

Aires Mateus. The House in Alenquer as a Process

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the House in Alenquer work process, initiated in 1995 – and commissioned by Emílio Vilar (1964-). The research revisits its importance for the Aires Mateus studio (1988) and the circumstances surrounding the origin of the 'process'. The work had relevance in the professional career of Francisco Aires Mateus (1964-) and Manuel Aires Mateus (1963-), both because of its disciplinary and media presence (including having been published in 2001, before it was finished). As such, the research that the House in Alenquer developed and provided is questioned, circumscribing it in concepts. The essay exclusively resorts to the analysis of primary sources, not only from photographs of the work / process, and original drawings, among others, from the studio and physical-digital estate, but also from various archival materials submitted to the Alenquer Municipal Council for licensing. Therefore, an analysis of the materialization of the work is done upon unpublished materials; the aim is to unfold the 'process', and conceive a 'narrative' about the House in Alenquer.

Keywords: Aires Mateus, Alenquer, Archive, House, Process

"All projects have a (more readable and intelligible) structure of an 'idea' about the construction and conception. The House in Alenquer is a project that is inevitably based on this principle. In fact, it is a truly seminal project" (MATEUS, 2023)



Figure 1 – Exterior Photograph. Ref AL 058, Casa Dr. Emílio Vilar–Alenquer. February 2000 (Source: Studio archive © Aires Mateus)

Previous note

In 2001, during the process of completing the House (Emílio Vilar) in Alenquer designed by Francisco and Manuel Aires Mateus, a publication about it could be found in 2G: *revista internacional de arquitetura nº20*, on Portuguese architecture – a new generation¹ – with photographs of the work still to be completed². Through its reading³, it is understood that the representation of the House in Alenquer was 'in process', hence the following questions: what was the 'role' of the process in the work; and what could be deciphered from it?

It is also important to question the purpose of the work and its ramifications. For example, is it possible to understand indications of 'experimental intentions' from a work 'in process'? What previous indications in the studio's path can be identified? What is the relationship between 'experimentation' and 'disciplinary ambition'⁴? Or, was the House in Alenquer a 'process of experimentation', which highlights 'structures'? Furthermore, what 'structure' or 'idea' did the House have? In this sense, there are some "concepts" to be discussed in relation to the 'process', seeking to understand the following 'principle': the materialization of the project.

Introduction

This paper was carried out through contact with primary sources, based on conversations developed with Francisco and Manuel Aires Mateus (1964- and 1963-, respectively), as well as graphic and written materials from the Aires Mateus studio. Likewise, the various dialogues with the former owner and original client – Emílio Manuel Távora Vilar (1964-) – created a densification of the process of the House in Alenquer, and consequently, of the ongoing research. Along with this work, two interviews are published: one with the architect Manuel Aires Mateus and the other with the photographer Daniel Malhão (1971-), both focusing on the ‘process’ and design of the House; some information was gathered from a constellation of relevant agents, who contacted the Aires Mateus studio in numerous ways, such as: João Belo Rodeia, Jorge P. Silva, Juan Rodríguez, Marta Sequeira, Ricardo Carvalho, Sofia Pinto Basto, among others.

As far as other content is concerned, the research is based exclusively on archival matters: from technical drawings to photographs of the unfinished work – i.e., the project under construction. All materials presented come from the original physical / digital collection of the Aires Mateus studio © and the Municipality of Alenquer, between the period 1990-2005, and 1994-2003, respectively⁵. The aim is to present and construct a narrative about the House through the gathering of unpublished archival material⁶. The methodology described reflects its importance – properly framed from a series of ‘concepts’ called (Between) ‘limits’: from (temporal) matter to the spatial ‘dimension’.

Aires Mateus. The House in Alenquer as a Process sets out to reveal the principle and purpose of the work: unveiling certain moments relating to the execution of the House, based on material about the process (i.e., ‘in process’). Therefore, the research adopts a view on the process, analyzing hesitations / doubts about the materialization of the work. The aim is to materialize a ‘possibility’ (or a ‘starting point’) with another ‘dimension’⁷.

On principles⁸: the essay focuses on the exhibition process of Casa Emílio Vilar (1995 / 1998 – 2002) located at Rua da Judiaria, N°7 in Alenquer. This research seeks to question, recover, and revisit some content related to the House. It is assumed that the materialized project (construction date 1999-2002) represents a ‘quantum leap’ in the path of the Aires Mateus studio – since it not only had an importance and impact for the studio, but also remains continuously *relevant* for it and to the national and international architectural panorama of the time, appearing in previous communications, publications, among others.⁹

Due to the ‘process’ with several ‘times’ in its conception, intrinsically related, not only by context, circumstance, and occurrences in the project and work and by the studio in charge of it, the House in Alenquer brings together several relevant moments. At the same time, it was a ‘process’ with a ‘thought’ linked to an ‘ambition’ of materialization and research, which, developed and provided by the House, is, thus, questioned.¹⁰

According to the state of the art, the 'process' of the project is barely mentioned and focuses on the materialized project – never revealing the previous 'phases' of its materialization. The presence of photographs of the ruin of the completed work, models by the Aires Mateus studio, and technical drawings of the materialized project have been the only components presented. However, the absence of sketches and content about the development is notorious; it is from these that the framework of the present research is established.

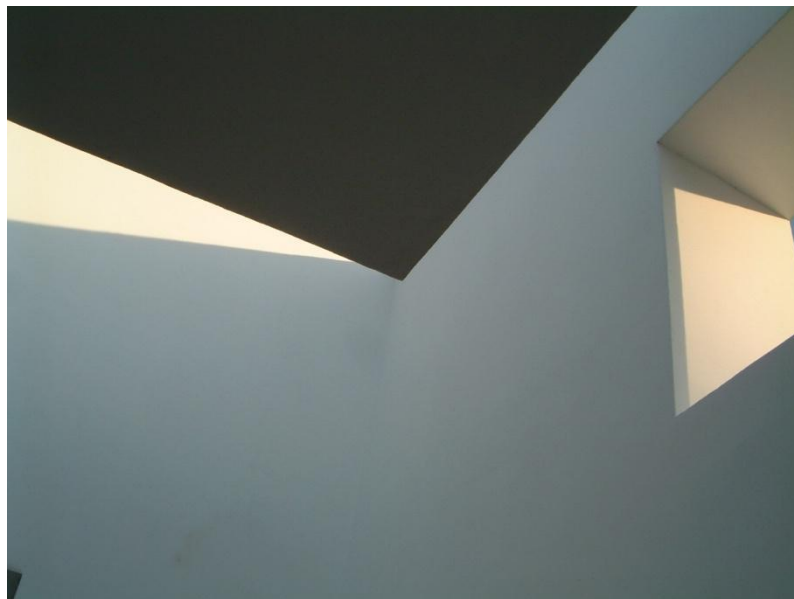


Figure 2 – Exterior Photograph. Ref AL 492, Casa Dr. Emílio Vilar-Alenquer. December 2001 (Source: Studio archive © Aires Mateus).

