

Johan
Anrys

(51N4E)

URBAN INTIMACY

51N4E

Porto Academy '13

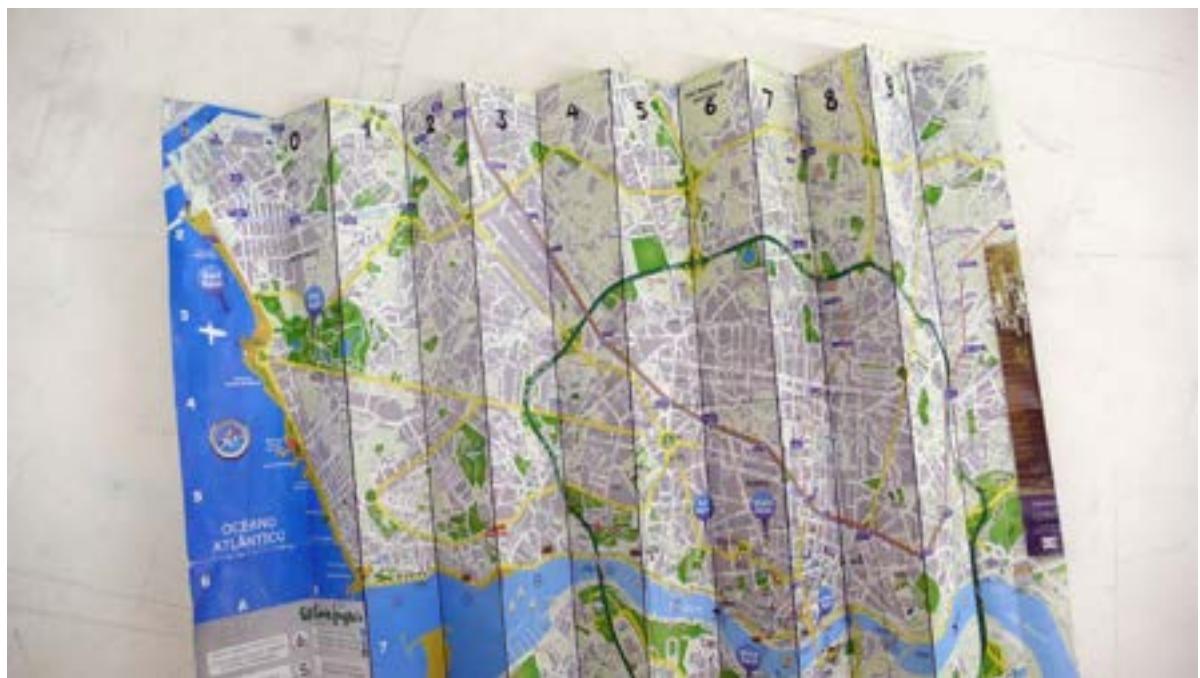
Somewhere we unlearned how to appropriate our public space. Following formal regulations, we arrange it mainly functional and efficient.

In this studio we are looking past the brief, towards the poetic, the human and the surreal in the constructing of our common space.

By our movements, our imagination and our rituals we share with others what we expect from life. The buildings and all the smart constructions we create are testimonies of a personal engagement in our shared environment.

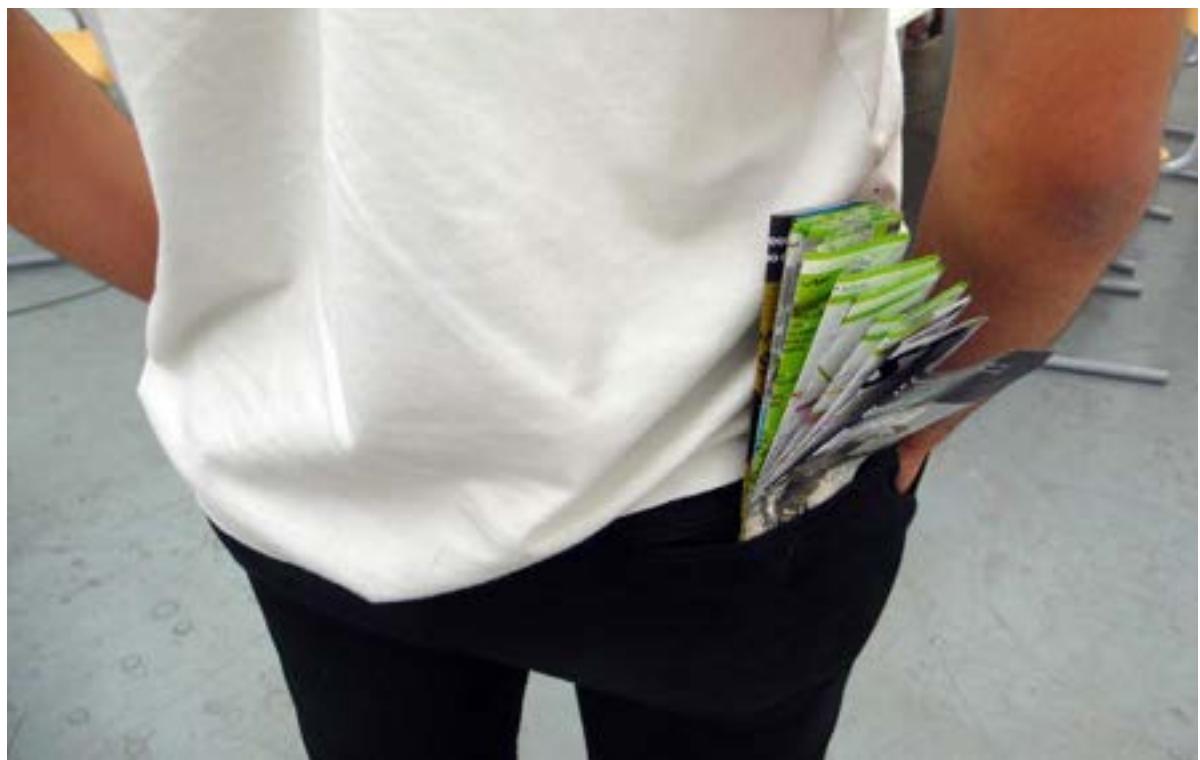
We are in search of a lexicon of how people give meaning to their own intimate lives by relating it to the public space and vice versa.

The Urban Intimacy index is a compendium for designers who aim for an architecture that is not self-referential but has the capacity to construct our urban intimate world. To give meaning to how we relate to others.

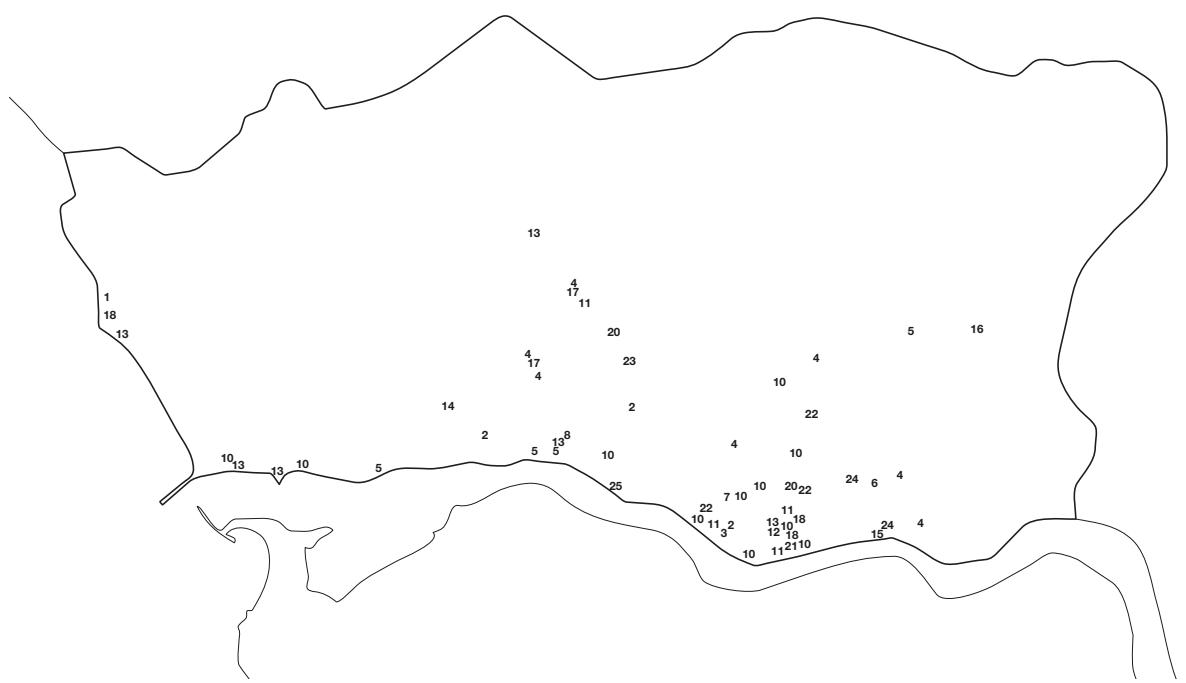


THE STUDIO

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- 1 POP-UP SHELTERS**
- 2 FLEETING GATEWAYS**
- 3 PUTTING IT OUT ON THE STREET**
- 4 ANTE CHAMBER**
- 5 GUERILLIA GARDENING**
- 6 CLAIRE/OBSCURE**
- 7 URBAN PAINTING**
- 8 FRAMED VIEWS**
- 9 STOOPS**
- 10 WELL(NESS)**
- 11 NARROW STREET**
- 12 SOUNDSHAPES**
- 13 FREE FOR INTERPRETATION**
- 14 CACOPHONY OF CORNERS**
- 15 LAUNDRY PLACES**
- 16 FREE RULES**
- 17 ENCLOSED HOUSE, RAISED ENTRANCE**
- 18 SEX & THE CITY**
- 19 THE CITY AS A STAGE**
- 20 SPATIALITY OF LIGHT**
- 21 URBAN CLOUDS**
- 22 WALL RETAINED SPACE**
- 23 SALDOS! HALF TIME SLEEPING PLACES**
- 24 RUINS**
- 25 TERRAIN VAGUE**

POP-UP SHELTER

1



The beach. A place where people simply like to go. Somehow it makes them feel good, whether because of the sun, because of the horizon, because of the melanin injections on their blood while getting a tan or just because of the water and sand and the infinite possible activities that naturally creates. In the summer people just flood them with their belongings and their naked bodies. But how do they create their intimacy in the middle of this chaos?

