possible to trace profound changes in the work of Eduardo Souto de Moura by the nature of the analogies employed. Initial projects often resorted to citations within the disciplinary field, appointing a primordial pantheon of elective affinities. Among them, rose the figure of Mies van der Rohe as the definitive embodiment of the modern architect. This fascination, if not obsession, made a mark on projects such as the SEC Cultural Centre in Porto (1981-1991) and the House in Alcanena (1987-1992). Other references also flourished, from Villa Adriana to Guiseppe Terragni, but the legacy of the German master prevailed. His insignia of transparency and freestanding plans was interlaced with vernacular tectonics for the buildings, precise and tactile at once. The extensive use of stone masonry and manipulation of ruins did not surrender to the picturesque. Rather, it made tangible the presence of time as a “great destroyer.” Architecture is a means to

15. Aldo Rossi, “An Analogical Architecture,” tr. David Stewart, *A+U: Architecture and Urbanism*, no. 65 (May 1976): p. 74. The projects by Palladio are the Rialto Bridge, the Chiericati Palace, and the Palladian Basilica. The first is a study, while the others are in Vicenza.

16. Eduardo Souto de Moura, “Su Aldo Rossi,” in “Dopo Aldo Rossi,” *d’Architettura*, no. 23 (April 2004): p. 189.

17. Eduardo Lourenço, *Heterodoxia I* (Coimbra: Coimbra, 1949), p. 15. “No plano do conhecer ou no plano do agir, na filosofia ou na política, o homem é uma realidade dividida. O respeito pela sua divisão é heterodoxia.”

18. *Ibid.*, p. 27. “E contudo, continua a ser vital para cada um de nós arriscarmo-nos, pessoalmente, a uma falência quase previsível.”

seize this motion, against the grain of the everyday. While bound to failure, it must push forward and leave something behind.

The recurrent mentions of Eduardo Souto de Moura to a performance by Joseph Beuys, *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974), are made under the same premise: “I am interested in the action that transpires in Beuys’ experiment, its result and not its locale. It’s all the same if the gallery was tall or long, if it was in New York or in São Pedro de Rio Seco; the important thing was *time*, the permanence in *place* and the selection of the materials.”¹⁹ The sway of contemporary art allowed for other possibilities and analogies. They became object-based, drawing from the humor of Marcel Duchamp and the rigor of Donald Judd. Thus, the Burgo Tower in Porto (1991-2007) resembled a pile of stacked crates and the cantilever of one of the Two Houses in Ponte de Lima (2001-2002) was compared to a bottle holder. It is unclear if these visual puns precede or succeed the projects. One way or the other, they downplay the cultured in favor of the prosaic. While it is highbrow to use the notion of “as found,” architecture merely aspires to be yet another thing.

Over the last years, this work has struggled against its own stasis. The condition was crystallized in the stereotypical solution of the glass box, replicated as a trademark. In science, the glass box is the symbol for an intelligible process whereas the black box stands for a more opaque backstage of knowledge. Deflecting Pavlovian repetition from disciples and copycats, Eduardo Souto de Moura delved into the latter. His analogical thinking is now closer to the definition of Carl Gustav Jung, archaic and unconscious. Many projects display a subversive glee, shaping familiar images into unfamiliar buildings. The protruding boxes of the Cinema House in Porto (1999-2000) bring to mind the beady eyes of a gigantic fly that landed in the heart of the city. Likewise, the six houses for Villa Utopia Resort (2006) progress from the profile of an anteater into a more abstract configuration. This transition oscillates between a zoomorphic extravaganza by Jean-Jacques Lequeu and the typological formulas of Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand. In other words, A is to B what C is to D.

Eduardo Souto de Moura has been hailed for a no-nonsense approach towards the hardships of clients, contracts, and construction sites. They are skillfully tackled, in order to get things done. But the pragmatic spirit of the architect also resides in the ability to protect intimacy under a social persona. Thus, he is able to mastermind the coexistence of public virtues and private vices. The duality inevitably recalls the characters of Doctor

19. Eduardo Souto de Moura, “Time,” in “Eduardo Souto de Moura. Recent Work,” *2G*, no. 5 (2008): p. 138. São Pedro de Rio Seco is the birthplace of the philosopher Eduardo Lourenço.

Jekyll and Mister Hyde. A snapshot of this “double exposure” was the installation *Object Light* in Porto (1996). An acrylic screen, transparent and blue, divided the exhibition space in two. At the back of this cell, there was a black panel with a grid of blue lamps. Up front, an amplifier and computer converted into light the sounds of Miles Davis and his classic *Kind of Blue* (1959). With a swarm of soft flashes, the acrylic screen veiled the rigid apparatus of the lighting fixtures. Exposed and concealed, these layers could be a portrait of Eduardo Souto de Moura and his inclinations. They range from music to architecture, from Miles to Mies.