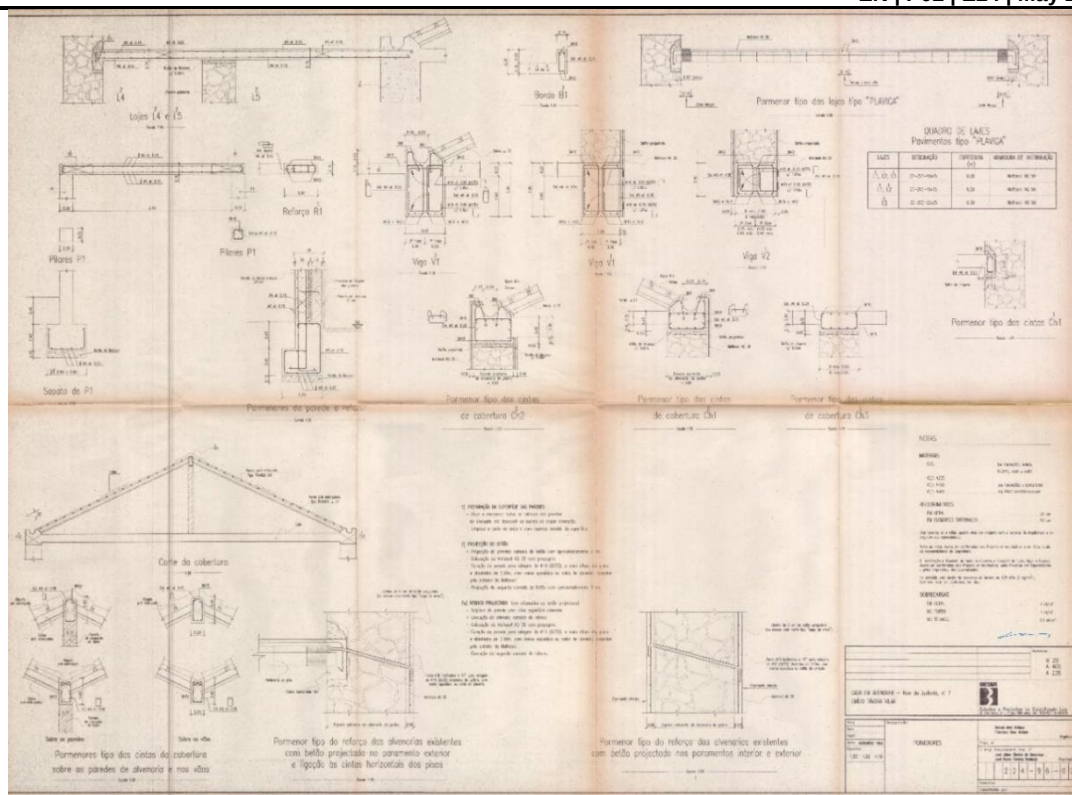


Figure 3 – Structural Studies/Details, Dr. Emílio Vilar–Alenquer House. November 1996 (Source: Alenquer City Council Archive ©).

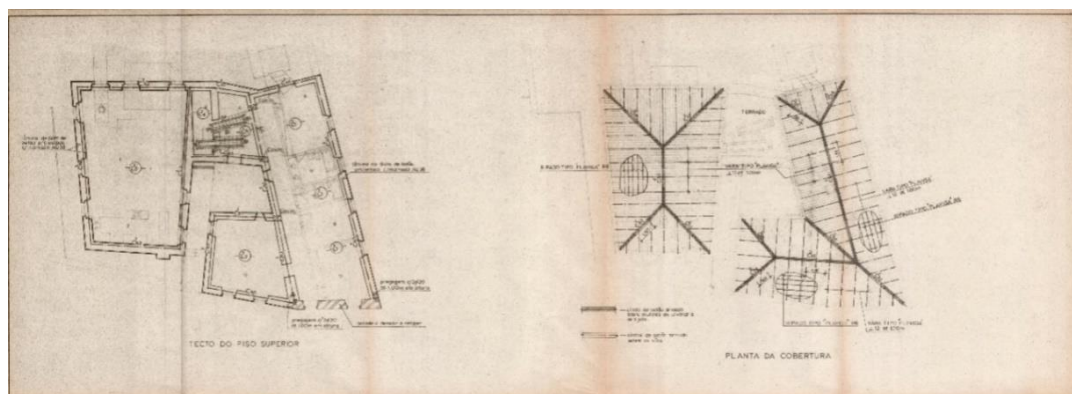


Figure 4 – Ceiling of the Upper Floor & Roof Plan, Dr. Emílio Vilar–Alenquer House, n.d. (Source: Alenquer City Council Archive ©).

Between context(s) & process(es)

In 1995, Emílio Manuel Távora Vilar acquired a property in 'ruin' located at Rua da Judiaria, Nº7 in Alenquer; that year, the 'process' of the House began, with the invitation to the Aires Mateus studio. The process began due to the proximity to the studio, informally, providing it with creative 'freedom' in conducting the 'process' on the House in Alenquer.¹¹

The original client, who at the time was a graduate in Communication Design from the Fine Arts at the University of Lisbon and was completing a Master's Degree in Design Management at ISCTE-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, invited Francisco and Manuel Aires Mateus to develop the 'ruin' project, with the aim of 'totally' restoring it. The option was curious; Emílio Vilar concluded that the project had a certain 'ambition' driven by a certain 'naivety'¹².

In order to understand the 'process', it is essential to know the time frame of the work in Alenquer and, for the present study, the process must be considered between 1995 and 2002. Therefore, there were two 'moments' presented: the original one, between 1995 and 1998 ('first process') and the other, between 1998 and 2002 ('second process'). Although this research will look at 'other' moments during the period presented¹³, it will only consider only the projects officially submitted to the Alenquer City Council.

Briefly, the 'first process' (1995) was defined by a "logical project, a restoration of the existing house" (ADRIÃO; CARVALHO, 2007: 70) – with a construction area of 391m². The 'first' presents the remodeling of the ruin in question or "the entire house"¹⁴.

As mentioned by the studio, the project "was clear, it was about restoring the house" (MATEUS; MATEUS, 1999: 23). These words referred to the consolidation and conservation of existing elements. The structural system would be made up, quoting the Project Description, "essentially of pillars embedded in the existing walls and prestressed slabs"¹⁵ – that is, it was not planned to use the existing walls "as support for floor or roof slabs"¹⁶.

Conceptually, it is intended to articulate and clarify the relationships between the main volumes within a set of autonomous volumes built in "two periods"¹⁷ (which had undergone successive adaptations), "articulated around a central courtyard"¹⁸.