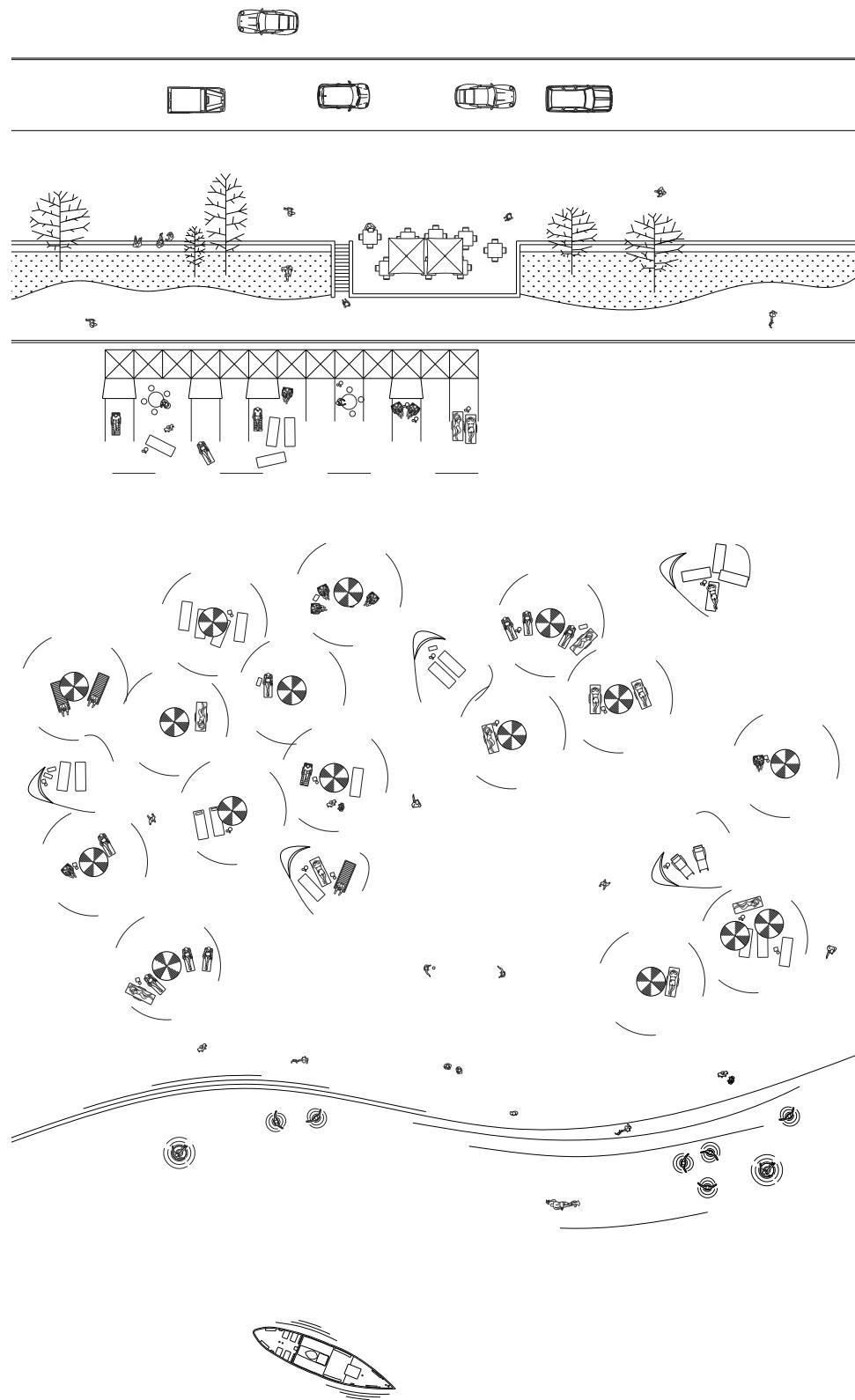
There are different ways that people interact and behave within this environment, that sometimes harsh, oblige them for protection. Strong sun, blowing wind, indiscrete eyes, disturbing sounds. It's this need of protection that invisibly will create their intimate spaces and boundaries. Where to go, where to go through...what defines that this piece of sand it's ours and which peace of sand it's yours? Is it the nature of your shelter?

Maybe.

Beach dwellings: tents, wind-shears, sunshades, what at first glance seems just a basic need of take shelter it's actually a pop-up complex system of public space appropriation in an intimate and unusual way.

POP-UP SHELTER

1



FLEETING GATEWAYS

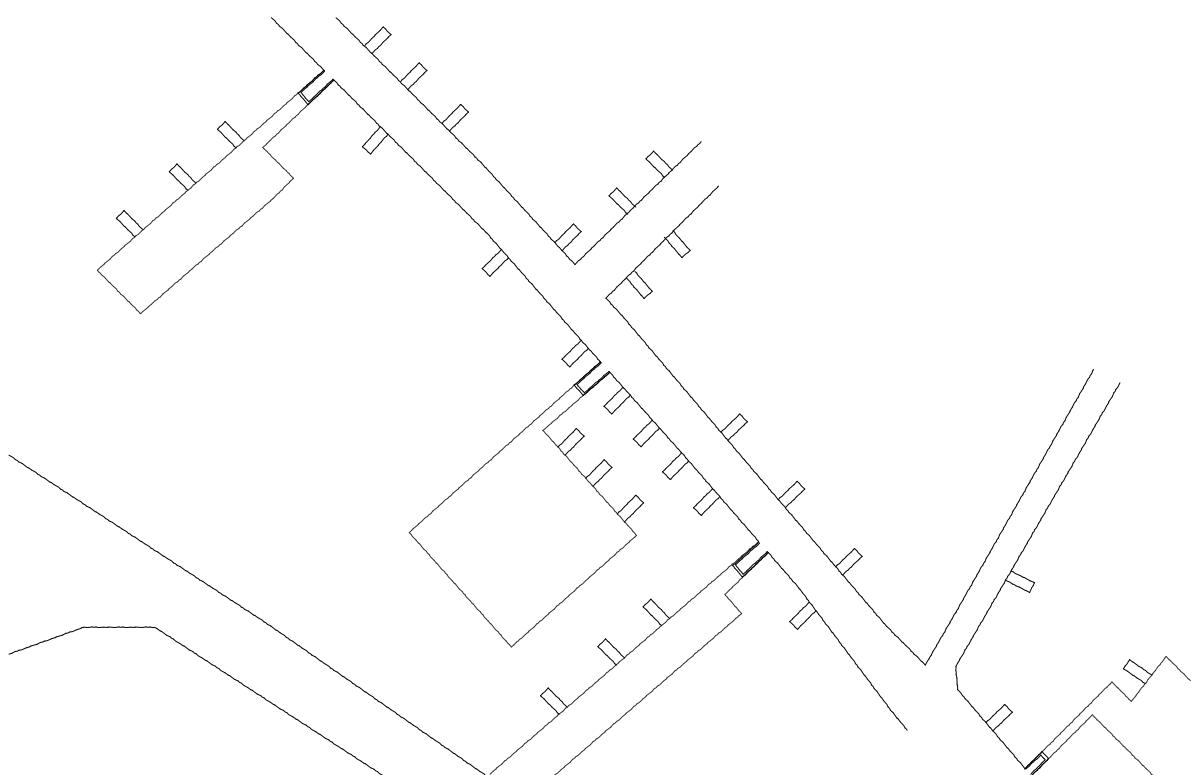
2



The gateway is an ambiguous element that separates, but at the same time unites two places with different characteristics, as it permits the transition from a open and public reality to a more intimate one. The threshold, there-fore, works both as a visual and psychological filter since its unclear presence determinates two places with different qualities that otherwise would be one: although the spaces opposite to the threshold are both open, the one that is be-yond the threshold instinctively assumes a more intimate and cozy feature, an open air shelter to escape the chaos of the city. Paradoxically the city itself becomes more familiar as it is preceded by the gateway. The framing of each potential reality makes one wonder and allows you to fantasize about what's on the other side of the threshold. Walking through the city constantly stimulates one's curiosity: it is difficult to resist the temptation to only look at the threshold and not cross it, but it feels like there is an invisible guard-ian preventing you to cross it.

FLEETING GATEWAYS

2



FLEETING GATEWAYS

2



PUTTING IT OUT ON THE STREET

3



Extended living spaces

People are furnishing the public space in order to create an informal atmosphere within the strictly organized city life. By setting up a barbecue with a table set in front of the door to enjoy late summer evenings, or a chair and a small library inviting passers-by to take a seat and read a book in front of a little antique shop, casual situations are created on various spots around Porto.

Sometimes the sidewalk and street are treated as a prolongation of the interior space, with a purpose of appropriation of the shared public space. Sometimes these situations turn up spontaneously, wherever and whenever there is a lack of formal, official solutions.

Both cases bring the everydayness to the street, a way for inhabitants to occupy the city and establish a relation with their territory. In such a context, the boundaries between what is private and what is public are blurred. The distinction of what belongs to one individual, to a family or to the community is difficult to recognize from the outside and it varies, according to time and particular situations.

PUTTING IT OUT ON THE STREET

3



ANTECHAMBER

4



Antechamber means the ‘room before’, is a smaller space serving as an entryway into a larger one.

In Porto we can find this kind of space in some residential buildings, where a series of outdoor spaces walk you from the street through the house.

In this gap the spaces are different levels terraces, courtyards, gardens and exterior stairs.

On one hand these elements vary the range of spaces of the house, on the other modify the relation with the street.

This is a transition space, the continuity of the facade is broken, but the intimacy is maintained.

ANTECHAMBER

4



GUERRILLA GARDEN

5



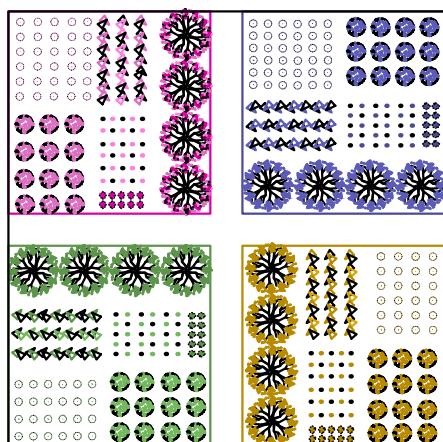
Cities have often green areas and other spaces not built on the urban territory, perceived by one side as uncontrolled sites that makes them easily conquerable, on the other hand, as places overlooked and therefore not safe and not appreciated.

A good solution is not to consider the non-built as a residual space, but as an element capable of an active relationship with the urban context, giving it a function.

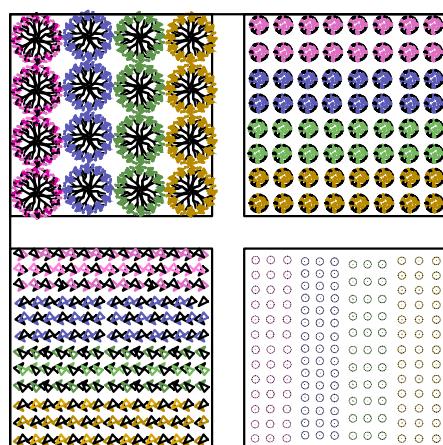
Given the necessity of self-production, the tendency is to occupy the unused land and cultivate it. The way this appropriation happens is very simple and spontaneous.

GUERRILLA GARDEN

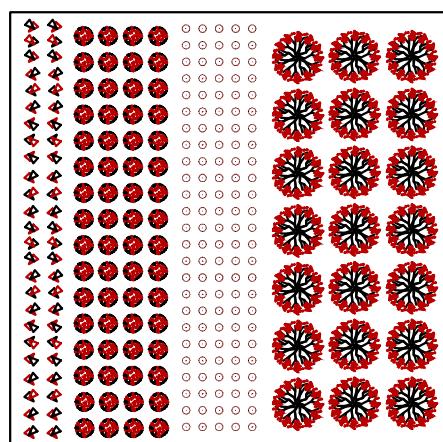
5



Typology 1
Each owner has a part of the plot.



Typology 2
Each owner has a different vegetable in each part of the property.
This is so in order to use the ground in a more efficient way.



Typology 3
The owner has a public garden where people can buy vegetables.