The atlas presented in this book is a collection of *objets trouvés*, randomly sorted throughout the years. It comprises photographs, postcards, clippings, memorabilia, and other findings. This jumble of things reveals an insatiable appetite for the many faces of reality. Nevertheless, it is possible to find an order out of such chaos. Each project offers the chance to ransom certain items, for the sake of inspiration. The kaleidoscopic nature of this supply denotes compulsion, but also restraint. As Aldo Rossi observed,

Yet there is a path to salvation in such acts of classification; the catalogue rediscovers a secret and unexpected history of the image; its very artificiality becomes fantasy. Once everything has stopped forever, there is something to see: the little backgrounds of the yellowish photos, the unexpected appearance of an interior, the very dust on an image in which one recognizes the value of time.²⁰

Eduardo Souto de Moura continues to explore his archive, searching for new trophies. This design method can be likened to the technique of *cadavre exquis*, juxtaposing miscellaneous sources. Among recent samples, it is worthwhile to probe into the competition entry for the Multifunctional Building of the Serralves Foundation in Matosinhos (2008). Planned as a facility to store and display contemporary art, the project was an anthology. It started with the zigzag silhouette of sheds, linked to a block epitomizing the style of the architect: *Souto de Moura d'après Souto de Moura*. Then, a steel tower crammed together the machinery in a disconcerting combination of the image of a robot with those of Bernd and Hilla Becher. The facility enclosed an existing pond within a courtyard, crowned by a tall chimney of brick from the disused factory in the site. While part of an industrial archeology, this vertical element was also a tribute: “The lake, the ruins, and the factory are themselves a ‘Chirico’ we discovered and did not want to

20. Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), p. 47.

reject.”²¹ The scheme had a striking resemblance to *Metaphysical Interior with Large Factory* (1916-1917), one of the famous paintings by Giorgio de Chirico. Like surreal props, they were pasted in the renderings of the proposal. These photomontages were remakes of *pittura metafisica*, updated.

Iconography pervaded other works, notably the Paula Rego Museum in Cascais (2005-2009), as if the buildings were “calligrams.” They are the emblem of an idea, confiscated from images and texts. “In its millennial tradition, the calligram has a triple role: to augment the alphabet, to repeat something without the aid of rhetoric, to trap things in a double cipher.”²² The explanation, by Michel Foucault, applies to this architecture. Analogy encodes it with the language of autobiography, signed by Eduardo Souto de Moura. The universal status it seeks is therefore related to this kind of personification. “The space occupied by analogies is really a space of radiation. Man is surrounded by it on every side; but, inversely, he transmits these resemblances back into the world from which he receives them.”²³

In a sketch named *Magritte*, two disproportionate apples crowd the atrium of the Laboratory and Office Building for Novartis in Basel (2005-2011). Amid the headquarters of a pharmaceutical company, this fantasy implies a subtitle: *ceci n’est pas un building*. It counters with nonchalance the respect for regulations that seems to confirm a “tendency to obey the constraints with an almost masochistic pleasure.”²⁴ Eduardo Souto de Moura treasures these contradictions, the true sign of an author. Despite biographic indulgences, he is well aware of professional obligations: “There is a sort of automatic writing, like in music or literature. But we cannot bury our mistakes. They petrify forever.”²⁵ Yet, the atlas remains his book of disquiet. In a time when most things expire quickly, he holds on to this valuable property. *Amarcord*.

21. Eduardo Souto de Moura, 2008, Competition for the Multifunctional Building of the Serralves Foundation in Matosinhos, Archive Eduardo Souto de Moura. “O lago, as ruínas e a chaminé são já por si um ‘Chirico,’ que fomos descobrindo e não quisemos rejeitar.”

22. Michel Foucault, *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1973) / *This Is Not a Pipe*, tr. and ed. James Harkness (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), p. 20.

23. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966) / *The Order of Things. An archeology of the human sciences* (Oxon: Routledge, 2002), p. 26.

24. Ákos Moravánszky, “The City of the Captive South. Álvaro Siza, Peter Märkli and Eduardo Souto de Moura on the Novartis Campus,” in *Let’s Talk About Houses. Between North and South*, ed. Delfim Sardo (Lisbon: Athena, 2010) p. 256.

25. Eduardo Souto de Moura, “Os traços em volta,” interview by Maria Leonor Nunes, *Jornal de Letras*, 6-19 April, 2011. “Há uma espécie de escrita automática, como na música ou na literatura. Só que não podemos enterrar os nossos erros. Eles ficam mineralizados para sempre.”