In the Project Description, the 'central' element – the courtyard – served as the main access. The main volumes would be covered by a roof "made of corrugated fiber-cement sheets covered with straw tiles, preferably old"¹⁹; however, the roof of the "central connection body" was expected to be "inverted" – i.e., as referred to in the Project Description: a "terrace roof", which was to be "duly waterproofed and thermally insulated, with an exterior finish of medium-grained glazed gravel"²⁰.

Programmatically, it was established the following: in the north body, the kitchen, and the living room with connection to the garden; and in the south body, the bedrooms and sanitary facilities on the upper floor, and the support areas on the lower floor.

Regarding the restoration – material issues – the exterior walls would be finished with lime mortar, cement, sand, and a yellow pigment²¹, thus providing unity.

In short, "two main bodies are thus made autonomous, which are connected through the courtyard and articulated by a lower central body that serves as a joint between the two large sections of the house", as mentioned in the 1996 Project Description – with the intention that "the present refurbishment and restoration operation aims to enhance the entire ensemble"²².

Antagonistically, the 'second process' (project date 1998 – 1999) of the House Emílio Vilar (project date 1999 – 2002), completely transfigures the 'first'. The premise of an existing 'something' remained, albeit with a different 'meaning'.

At the beginning of the 'second process', the frameworks that made the relationship with the public space had been already consolidated. Therefore, the consideration for materialization shifts paradigm, that is, the 'existing' is ready for 'something new'. However, 'something' that is not separate from the recovered walls.²³

While the design intent of the central courtyard had been lost, the proposed enhancement ("of the whole complex" in 1996)²⁴ remained the premise for the 'second process': the recovery of the street facades; the introduction of minor rectifications to the facades; the suppression / redesign of areas lacking in quality, seeking to improve and re-establish interior-exterior relations; the adaptation of existing interior areas to a relatively reduced program; finally, "redesigning the detail from the perspective of volumetric and tectonic enhancement of the ensemble, referring the detail to a merely functional plan"²⁵.

As mentioned, the 'intention' of the courtyard is reversed. It is considered a logic of not enclosing of 'central empty' space, but a logic of proliferation / spatial sequence from various 'limits'. Logic transmuted into meaning, where the central 'centre' / 'idea' would be the result of 'something' anchored to other 'concepts' / 'themes', circumscribed by the plane of the street facades: (as) the last 'limit'. In this way, there was an evolutionary intention about the intentionality of the 'first process'.

The 'second' one presented a principle with a unique ambition, which questioned the 'limit' as 'matter', in a new conception of interior-exterior space, stimulating new 'horizons' – with an adjacent 'purpose'. In 1999, the Project Description and Justification Memorandum of the 'Draft Amendment to the Approved Project' was submitted with the 'second process': where the first line of point '2 – The Proposal' mentioned that: "The alteration, which greatly reduces the construction area, is due to the situation encountered on site"²⁶. A statement that, at first glance, appears to be (solely) the justification for the change in construction area (from 391m² to 113.4m²).

However, this 'carries' the 'intention' and, in essence, the 'ambition' of the process / project, of materializing "a small house with a very reduced program"²⁷. The same is delimited by the exterior walls: the plane of the street facades.

The proposal questioned the meaning of 'limit'. Equitably, it became a principle that questioned and fostered the research of 'concepts' about space, space-between and spatial limits²⁸: since the materialization of the "small house"²⁹ aimed to disseminate / proliferate 'metaphorical' spatial on the intention of the 'courtyard'. Thus, the ambition of the "small house" explores new 'senses' or 'meanings', as mentioned in the Project Description.

However, programmatically, it remained cohesive, similar to the 'first process' that had an organization distributed across the Northern Body and the Southern Body.

In the 'second process', there was a programmatic concentration on the ground and upper floors of the South Body, while in the North Body, a "small tank" was built³⁰. Once the strategy of organizing the 'enclosed spaces' of the "small house" was consolidated, the exploring was carried out on the 'spaces' between the existing, consolidated and recovered walls. In this way, it is foreseen that the consolidated walls acquired a "new meaning" as a 'spatial boundary', since they form an interior / exterior space, which in the project's understanding would be "furnished".

The "small house" gave rise to new approaches to the context / exterior space, respecting the relationship of the historic centre, where for the street, where there was more light "coming from the inside" through the windows – and to the interior, 'something new' would be acquired: a new scale. The construction of the "small house" had an overall meaning and not one of autonomy, since the "constructions should not be understood separately from the restored walls".³¹ The project also established a 'new meaning' of "interior space", created outdoors, private and furnished, and of "a small building designed in a way that establishes an intimate relationship with the existing one".³²

From the subversion of the 'first process', and the consequent materialization of the 'second', there was evidence of an intense research that covered the project and the construction process. The 'process' had provoked numerous situations about conception/composition, raising new questions that are to be thought of.

Nevertheless, the work was demonstrated from a very precise objective conceptual 'principle', from 'global' control of the project and the 'principle'.³³ In short, it is considered that the material about the process was fundamental to the construction of the narrative of the materialized project. Consequently, based on the intentions mentioned above, this paper develops into a debugging and exposition of the 'House process', focusing on the 'second process', the materialized work.

Subsequently, it was unraveled by introducing material about its 'process' and circumscribing it in certain 'concepts' previously mentioned.

From research to matter(lization)

"Over time, I have come to argue that architecture works fundamentally on the elaboration of a question" (MATEUS, 2021: 9)

The Aires Mateus studio's process was based on the formulation of a question as the core for the materialization of a possibility³⁴. Regarding the House in Alenquer, the question this: how does a 'principle' materialize? And how does the 'process' begin?

As such, its elaboration would be the 'foundation' of the research and could translate into a principle for the 'process' and the project. Would the thematic fixation serve to address the problems inherent to the discipline of architecture? Is it possible to consider the Aires Mateus 'process' as a path inherent to a great deal of research, which circumscribes 'lines' on 'concepts' of 'matter' and 'space'?

Since principle is the 'limit', how is it possible to dissect its 'layers' (complexity)? In which 'concepts' can the 'process' be framed? And, what 'paths' are possible to unveil in and about it?

The House in Alenquer, due to numerous circumstances, created a unique 'process', both in the execution of the work and in the studio. Briefly enumerated, they were: first, a remodelling / renovation of 'something' and 'finishing' the project ('first process'); then, due to the circumstance ('ruination'), a distancing and consequent contemplation of 'something' inhospitable (the ruin); later, a 'principle' wrapped in ambition, anchored to the (antagonistic) 'thought' and 'process' of materializing 'something' ('second process') understood between the pre-existing 'matter' ('between limits'), but 'not as separate' from it (ruin).

Therefore, similarly to the research conducted in the studio, a reflection on 'concepts' from the beginning of the process was promoted, then and successively called (between) 'limits'. The debugging of the 'second process' was developed, which would be proposed on the basis of the 'limits' considered primordial in the process of the House, which constituted the project, and with methodological consequences.