GUERRILLA GARDEN

5



CLAIRE/OBSCURE

6

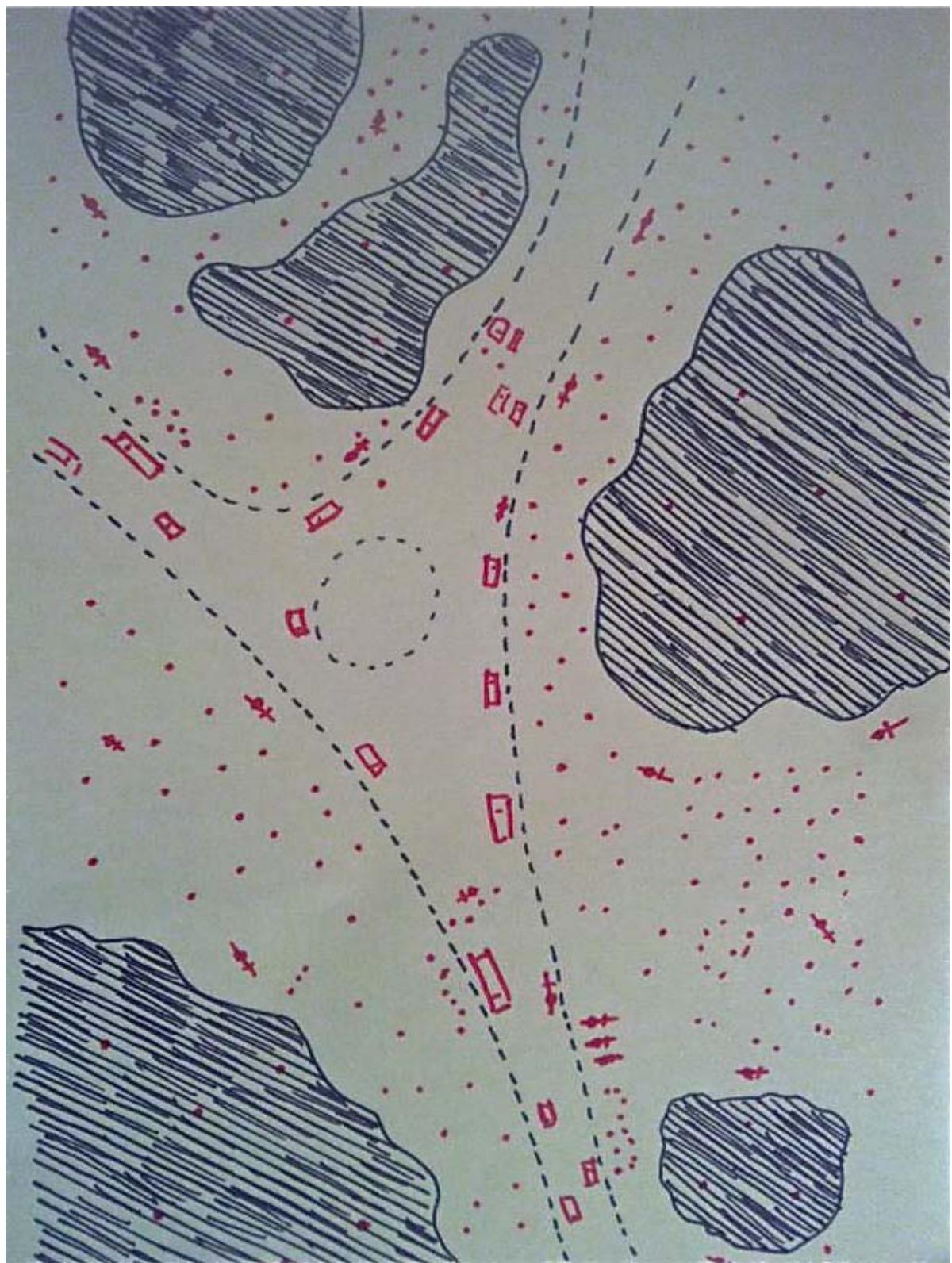


Finding from the shadow what light cannot give us

“ One of the basic human requirements is the need to dwell, and one of the central human acts is the act of inhabiting, of connecting ourselves, however temporarily, with a place on the planet which belongs to us, and to which we belong.” Jun’ichiro Tanizaki

The association should not be necessarily made to a building, where we live our everyday lives, a place we feel as our own because we are used to it. In the vastness of our city, we tend to create little mind images of spaces where we felt protected and comfortable, and call them our places. But it is not that simple. We stand in the park, and through the trees we look at life running through the city in a different perspective. The high contrast creates a surreal scene: “Life happens in the light, you happen in the shadow. “ Memory is a dark place, reality is as bright as it can get. We create a memory of belonging based on what we feel when we are inside, composing our identity looking at the city as a scene. After these moments of inner calmness, we go back to the light, back to relating to the rest of the world.

CLAIRE/OBSCURE



URBAN PAINTING

7



Like the act of painting, the buildings of Porto form fragments of the city that together construct an urban artwork. The formation of this painting is a process of the individual using their private space to give meaning to the greater city.

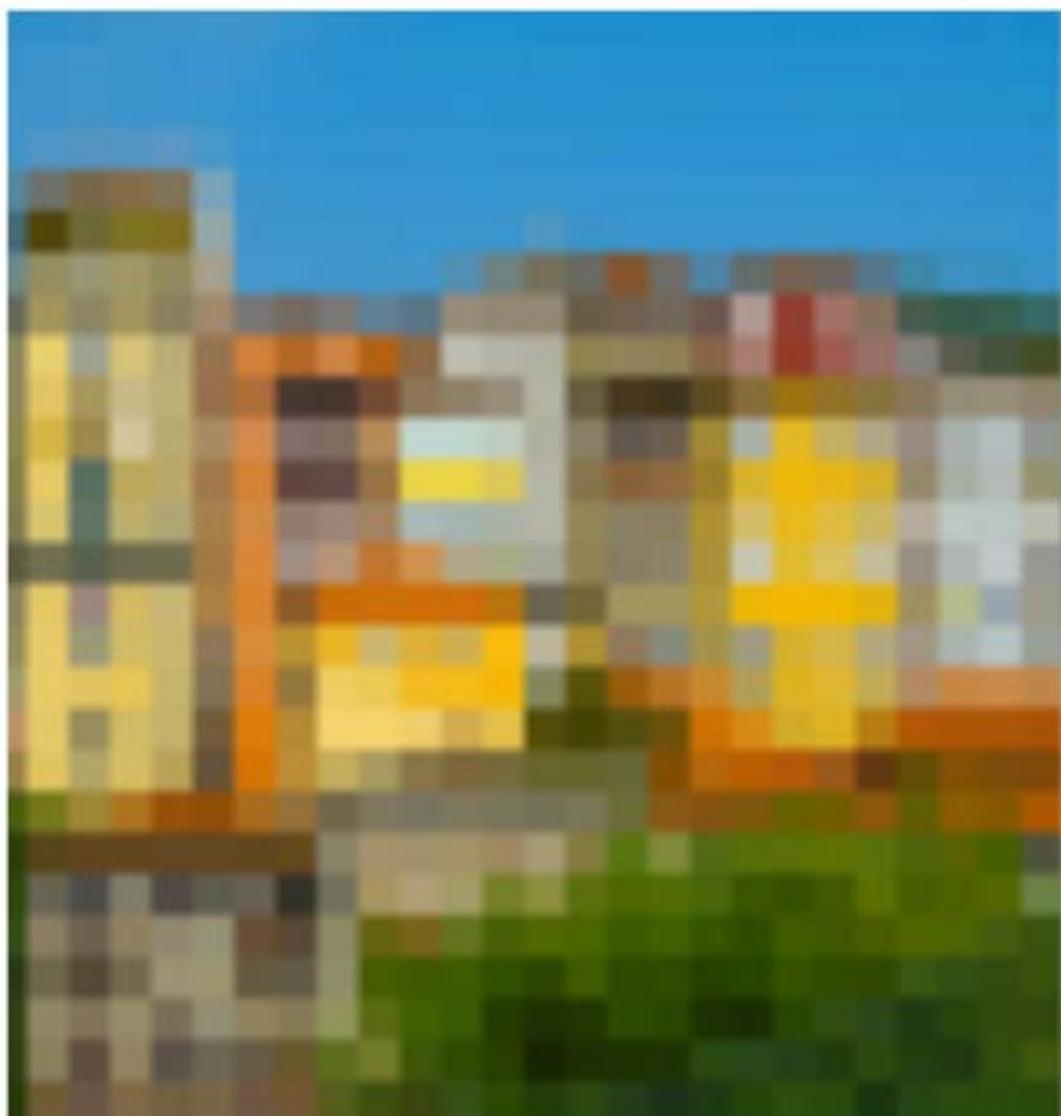
At an intimate scale the role of the individual building in creating the urban painting is insignificant, forming only a single pixel: a tiled façade, painted window frames or the rawness of the untouched surface. These elements form the palette from which the city is painted.

At the scale of the street the façade begins to speak of the personality of each building and develops a collage through the juxtaposition of surfaces and textures. Here, the public may begin to envisage the relevance of these surfaces in relation to the private lives that exist behind them.

At the scale of the city it is the combination of all these elements- the individual pixels- that create an urban painting. Pattern and coloured facades are scattered throughout the streets of Porto composing a chromatic and expressionistic city.

URBAN PAINTING

7



FRAMED VIEWS

8



FRAMED VIEWS

8



“It was like a seascape framed in white masonry, suspended from the blue sky opposite the terrace, revealing, in all the infinite varieties of colour and light, fleeting scenes of peaceful river life.... glimpsed one moment and gone the next, as if swallowed by the uncertain sea; or even, for days at a time....” The Maias,

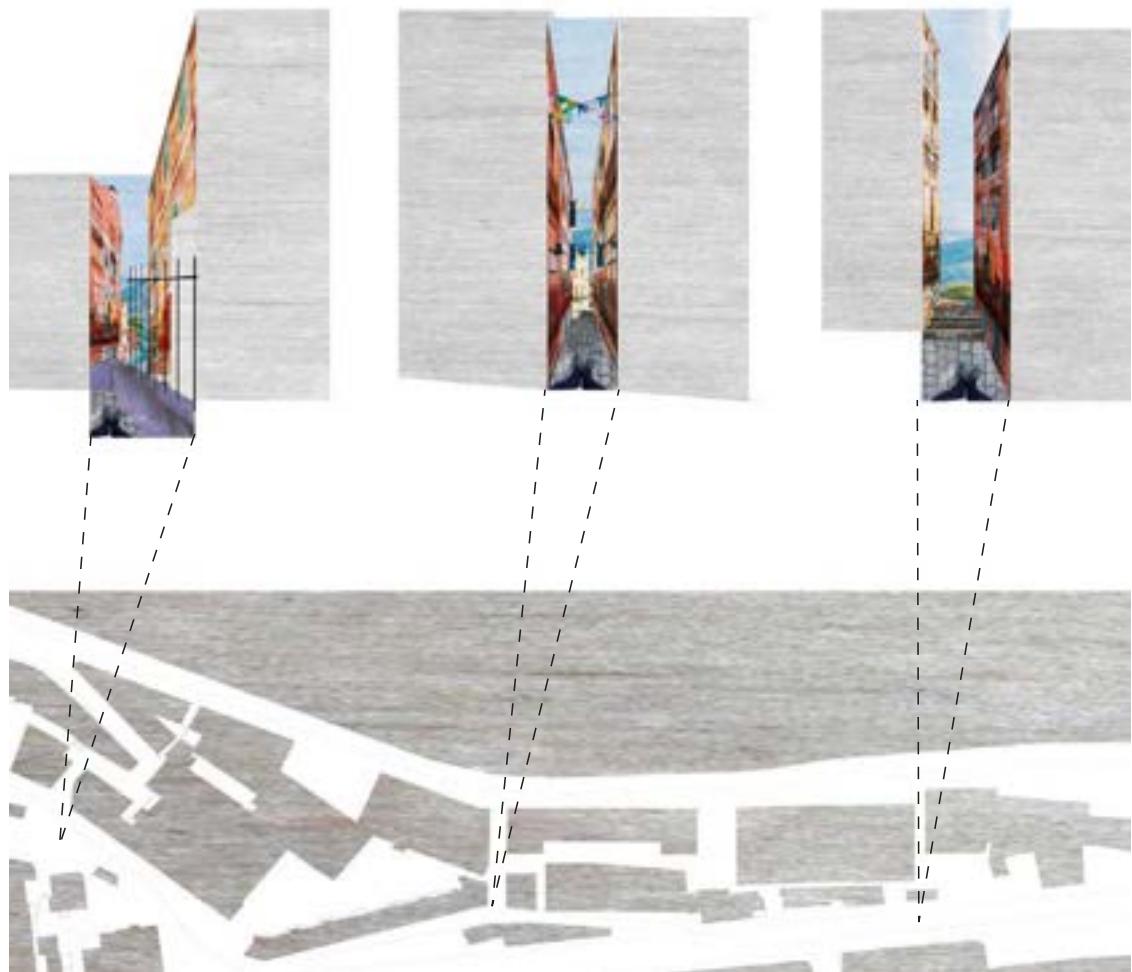
The New York Times, 2008

Sited along the elevated promenades of Porto, shaped by the voids between buildings, there is a phenomenon of Framed Views. They are fragmented views of the distant eidetic landscape and appear as fractures between the compressed mass of the buildings. They offer space for the eyes to breath. However, they are not simply superficial images to consume, but scenes to be immersed in; a mental space in which we occupy and remove ourselves from the chaos of the city and project our gaze towards the horizon. Here, the city limits are realised and one may imagine what lies beyond the edge of the city.

