

## Communiqué / Press Release

For immediate release

### THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR ARCHITECTURE PRESENTS THE EXHIBITION **CORNER, BLOCK, NEIGHBOURHOOD, CITIES. ÁLVARO SIZA IN BERLIN AND THE HAGUE**



Photograph of *Bonjour Tristesse* by Giovanni Chiamonte, 1984.  
Architect: Álvaro Siza. Neighbourhood of Kreuzberg, Berlin.  
© Giovanni Chiamonte.



Photograph of *Punt en Komma* by Peter de Ruig, 1988.  
Architect: Álvaro Siza. Neighbourhood of Schilderswijk, The Hague.  
© Peter de Ruig.

*Montréal, 24 September 2015* — The Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) presents **Corner, Block, Neighbourhood, Cities. Álvaro Siza in Berlin and The Hague**. On view in the CCA's Octagonal Gallery from 24 September until 7 February 2016, this exhibition showcases two seminal social housing projects by Álvaro Siza from the early 1980s. It is curated by Eszter Steierhoffer, Curator of Contemporary Architecture at the CCA.

Siza's participation in the SAAL Process<sup>1</sup> following 1974 led to commissions for social housing in Berlin and The Hague in the 1980s. Known as **Bonjour Tristesse** (1982–1983) and **Punt en Komma** (1986–1989), these are his first built projects outside of Portugal and incorporate considerations that Siza explored earlier in Porto, where he approached housing on the scale of the neighborhood and within the context of a historic city.

After World War II, Berlin had lost its status as a capital and became a shrinking city. The International Building Exhibition (IBA) 84/87 was implemented to counteract this process and to re-establish an architectural identity for Berlin. Siza was invited in this context to the competition of the "Altbau" section of the IBA in Kreuzberg, where he was the only foreign architect to build. He paid close attention to the architecture of Berlin and studied it through countless drawings and sketches. Later Siza was also invited in The Hague to redesign the master plan of the

<sup>1</sup> See related exhibition entitled *The SAAL Process: Housing in Portugal 1974 – 76* on view at the CCA until 4 October 2015.

“Deelgebied 5” area in the Schilderswijk, an impoverished neighbourhood characterised by the tabula rasa approach of earlier urban renewal projects that took place in The Hague and resulted from speculative redevelopment of the inner-city areas. In his design for “Deelgebied 5” Siza demonstrated the same approach and understanding of the local character of the city as earlier in Berlin: in his plans he maintained the specific cross section of the street that is typical for the area, while providing more generous courtyards on the interiors of the proposed blocks. The two projects in Berlin and The Hague resemble one another in size, scale, program and ambition: both were built during the same time period, both are results of a distinct attitude towards the city, and both were social housing projects that were developed to accommodate immigrant communities through participatory design processes, yet they are also remarkably different. They present local solutions to global questions about the reconstruction and densification of urban centres, reflecting and reviving the specific character of their respective locations, Berlin’s Kreuzberg and the Schilderswijk in The Hague.

“In juxtaposing these two projects, the exhibition points to certain fundamental and complex attributes and interests in the work of Álvaro Siza—the universal and the vernacular, the specificity of the generic and the monumentality of the ordinary. Together, they present possible models of an urban architecture at a time when the character of the twenty-first century city is yet again undergoing major transformation,” explains Eszter Steierhoffer, Curator of Contemporary Architecture at the CCA.

Siza’s sensitivity to context and ways of living resulted in subtle architectural interventions in the urban fabric that mediated charged political and social climates. His façades and plans reinterpret the morphology and typologies of each city. Siza’s architecture has a truly urban character; the projects reveal themselves through the city, and the city reveals itself through the design of each building.

The exhibition presents two large-scale models and a selection of archival material – maps, drawings and sketches of the projects. It includes original drawings from the archive of the architect along with photographs of “Bonjour Tristesse” by **Giovanni Chiaramonte**, and photographs of “Punt en Komma” by **Alessandra Chemollo** and **Peter de Ruig**. Additionally, documentary photographs will be projected and accompanied by interviews with Adri Duivesteijn, former deputy mayor of The Hague who invited Siza to come work on the Schilderswijk neighbourhood and Brigitte Fleck who was responsible for competitions for the Senate of Berlin in the late 70s and proposed to invite Siza for several competitions.