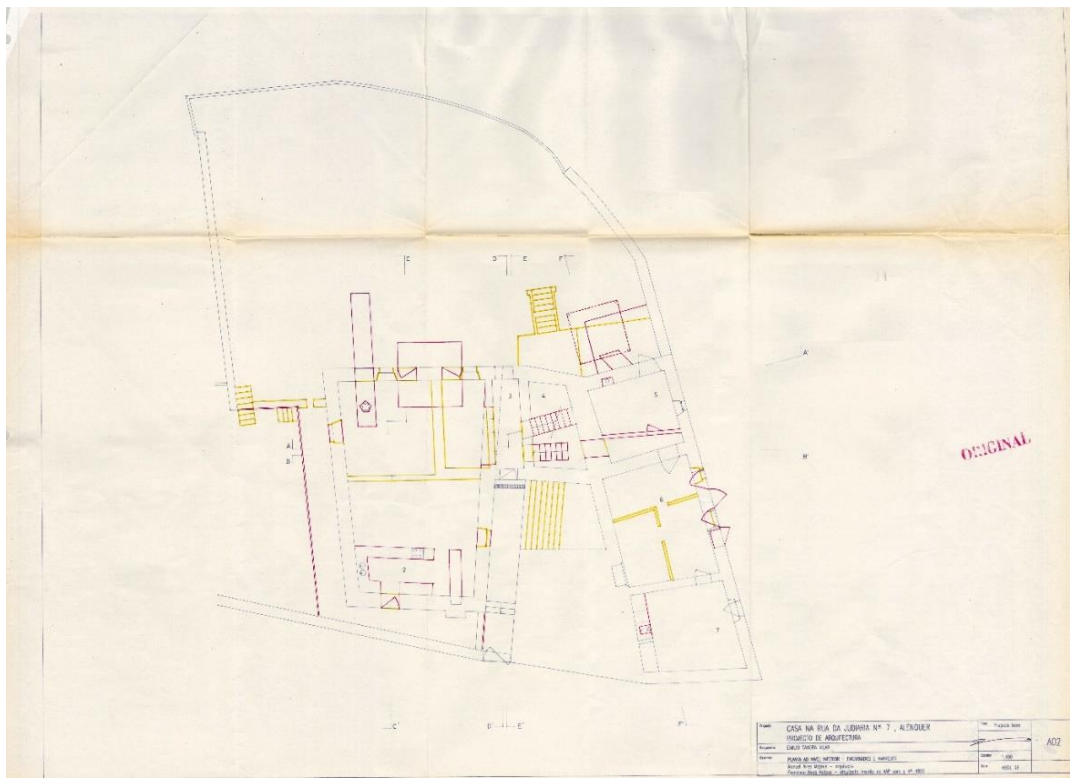


Figure 5 – 'First Process' / Lower Level Plan-Reds and Yellows, Dr. Emílio Vilar House – Alenquer. April 1996 (Source: Alenquer City Council Archive ©).

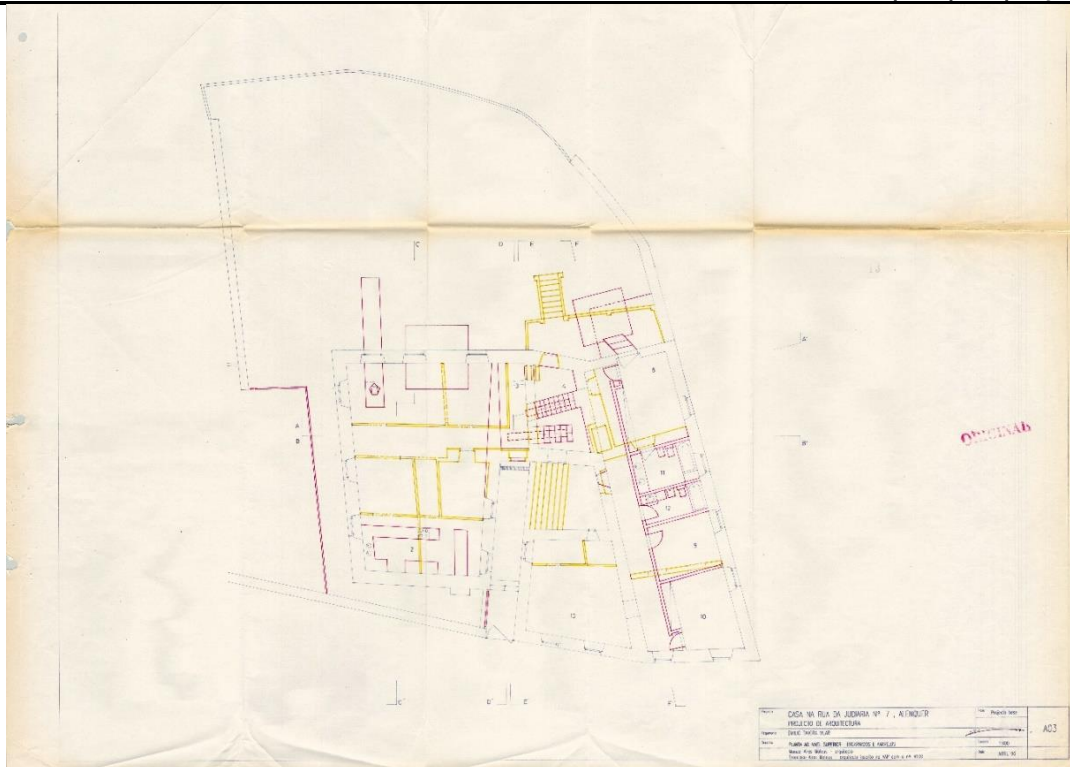


Figure 6 – ‘First Process’ / Upper Level Plan-Reds and Yellows, Casa Dr. Emílio Vilar-Alenquer. April 1996 (Source: Alenquer City Council Archive ©).