From this vantage point both near and far become tangible and between this visual duality the individual may locate their body in space.

FRAMED VIEWS

8



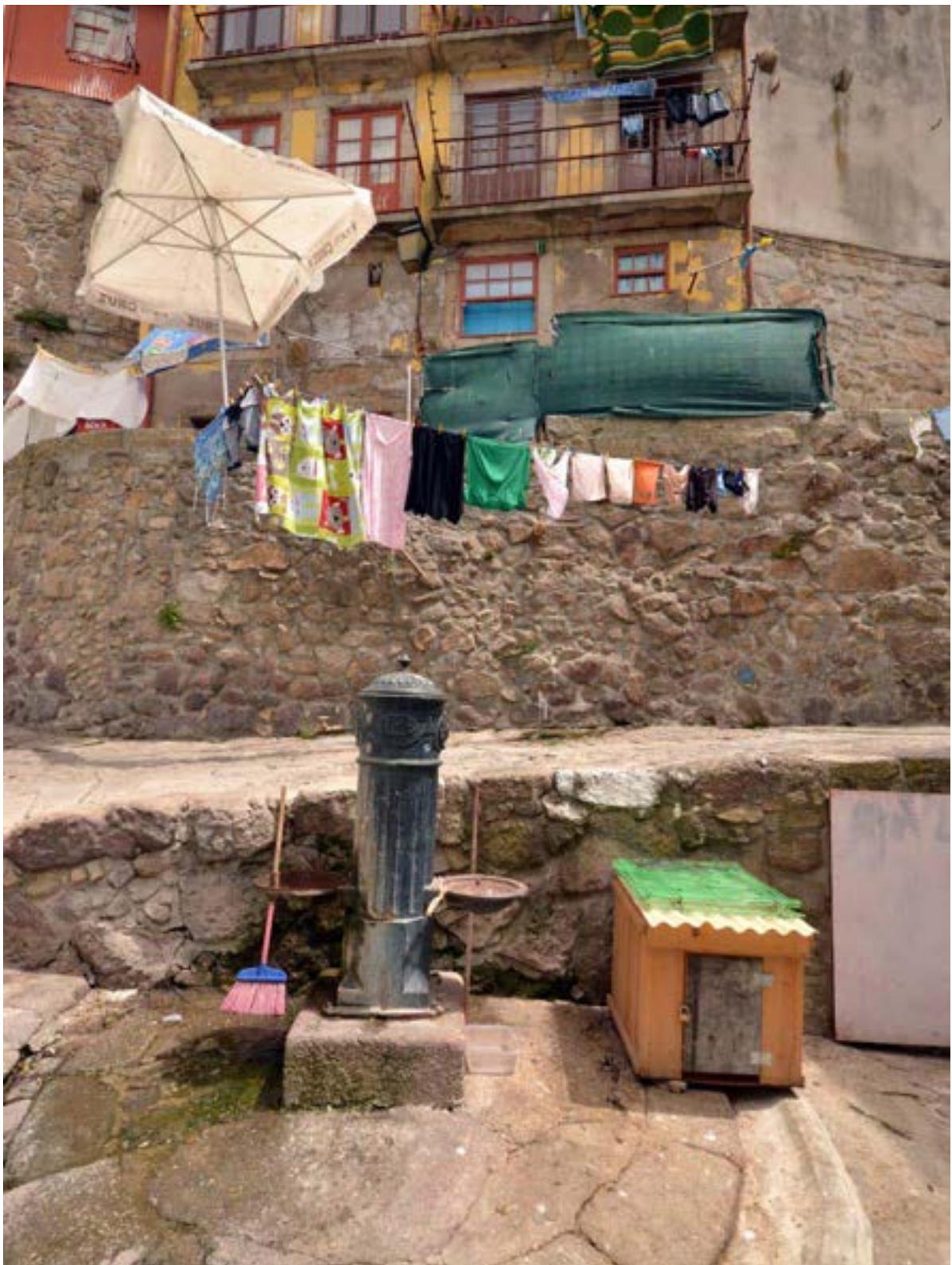
STOOPS

9



WEEL(NESS)

10



The Well becomes an import element of the public space because it works as a public supplier of water. This condition improves the well being that one can feel inside the city. As a consequence, it instigates a user-dependent relationship, becoming both an instrument to the everyday life of the common citizen and also an element of the public realm.

In this sense, the well unfolds a public life around it. For instance, people use it for their basic needs as doing the laundry, clean their own houses and their cars, or even to drink the water coming from it. Also the well it's open to new interpretations since people use it to take the occasional shower or as a pool when it's to hot in summer.

On the other hand, the existence of another water supply almost demands a sense of responsibility from the people that live nearby. Then a civic sense is created instigating the citizens to take care of the well as if it was their own. In the end, they also use the water that comes from it to clean the space around and the streets that they use.

The distribution of the well through the city becomes an element of the public space through their different shapes and sizes, ranging from a small steel piping or a proper baroque fountain. This way everybody identify it as being a part of a specific place of the city and part of a local culture. This creates a sense of awareness becoming a recognizable point of encounter between citizens inside the city or as merely as an iconic structure.

WEEL(NESS)

10



Pena Ventosa Square - Axonometric View

WEEL(NESS)

10



Aliados Avenue



Dr. Pedro Vitorino Square



Tareixa Vaz de Altaro Street

NARROW STREET

11



Confined to the space intramurals, narrow and not strait streets were created in the city of Porto.

These streets feature Porto's culture. When we explore them, we fell far from the city, where the sounds of cars are replaced by domestic sounds and smells.

The feeling of narrow streets is reinforced not only by slender buildings but also by projecting balconies beyond the facade plane. This makes a contrast of light and shadow, creating cold places but at the same time cosy.

The buildings create protrusions and recesses where the human eye gets inside this sinuosity and complexity.

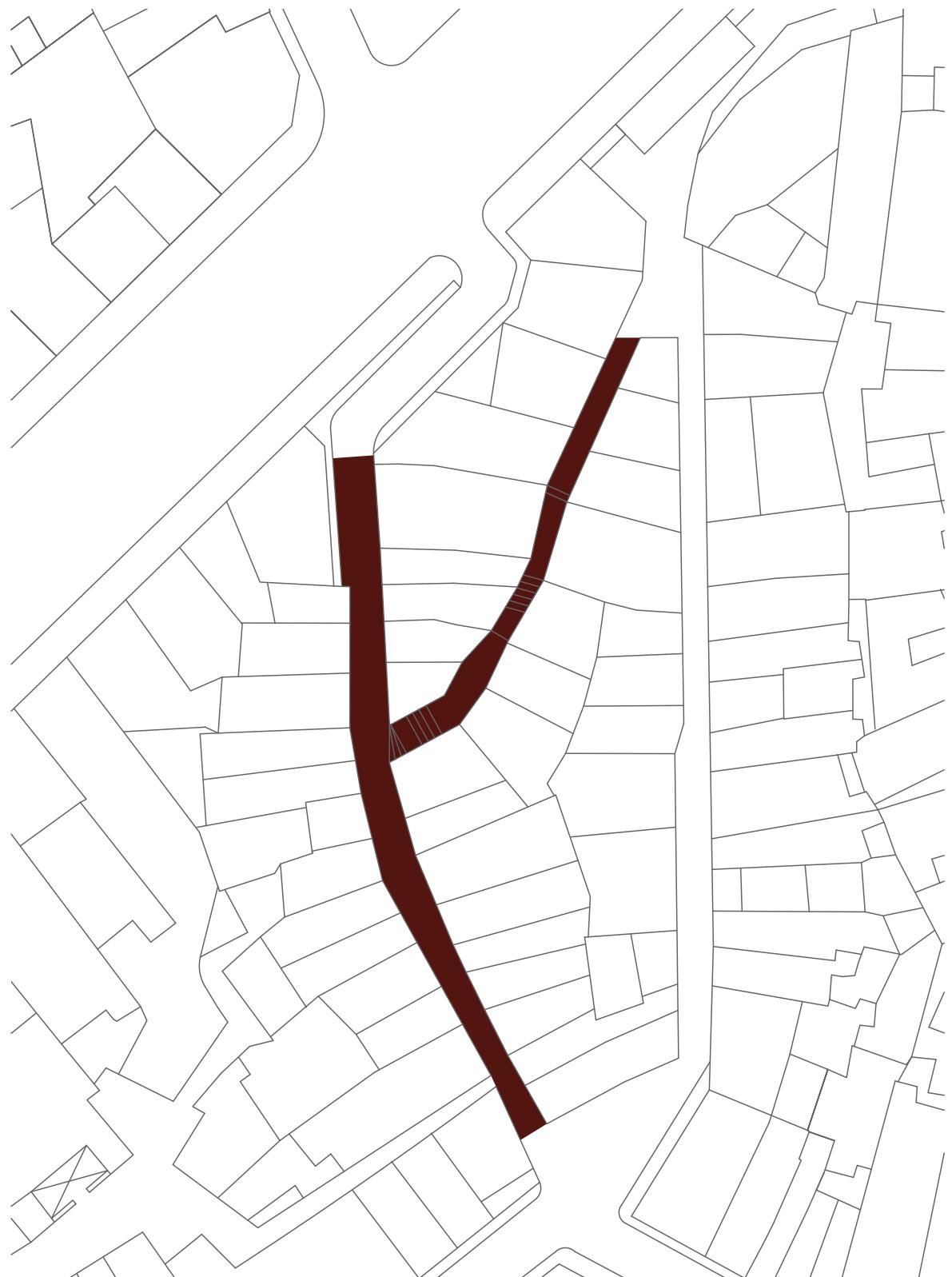
The buildings have different colors and create a mystical ambiance in contrast with typical granite stone harbor.

The fact that these have a reduced width, allows an intimate dialogue, encouraging residents to appropriate public space.

These streets go beyond the regular layout, creating a contrast between proximity and distance, light and shadow, stimulating the mystery and the discovery.