## ÁLVARO SIZA

**Álvaro Siza** emerged in the late 1950s at the forefront of developing a new architectural language adapted to the cultural and social context of Portugal. He received the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1992 and the Venice Biennale’s Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in 2012, among many other recognitions.

Siza donated a large part of his office archive to the CCA in 2014 in order to foster discussion and dialogue in a research-oriented context. It comprises projects representing his life-long interest and study of houses, housing, and city planning, as well as designs for cultural centres,

museums, and universities throughout Europe, Asia, and South America. The material includes sketches, drawings, study models, as well as related digital files, correspondence and documentary photographs. The CCA is committed to cataloguing and archiving the materials and making them accessible for scholarly research.

This year, Siza's prolific career was highly commented in the news since he has been commissioned to design a luxury condominium tower in New York City – his first American project. He has also accepted to work on the renovation plan for the formerly renowned and abandoned Hotel Estoril into a youth recreational and art center in Macau.

## CURATOR

**Eszter Steierhoffer** is Curator of Contemporary Architecture at the CCA. She holds Master of Arts degrees in History of Art and Architecture from the Eötvös Loránd University, and in Curating Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art, London. She is completing her PhD in Critical and Historical Studies at the RCA in London on the history of display strategies and exhibitions of architecture. Steierhoffer was Curator of the Art Network Agency in London (2009-2012) and organised a number of exhibitions with architectural foci, including *Zoo-topia: Zoo Architecture as Taxonomies of Representation* (2012) and *Anatomy of a Street* (2010) at the LFA in London. She was visiting lecturer at the Royal College of Art, and Assistant Professor of Art History at the Richmond University (2013 -2014).

## EXHIBITION AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

The concept of the exhibition installations was developed by the CCA curatorial team. The exhibition design was created by Canadian graphic designer **Sean Yendrys**. He received his MFA from Yale University, and currently teaches typography at Parsons The New School. Based between New York City and Montreal, his recent clients have included Bard Center for Curatorial Studies, Columbia GSAPP, Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, and Princeton Architectural Press.

## RELATED PUBLIC PROGRAMS

On the exhibition opening day, a **lecture by Álvaro Siza** with an introduction by **Mirko Zardini** will mark the opening of the exhibition *Corner, Block, Neighbourhood, Cities. Álvaro Siza in Berlin and The Hague*. The public lecture will take place on **Thursday 24 September at 6 pm** in the Paul Desmarais Theatre.

Architect, educator and researcher **Nelson Mota** will give a lecture entitled **Álvaro Siza's Archaeology of the Ordinary: The welfare state and politics of urban renewal in 1980s Europe**. It will take place on **Thursday 26 November at 6 pm** in the Paul Desmarais Theatre.

## ABOUT THE CCA

In July 2014, Álvaro Siza decided to donate a large part of his architectural archive to the CCA in order to foster discussion and dialogue in a research-oriented context. He also donated specific project archives to the Fundação Gulbenkian and Fundação de Serralves in Portugal. The CCA is collaborating with these institutions on consistent cataloguing, research and related programming in relation to Siza and his work.

The CCA is an international research centre and museum founded in 1979 on the conviction that architecture is a public concern. Based on its extensive collection, the CCA is a leading voice in advancing knowledge, promoting public understanding, and widening thought and debate on architecture, its history, theory, practice and role in society today. The CCA offers a unique environment dedicated to the study and presentation of architectural thought and practice, where the work of Álvaro Siza will be available for advanced research in the context of the other international archives of Ábalos & Herreros, Foreign Office Architects, Peter Eisenman, Arthur Erickson, John Quentin Hejduk, Gordon Matta-Clark, Cedric Price, Aldo Rossi, James Stirling and the collection of project archives related to *Archaeology of the Digital*.

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