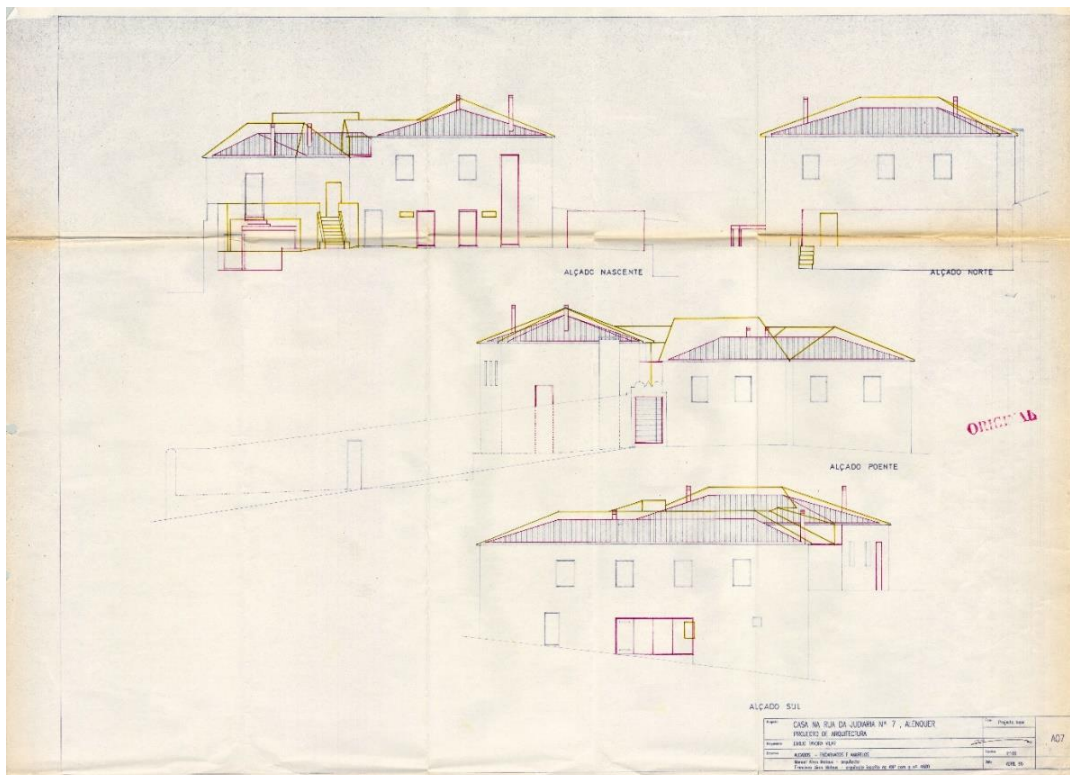


Figure 7 – ‘First Process’ / Elevations – Red and Yellow, Casa Dr. Emílio Vilar-Alenquer. April 1996 (Source: Alenquer City Council Archive ©)

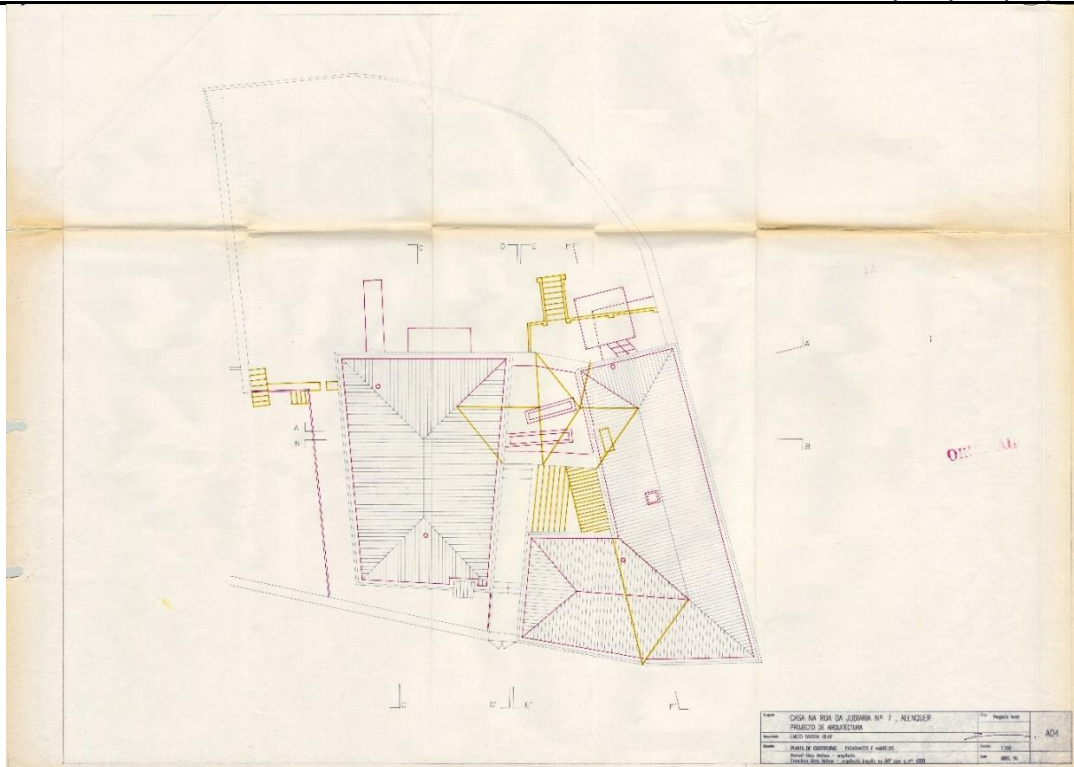


Figure 8 – ‘First Process’ / Roofing Plan-Red and Yellow, Casa Dr. Emílio Vilar-Alenquer. April 1996 (Source: Alenquer City Council Archive ©)

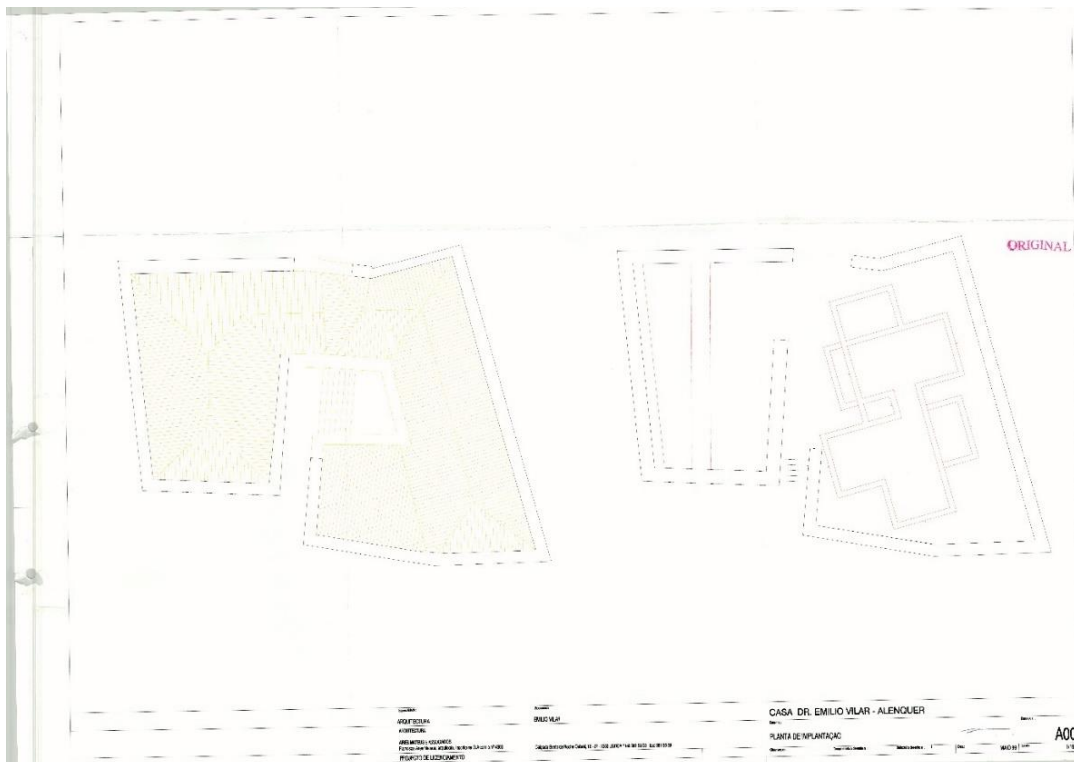


Figure 9 – ‘First & Second Process’ / Implantation Plan, Dr. Emílio Vilar House-Alenquer. May 1999 (Source: Alenquer City Council Archive ©).