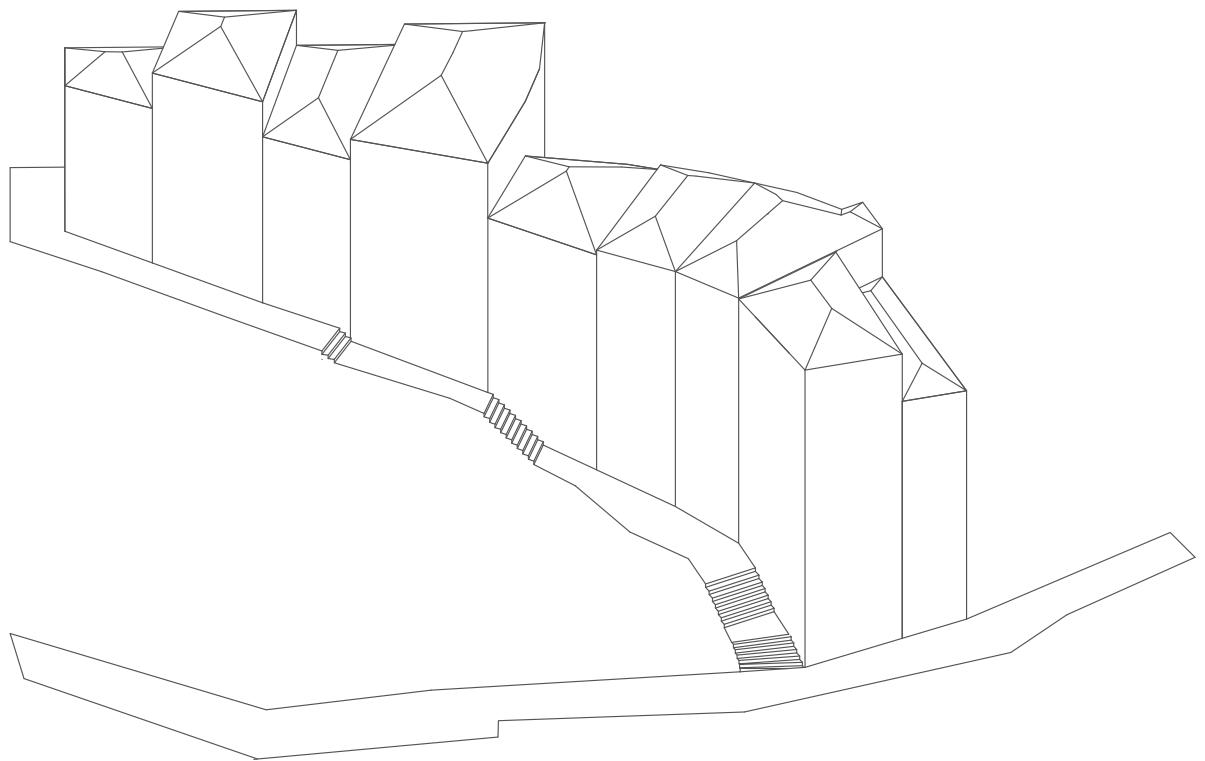
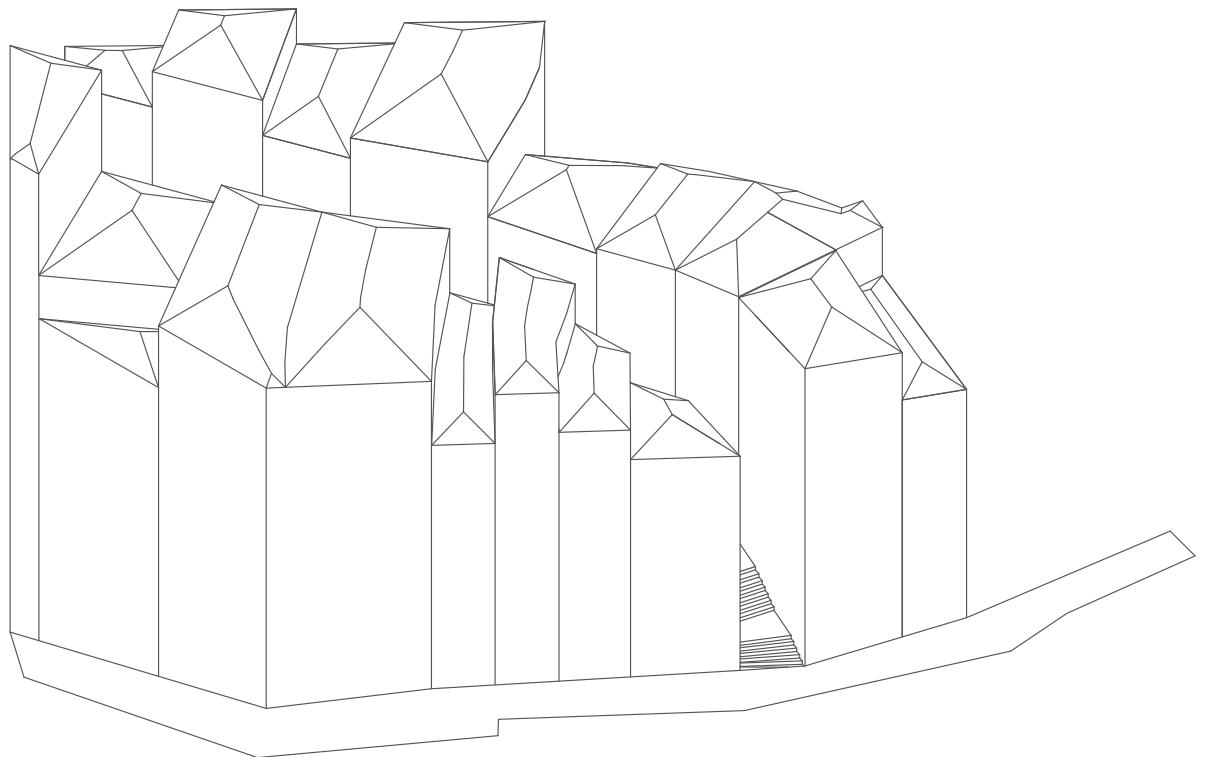
NARROW STREET

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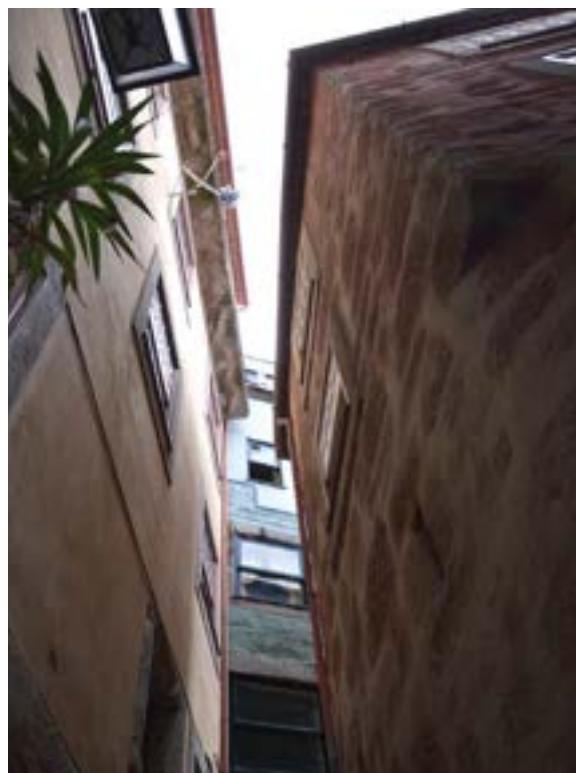
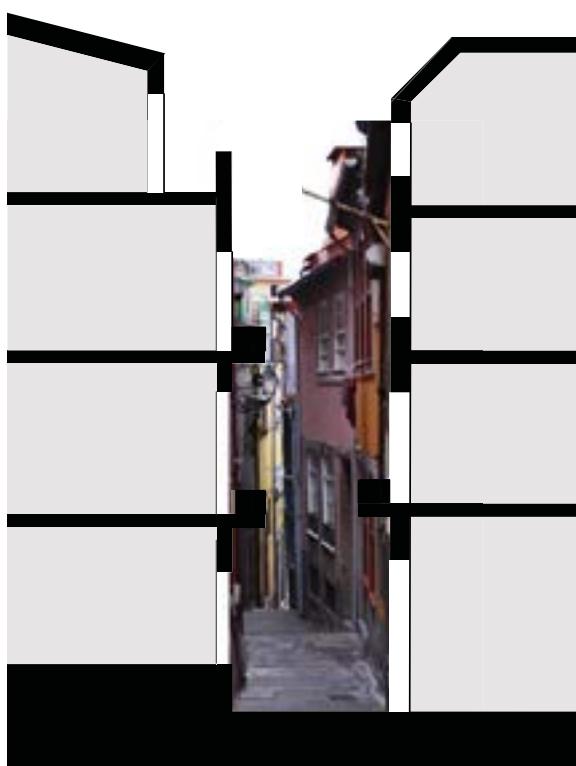
NARROW STREET

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NARROW STREET

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NARROW STREET

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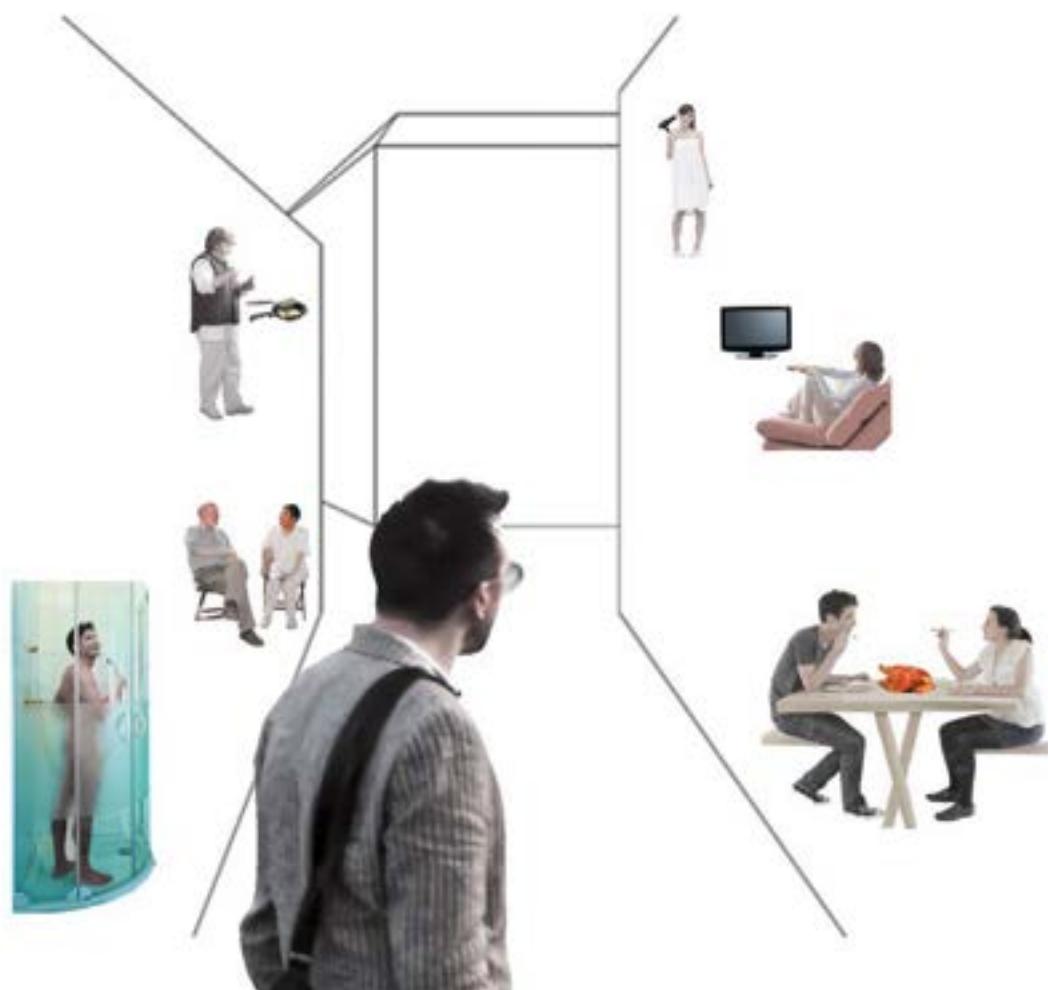




We found some places, walking around the city, where the sound of the daily activities of the neighbours of their buildings can be heard so clear it is almost like being inside their homes. Sounds of cooking, washing, talking or watching television invade the space between the facades. It happens especially in narrow streets, with no traffic and few visitors, where in summer people make their activities next to the open windows.

If the sound is quite sharp, it could even be like the facades disappear. All the space in between and behind becomes one only space, where public and private merges. Neighbours do their tasks in the same place that walkers cross.

Pedestrians can also feel like they are invading a private space. The street becomes through the sound a belonging of the neighbours, an extension of their home indoors.





“A moment of wit and whimsy ... both childlike and highly sophisticated in its simplicity, it stands as an assertion of the transforming power of the human imagination at a time when human values were under siege.”¹

-Eric Gibson describes the opera of Picasso's ‘Bull's Head’

It is about free interpretation.

Two old ladies sitting on the steps in front of their house, soaking up the sun.

Here steps relate the internal private life with the shared public life on the street. At the same time, they are reinterpreted as benches. It allows the inhabitants and passersby to stop and sit together, perhaps have a coffee and enjoy the sunshine.