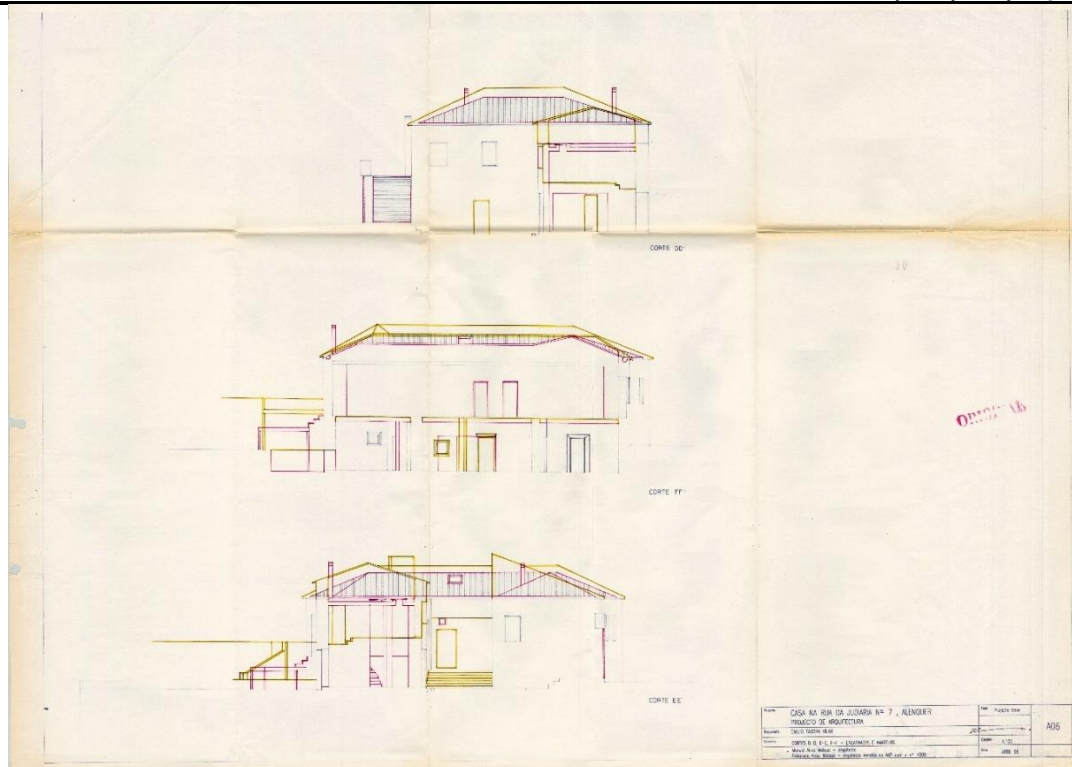


Figure 10 – ‘First Process’ / Sections, Casa Dr. Emílio Vilar–Alenquer. April 1996 (Source: Alenquer City Council Archive ©).

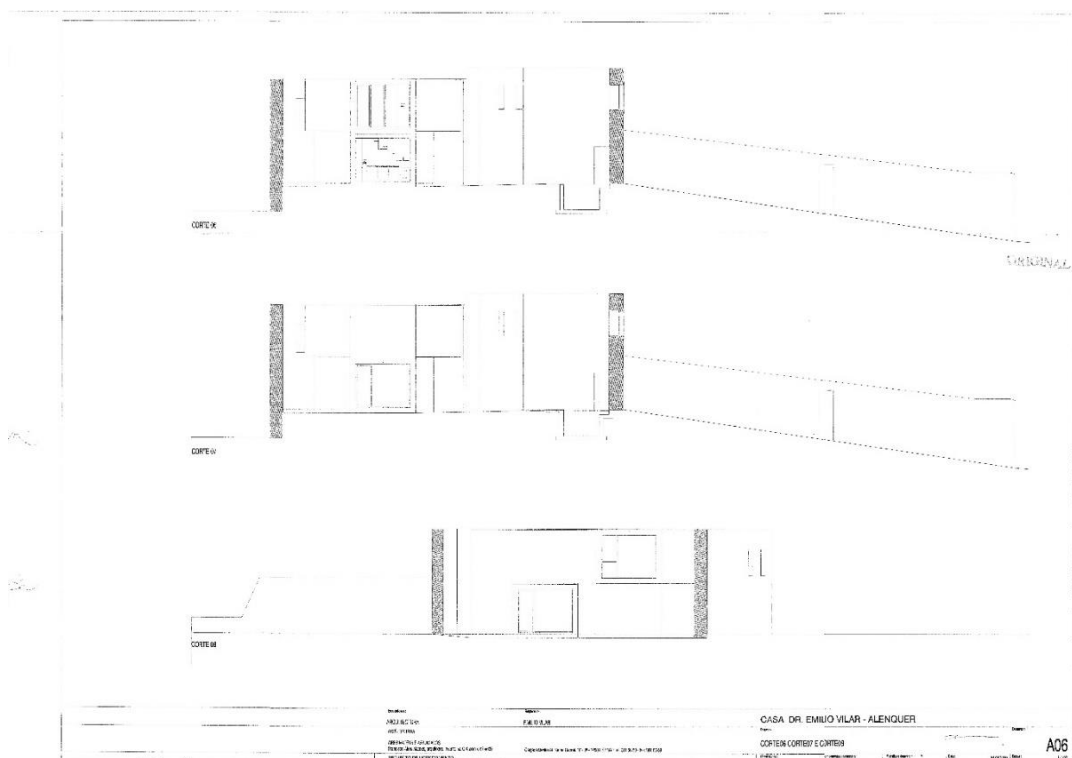


Figure 11 – ‘Second Process’ / Section 06 / 07 / 08, Casa Dr. Emílio Vilar–Alenquer. May 1999
(Source: Alenquer City Council Archive ©).

(Between) 'Limits': from (temporal) matter to the spatial 'dimension'

"I also like to think that the physical limits and the limits of the situation, that is, the limits of a given reality, constitute the very generic question of architecture itself" (MATEUS, 2021: 9)

In Alenquer, it is possible to observe a process that was mutated according to the circumstances and was also exchanged in work (under construction). As previously mentioned, the House could be framed in several 'processes', developed by the Aires Mateus studio. However, for the purpose of the research, only the two 'processes' ('first' in 1995 – 1996 and the 'second' in 1998 – 1999) submitted to the Alenquer City Council were considered³⁵. Regarding the 'second process', its particularity is that it agreed with the valuation proposal promoted by the 'first process' and was built on a 'principle'. Through the purification of written and graphic elements, it is possible to understand the development of the work, as well as to identify crucial particularities for an in-depth understanding of the House in Alenquer.

The House was considered to have in itself, a series of 'concepts' / 'themes' inherent to the 'principle', not only the result of the process during the design and construction phases, but also from the research by the Aires Mateus studio.

In the same way, some 'concepts' were consolidated 'in process' of the (phase) of work. The principle is first materialized in the project and work in Alenquer, which proved to be important, as a condition (in the studio's journey) and in "successive processes – based on the fact that 'ideas' are fundamental in practice" (MATEUS, 2023). Therefore, by researching the principle ("limit"), one realizes that it is composed of selected (duly enumerated) and proposed 'concepts', which serve as a condition for the materialization of the project with:

- 'Time': relating to construction / materialization (as a means to achieve 'something');
- 'Limit(s)' materialization of the interstitial space, research into space between 'limits' (and relationship with the 'inhabited' space / experiences /...), both 'between' / interior-exterior;
- 'Space': (temporal) matter and spatial 'dimension', relating to continuity over matter (inherent project ambition) and consequent 'dimension'.³⁶

Time: construction of form and 'meaning'

"The House in Alenquer is a foundational project / research. I would go further and say that the House in Alenquer is the greatest of all foundations." (MATEUS, 2023)

Construction is considered to be related to 'something temporal'. The matter relating to construction involves two 'periods', and in the case of Alenquer, it referred to the materialization of a 'pure' object in a 'precise time' ("small house"); and "the 'materialization' of ruin – which is a 'continuous' (time) that evolves (time)" (MATEUS, 2023).

From these statements, notions of 'limits' about time are understood, which encompass various constructions (materializations), as mentioned by Manuel Aires Mateus: "The 'idea' of time proved to be essential" (MATEUS, 2023). As described in *Estructuras en el Tiempo*, the coexistence of both the ruin and the object (one bearing vestiges of the past and the other, respectively) "cement the metaphor of the underlying symmetry between ruin and construction"³⁷. In the process in Alenquer, time acquired 'two meanings', as mentioned by Manuel Aires Mateus: "perceiving that difference between this 'time' and another 'time', that is, a 'permanent time' *versus* a 'time' with the capacity for variation, was very interesting (in the project)." (MATEUS, 2023)

"From that moment on, we began to work on what seemed most important to us, the space adjacent to ruin – the idea of the two times, the perennial and the fleeting, the permanence and the moment. Those walls had a freedom that only time could build. Time builds a world of scars and a freedom that cannot be created from scratch." (ADRIÃO; CARVALHO, 2007: 70)

In the House in Alenquer, the 'concept' of time is intensified. As demonstrated by Manuel Aires Mateus, such 'concept' (in relation to matter) became even more evident given that "Architecture is a statement ('marked') in 'time' and has a 'pure' geometry for that reason (when we are 'creating' it)". (MATEUS, 2023)

Therefore, materialization embodied (the 'concept' and) the *foundation* 'between times'. Likewise, it was the cause of consolidation of the 'ruin' – of a 'material permanence' – and related from visual framing with the 'pure object'. In addition, the construction (of the 'pure' object, called a "small house") had an ambition to be the 'mediation' to achieve an 'expression' (indicted by the 'pure' construction).

"More precisely, and to give an example: to build an independent roof and floor. This structure allows the construction of the form to acquire another possibility, i.e., independence 'allows' the construction to be 'pure'" (MATEUS, 2023)

The 'expression' comes from research, which ultimately, appears as a purpose for the discipline of architecture to promote harmonious 'pure' aesthetic relations – and which represent precision and constructive accuracy. In this context, 'expression' should be understood as (a) 'way' / 'sense' of both thinking and materializing space and construction. Similarly, 'expression' functions as a 'process' logic that is related to a 'form' or 'sense' of 'something'.

The materialization of 'expression' took place during the process in Alenquer. For that reason, the House acquired a notorious importance, as indicated by Manuel Aires Mateus, since it was a project that presented the beginning of a 'sculptural sense' (MATEUS, 2023). In the same way, the sculptural dynamic could be understood by the space (between) the 'pure' materialization and the existing ruin. Interstitial spaces that function "in a way with an intimate relationship with the existing"³⁸. How did the relationship of intimacy materialize? It is thought that the spatial 'idea' of intimacy (mentioned by the studio) came from an ambition for space originating from matter.

In the process in Alenquer, the ‘origin’ of the form of the ‘pure’ object and the ‘space between’ (as a ‘mental process’) was sought by depression, that is, a materialization through the idea of ‘material subversion’ (rather than emergence), as in the Church of St. George (Lalibela Ethiopia). The importance of the aforementioned reference is not only the opposition between a ‘pure’ geometry (clearly architectural) and its ‘limit’, but also the ‘material’ question. Specifically, the ‘construction’ (Lalibela) was revealed from the excavation; the excavated matter gave rise to a ‘space’, which formulated ‘new bodies’ and interstitial spaces. Likewise, the intention, apprehended from the reference, was the valorization and importance of the interstitial spaces (originated by depression) or the space ‘between’, as being the ‘central space’, transmitted (as ‘concept’) in Alenquer.

“(…) basically, the materialization of the House in Alenquer was efficient in conveying this ‘idea’. As an idea, the intention was related to the constructions of the Church of St. George in Lalibela, because we assumed the ‘freedom (and irregularity) of the excavated’ against the (existing) geometry. Essentially, also resorting to the memory of that project (St. George’s Church) where the space that was used is the ‘space between’. Our idea (for the House in Alenquer) was exactly that, as a principle.” (MATEUS, 2023)

Curiously, Emílio Vilar mentioned that, during the ‘process’ of work, the ‘term’ *sculpture* was evoked, referring to a sense of ‘sculpting process’, i.e., both the creation of forms (volumes or reliefs) and the shaping of ‘something’, which would be densified and verified in *Limit(s)*: ‘*interstitial*’ materialization. Succinctly, the form of the ‘pure’ object (“small house”) presented, as mentioned by Manuel Aires Mateus, the ‘principle’ that it was a certain sculptural sense – ‘expression’ – built ‘in a precise time’. While the ruin represented a ‘time’ of continuity, and the construction was the mediation, as well as the ‘beginning’ for the foundation of ‘times’. ‘Artistically’, the ambition (of the construction) of the project was that it sought to materialise the intention and process of the ‘idea’ of irregularity of the excavated ‘against’ a ‘pre-existing geometry’ (ruin) – generating interstitial spaces, ‘wrapped’ in the same built matter (vertical plane) and with a common ‘material’ base (horizontal plane).