Mixing personal pursuits with existing elements in the public space through reinterpretation, combine to create a new type of social life in which the value of the individual's experience increases in a simple way. For example, using the rocks on the beach as a meeting place, leaning against the sea barrier dam as if it were a sofa on which to read books, etc.

A perception of urban space no longer defined as an accumulation of building but rather as a set of social and human relationships determining the identity of location and the various elements in that space.²

¹ Gibson, Eric (16 April 2011). “A Magical Metamorphosis of the Ordinary”. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved 2012-10-21.

² Maurizio Bartolotti, Collective intimacy, the new urban community.

FREE FOR INTERPRETATION

13



FREE FOR INTERPRETATION

13



CACOPHONY OF CORNERS

14



A typical Porto neighbourhood, hides beneath its the twist and turns a cobbled street with a colourful and vibrant corner. Up on a steep hill overlooking the river Douro, sharp turns and narrow walls slowly unveils the changes of the perspective. The street, never reviling completely bounces the eco of the cobbled street against the narrow walls, there are people ahead. A gulp of air and light it is finally released at the meeting of the corners. A bar at the intersection takes advantage of the sun hitting the front facade, and extends to the street, placing some chairs for an afternoon gathering. The perfect location to meet with friends, on a secluded street with panoramic views. These corners are the opposite of orthogonal, and more like a combination of all different corners coming together to create a shared space.

CACOPHONY OF CORNERS

14



CACOPHONY OF CORNERS

14





Every city have essential needs, such as hygiene. But the laundry place does not only provide clean clothes. It is a place of communication, an important part of the every-day life of the community. Every neighborhood has its own laundry, which becomes an extension of one's home to take care of. As a reversed sock, the interior is revealed to the community. Washing clothes is a ritual process made up of precise steps, repeated as a ritual and requiring concentration. But everything is thought to speed up this process and to make it as comfortable as possible. Wash basins are sunk in the sloping pavement at a lower level to let the water flow, the shared thread to hang is near of them, high roof make the air pass and dry clothes. Using a laundry is connected to wellness, both physical and spiritual. As a temple of hygiene, the laundry allows the transition from dirty to clean, not only of the clothes, but of the soul as well. The toil of the work somehow recalls the penitence after the confession of the sin. This purifying effect acts as a social gatherer. The position above the riverside allows the view of the beautiful landscape, the final redemption.

LAUNDRY PLACES

15



LAUNDRY PLACES

15





The 20% of Porto's city center houses are abandoned. Some of them are locked, but in other cases, after a long time being neglected, its doors and windows have been opened, so people from the street can get inside.

From the street, we can still see the façade, floors, and maybe some beams or walls. Sometimes, there is evidence that people enter in and use those spaces, as we can see their belongings inside.

In this case, the abandoned building is used again in a private way.

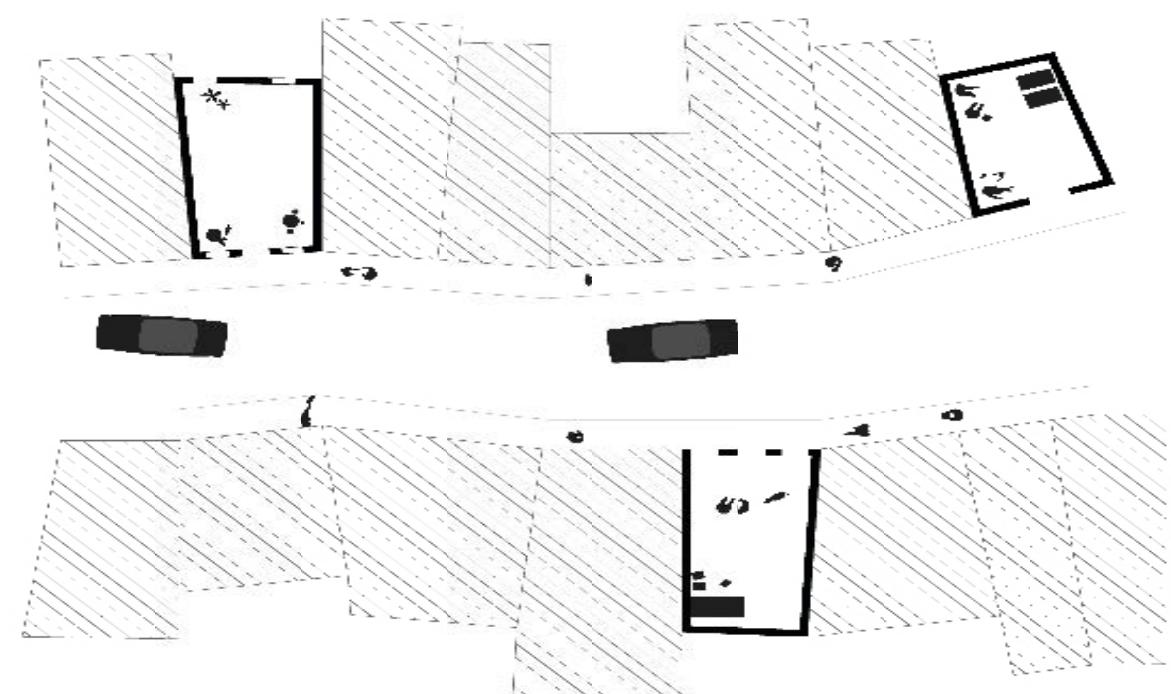
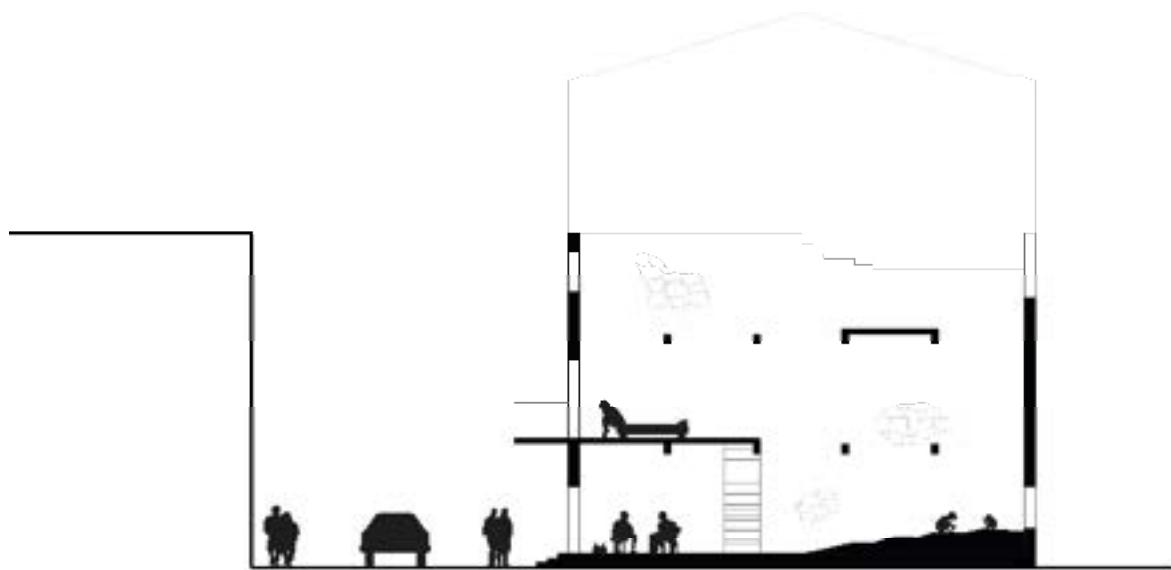
On the other hand, we can find cases in which people use those places just temporarily, as if they were part of the street. We found an example of this situation in which a child used a closed shop as a stage.

When this circumstance happens, the space that was a private property becomes part of the street, increasing and changing its surface.

In conclusion, we can say that the street is always in motion, changing its characteristics by including new spaces which will be used as unrestricted, but in a more intimate way.

FREE RULES

16



FREE RULES

16



ENCLOSED HOUSE, RAISED ENTRANCE

17



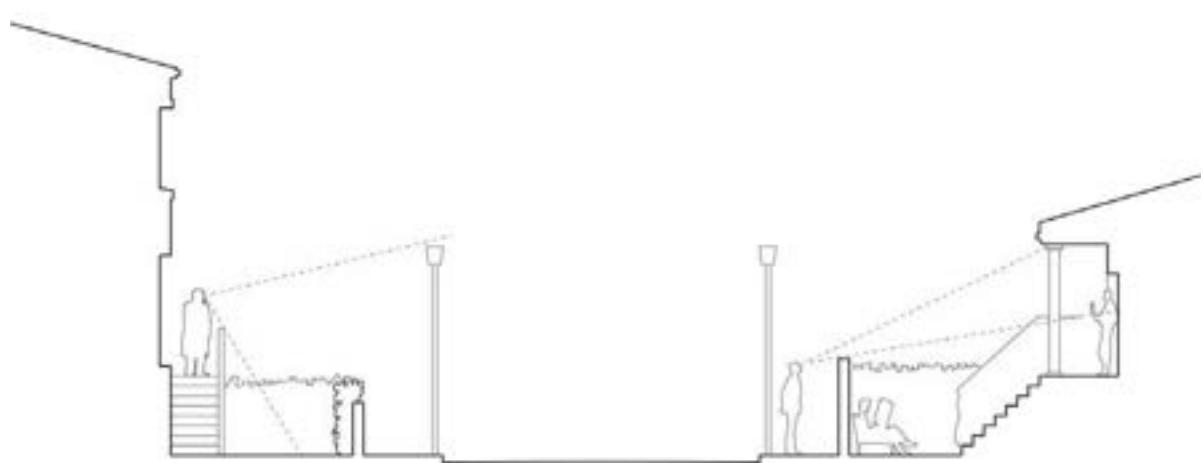
The houses stand alone on the grass, as free standing objects in the landscape ; isolated by walls, fences and bushes. Upper-class or even rich residences, the physical boundaries define the owner status. The garden is kept secret, hidden behind the house and only the front side is visible to the passer-by. The entrance is set back and raised, away from the street and detached from the ground by a handful of steps.

As a watch tower, the building rises above common ground, controlling access to the garden and movement in the street. Elevated, voices and eyes pass over the fence, allowing the inhabitants to stop their walk for a talk.

Blurring the frontier between out and in, the doorstep provides more than a simple threshold, it is the keeper of human contact, a visual and oral bridge between isolated houses. Sometimes it appears as a theater of exits and entrances, displaying the owner's « mondaine » life. In the view of the street, guests are invited to pass the fence, climb the stairs and enter the owner's privacy.

ENCLOSED HOUSE, RAISED ENTRANCE

17



ENCLOSED HOUSE, RAISED ENTRANCE

17

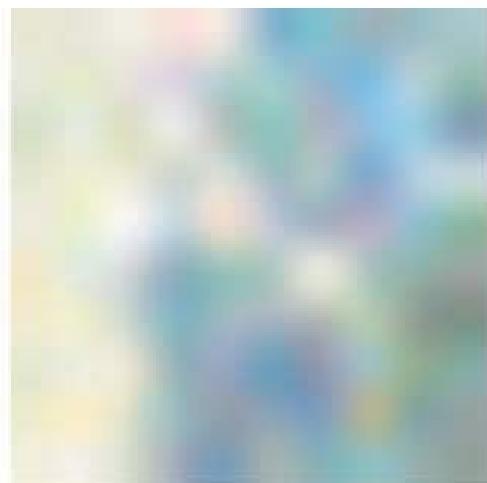




Talking about proxemics, the intimate distance ranges from skin contact to eighteen inches away. This is the distance of physical involvement of love, comfort and tenderness between individuals. The public distance extends from twelve feet to twenty-five feet or more. This range tends to be formal and rather detached. In the background of the Sé Catedral do Porto, one among the most formal and representative space of the city, a couple of young super blonde tourists are snogging each other with sensible ardor. In a space where the compression is completely absent and your gaze is potentially all-encompassing they are looking for a clearly vain visual shelter from the itchy curiosity of the others. Libido as a space demand. The difference between the human scale in comparison with the monumentality of the historical building provides them anonymity, while the picturesque panorama from the railing of the belvedere and the kinetic/third worldist show by the children diving into the fountain (a super folkish little theater) offers them a good diversion to vent their implacable amorous impulses. To undermine the manic and surgical precision of urban rituals to disappear into magnitude. Love is a matter of scale.

SEX & THE CITY

18

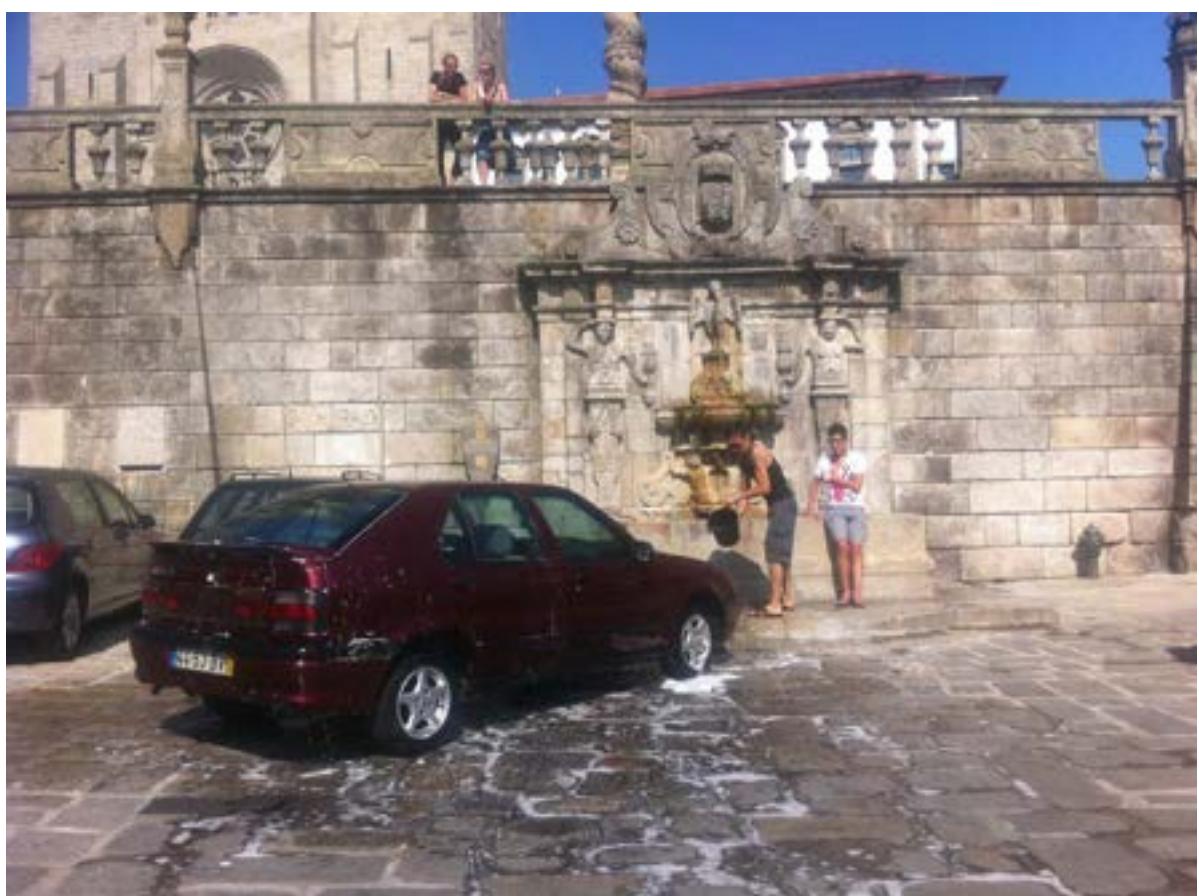






THE CITY AS A STAGE

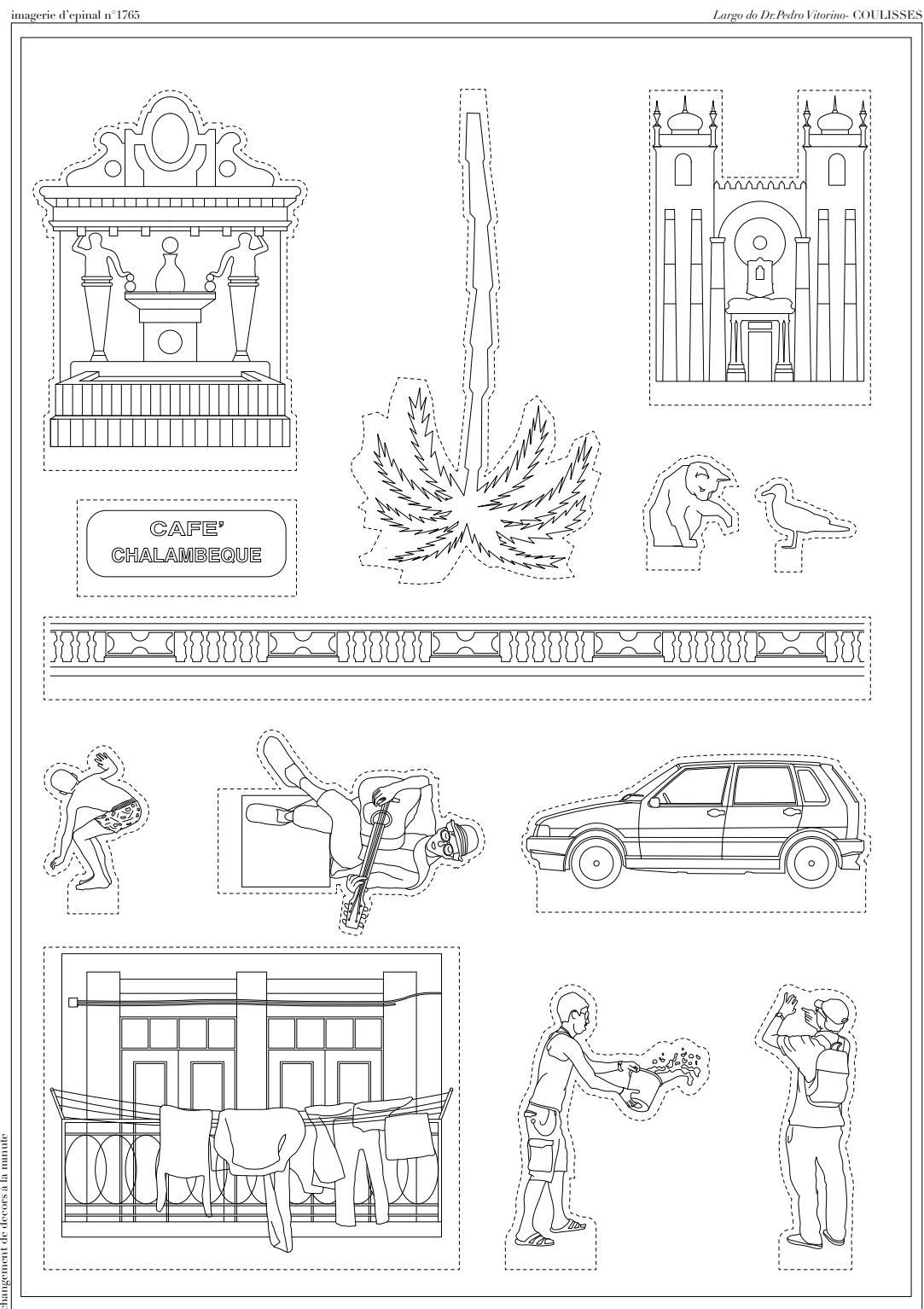
19



When in 1925 Walter Benjamin describes his trip to Naples, he talks about a porous city where public and private blurs in an endless theatre and buildings keep throwing up what they are hiding. In the attempt to read Porto, we need to avoid the easy folklore of squalor and its insipid sentimentalism, limitating ourselves to give a name to the things we see. Putting things in order, investigating the capability of the city to generate peculiar moment in which scrambled pieces of life get together creating unexpected but totally coherent theatrical piece. Walking down the ramp from the cathedral to Largo do Dr.Pedro Vitorino, you get trapped in a proper open air workshop. What at a first glance seems an occasional car wash proves to be a permanent activity. The boss of the garage, followed by his faithful assistant, frantically keeps washing the cars of lazy people that wait for their turn drinking and joking. This is only the preamble of a play that unfolds itself to the eyes of delighted tourists, in ecstasy by the possibility to capture a real “souvenir”. An encased square as the perfect scene, cracked façades of buildings as wings, Fado as the soundtrack.

THE CITY AS A STAGE

19



SPATIALITY OF LIGHT

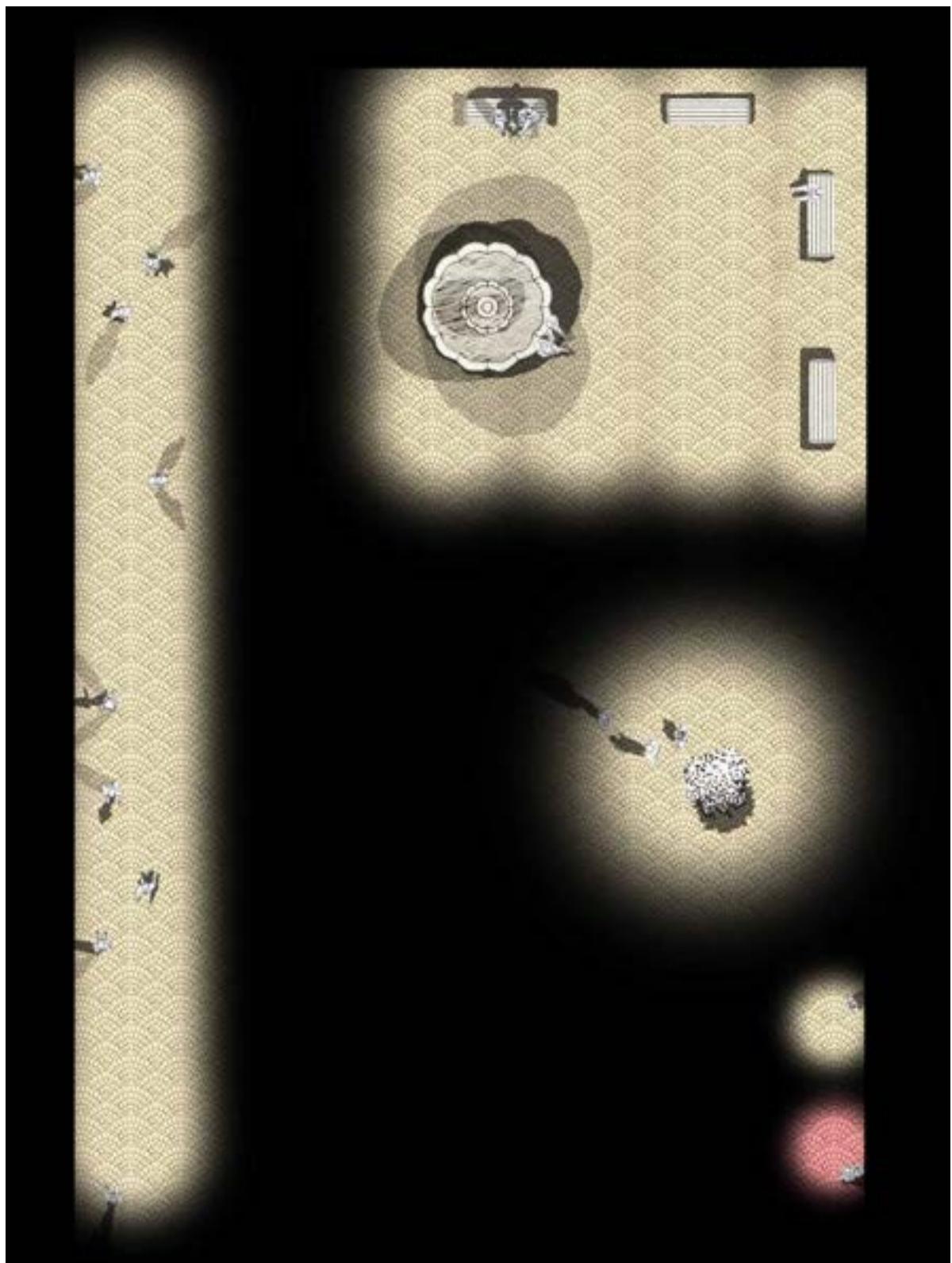
20



Day light (receiveid from the sun) and artificial night light shape differently the urban space. Though we understand that during day shadow offers us freshness and containement while light warms us and reveils the details, it remains to perceive trustingly (further than the feeling of safety lit spaces give) how people deal with urban spaces during night concerning how much light these receive. The light from lamps is more “concentrated” than sun light , and often we find spaces that during day we would perceive as unified and that over night are split by light in different zones, some more enlightened and thus colorful and others more shadowed and faded. The most illuminated places seem to be specific rooms designed by light, to which people are attracted due to its spacial definition. Light is thus a structural element of night spaces, so we shouldn't treat it flatly but more thoughtfully, designing, for example and as an alternative to the too homenegious illuminated streets, differentiated spaces from which people could choose and that would compose poetic composition of light and shadow values. Fundamentally, it seems nothing happens in the shadow, instead we dwell in the light.

SPATIALITY OF LIGHT

20



LAUNDRY PLACES

15



SPATIALITY OF LIGHT

20



URBAN CLOUDS

21



URBAN CLOUDS

21



In some neighborhoods of Porto the buildings are so dense that if you look at the sky you can identify different shapes.

These are created by the contrast between the darkness of the narrow streets and the light of the sky. What forms these sky-shapes is not only the buildings but the combination of different elements as roofs, windows and open blinds, clothes hanged on the laundry line, electric cables, antennas, trees, plants on the balconies and people talking to each other from one window to the other.

The complex geometries recount the considerable pressure of the space, giving a reassuring relief to the compactness of the city.

The gaze scrolls from one corner to the other unable to focus on a specific detail and the light gives an acoustic refuge from the noise of the traffic.

Different sensations are offered to the spectator that finds himself underneath this composition of frames which is, therefore, the beautiful ceiling of Porto.

URBAN CLOUDS

21



WALL RETAINED SPACE

22



The topography of some cities, such as Oporto, creates level differences that have to be sustained, i.e., the ground hills that compose those differences have to be enclosed by retaining walls. We can find, detached from sloped circulation spaces or just higher or lower than busy platforms, stable and enclosed places that are justified by the level differences and limited by at least one (stone) anonymous wall. Furthermore, when streets follow those differences, sometimes one goes down until it intersects aslant another. When there is just a retaining wall instead of a building on the “closed” corner of the intersection, that wall becomes a protective limit of the “pocket space” between the streets, free from the circulation zones. That apparently residual space becomes a well defined and inviting place, where people can stay embraced by the (usual curved) wall. The level difference also allows people to see it from above, from the upper street/platform, an example of a dynamic way of relating to the city, its spaces and its people.

WALL RETAINED SPACE

22



SALDOS! HALF TIME SLEEPING PLACES

23

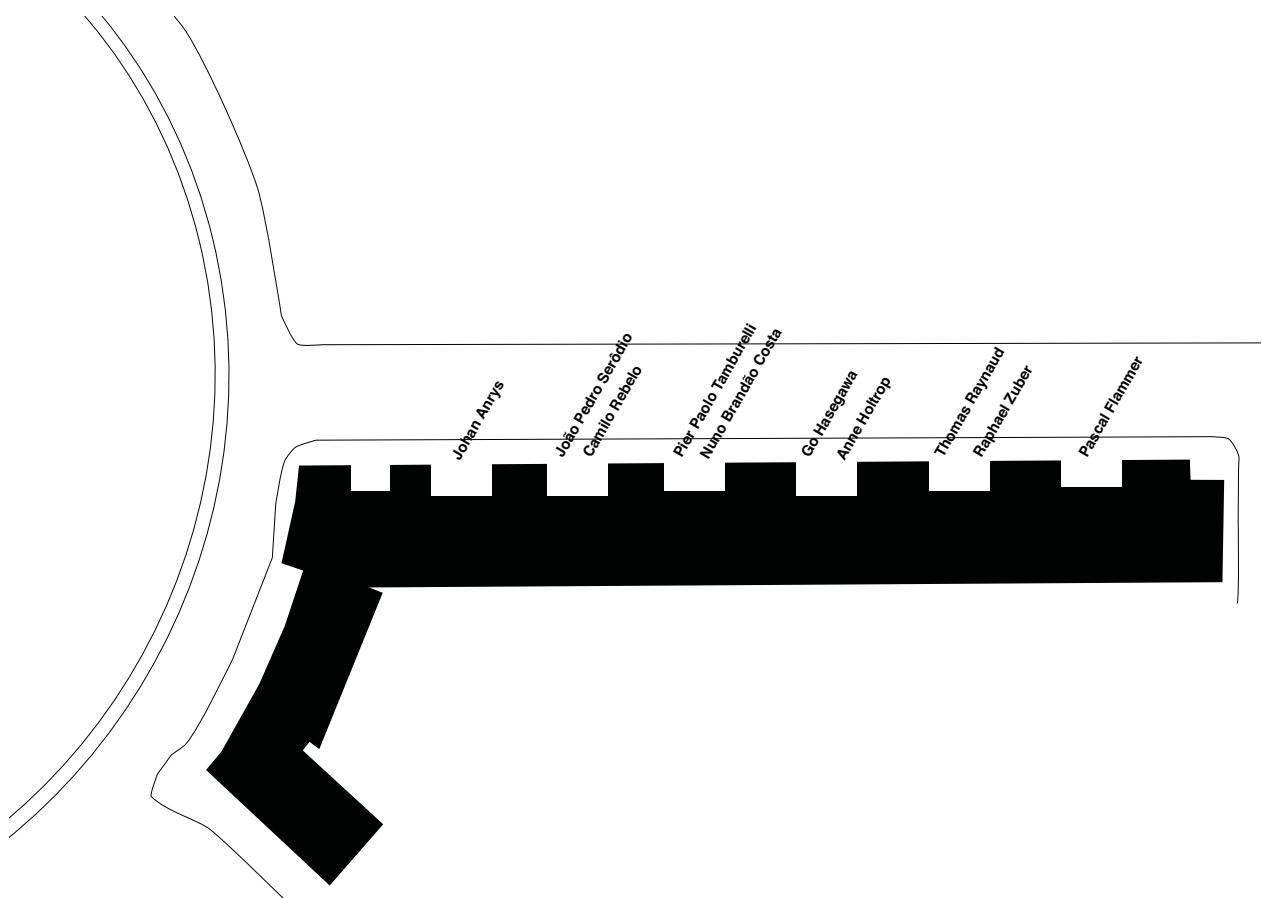


Allong Rua Julio Dinis, one of the arms of the Boavista roundabout, shops with large windows are displaying the latest trends or freshest products. Every couple of neighboring shops share a small covered entrance port with facing doors, including a third door accessing the apartment block above the shops. The cosy room created by this setting must have a considerable amount of people passing through everyday. During the night a whole different scenario is created: after wandering the streets all day, a group of homeless people set up their few belongings in order to pass the night in a more or less comfortable place.

With the approval of the shops, an (almost) flawless organization between day-use and these nightly settlements results in a constant changing use of the space. Being inhabited here becomes the result of a process of creation and re-creation carried out by the inhabitant, a process of adapting and re-adapting between space and society. We are being faced by a dynamics in which space is constantly created and re-created, a dynamics which itself defines the phenomenon of inhabiting.

SALDOS! HALF TIME SLEEPING PLACES

23





Walking in the street, I suddenly realize that this façade doesn't have any apartment behind. The windows don't have any glass, and I can actually see the sky through these frames.

It's a façade between the street and an empty space. I'm outside looking through a window to another outside space.

Absurdity of a reversed situation, Magritte feeling. But this empty space behind this screen is only afforded to my eyes; I cannot pass because the door is blocked.

This perforated screen creates a filter giving light to the street from the façade, which is a new situation. The façade is not anymore that strong separation. I'm suddenly in an inside space, in an intimate position, looking toward the city.

It becomes a casual interpretation of a landscape system commonly used in the Renaissance period, to frame the view in a garden or in a terrace of a villa. What's new here is to experience this in an urban concept.

This façade works first as an illusion and then as the memory image of the ruined building.

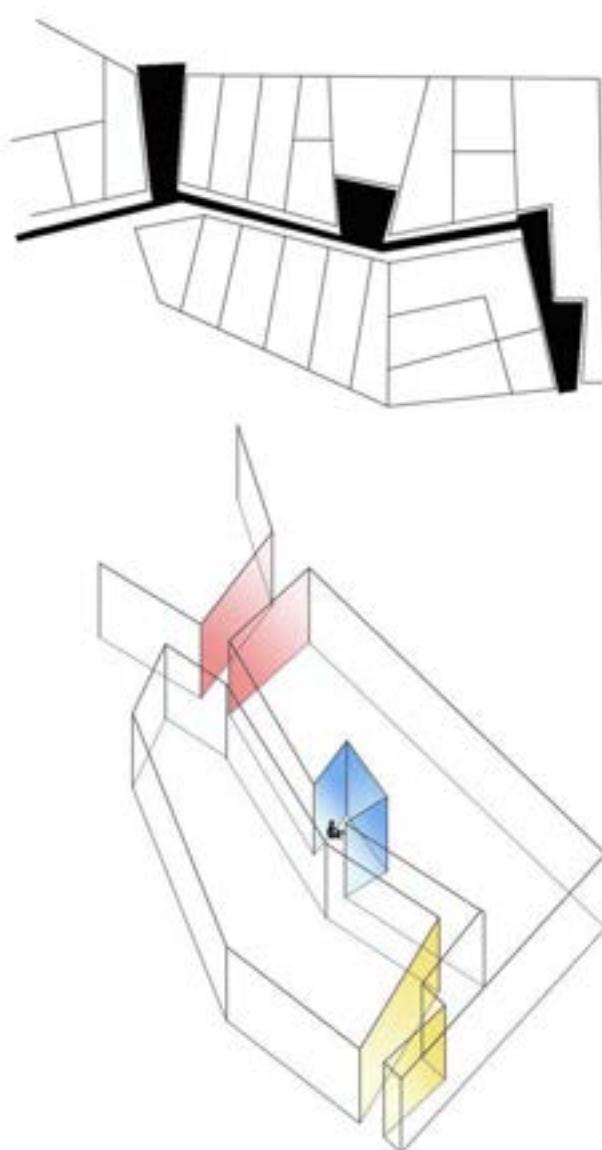




These are interstitial spaces found between the mass of existing buildings. They are void spaces, empty of both form and function. These spaces of emptiness are outside the formal order of the city and provide relief to its confining homogeneity. These ‘lost spaces’ in fact give way to private inhabitation, where one may make the space their own, light a fire, and sleep.

TERRAIN VAGUE

25



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PORTO ACADEMY 2013

www.portoacademy.info

From the 20th to the 27th of July 2013, Indexnewspaper organized ‘Porto Academy’ at Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (FAUP). The academy consisted of a weeklong workshop with Anne Holtrop, Camilo Rebelo, Go Hasegawa, João Pedro Serôdio (Serôdio Furtado), Johan Anrys (51N4E), Nuno Brandão Costa, Pascal Flammer, Pier Paolo Tamburelli (Baukuh) , Raphael Zuber and Thomas Raynaud (Building building). It also included ten lectures from those architects plus five master classes from guest architects : Alexandre Alves Costa (Atelier 15), Álvaro Siza, Eduardo Souto de Moura, Marcos Acayaba and Milton Braga (MMBB), exposing thoughts about “Porto and Paulista Schools”.



Porto
Academy'13

by indexnewspaper