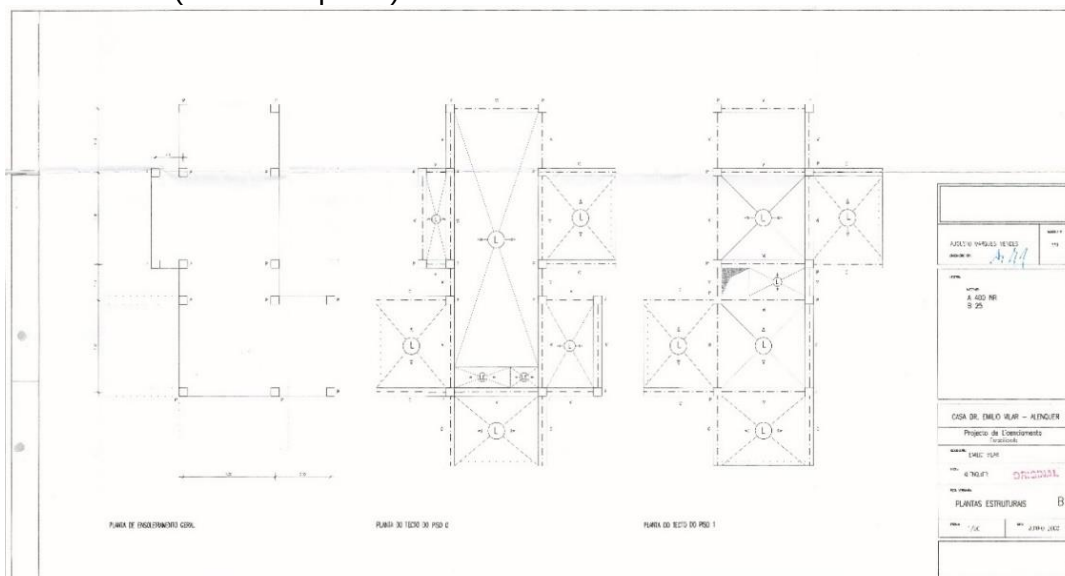


Figure 12 – ‘Second Process’ / Structural Plans, Dr. Emílio Vilar–Alenquer House. June 2000 (Source: Alenquer City Council Archive ©).



Figure 13 – Exterior Photograph. Ref AL 255, Casa Dr. Emílio Vilar-Alenquer. September 2001
(Source: Studio archive © Aires Mateus).

Limit(s): 'interstitial' materialization

"(...) basically, the House in Alenquer was the main moment, perhaps the first time, that we actually managed to have a 'broad theory' about the 'limit'." (MATEUS, 2023)

The principle of "not avoiding construction" and of 'inhabiting' limits is materialized in Alenquer (MATEUS, 2023). The 'spatial' transformation into a physical 'something' from a notion of non-physicality was considered: is the 'void' matter? The House was a research assumed by Manuel Aires Mateus, as the main moment of precise 'broad theory' about space and 'limit', in a coherent form of programmatic stratification, and with a 'unique spatial meaning'. However, is it possible to dissect the existence of previous evidence of such?³⁹ Alenquer proved to be the most obvious 'process'.

'Entre limites' emerged from the House in Alenquer, and was published (as a 'concept') by João Belo Rodeia. The 'limit' had a possible definition, not being a 'line' or a 'limit element', but rather a 'space between something'. In Alenquer, summoned over the House: 'something' between walls, a possibility of 'living' between limits. The 'concept' was established by the relationship between the 'body' and the (vertical) 'line'. Specifically, the space between the 'bodies' that established 'this line': space between 'something' that is 'one's own' territory.

The House in Alenquer emerged from this purpose: a recognizable spatiality from the 'limit'. In other words, space seemed to be recognized by thickness and substance (pre-existing / materialized); as if space were translatable into a material excavation, and as if matter were translatable into a spatial excavation.

In turn, the 'limit' served for the composition and programmatic materialization in the 'second process', as referred Aires Mateus said: "From here, we then began to build an intention of 'wall', or 'inhabited limit', questioning, how to build the limit, and assimilating the latter as 'inhabited'." (MATEUS, 2023).

The 'limit' indicated by the existing ruin and by other materialized elements created 'space', which served as an interstice of the 'inhabited' space, in a logic of inhabiting the 'limit'. The interstitial space is receptive to various experiences and functions, whether they came from the 'function house' or not.⁴⁰ Spatially, the whole was formulated by a pragmatic coherence of the composition of the program or of 'living spaces'.

Looking at the scheme from the floor plan, one can see the logic of the "small house" with scattered areas on the ground floor and sheltered and protected areas on the upper floor.⁴¹ Regarding the functional and programmatic stratification, the 'pure' / "small house" had elements on the first floor that are arranged in a space 'enclosed' by 'limits': the stove; the two kitchen countertops (one of which merges with the wooden staircase); a "small tank" built.

The dispersion of the elements throughout the horizontal plane was related by the "natural pine wood"⁴² flooring, which functionally and programmatically unified the experience in space (and promotes an inseparable relationship with this dimension).

Contrary to the spatial dissemination and fluidity on the ground floor, on the upper floor it was possible to identify a greater stratification through other distinct 'limits', which provide 'protection' and shelter, such as: the three spaces with natural pine wood floors; a sanitary installation space; and a space with a slab, circumscribed by several vertical 'limits', but without a horizontal (upper) 'limit'.

It is, as well, important to mention another level about the materialization or dematerialization of the 'limit' (i.e., ruin). When in 'tension' with the "small house", it was subjected to architectural manipulations during the construction process, in order to promote visual and spatial relationships intended by the studio. By analyzing the on-site notes on the original drawings from the Aires Mateus studio, it is possible to verify the decisions that led to the construction and demolition of parts of the ruin.

The notes presented were recorded in dialogue and collaboration. The decisions can be considered as the result of on-site analysis, through an empirical and intellectual form of architectural observation – hence the manipulation of the space between, that is, the areas 'between' the "small house" and the ruin, that could be seen.

Areas contained in 'limits' with a distinct design and conducive to countless experiences are clearly presented. Thanks to the manipulation / materialization of the ruin, visual and spatial experiences were accentuated not only between the "different" spans, but also between the interstitial spaces.

Materialization is autonomous, but not separate, in the "midst of these spaces of ambiguous dimension" (MATEUS; MATEUS, 1999: 23). The program is thus organized: on the upper floor with "a social bathroom, storage and 'the bedroom'"; on the ground floor with a "living room with a kitchen area"⁴³; and the rest is undefined. The need for programmatic nomenclature is not related to their degree of importance.

In Alenquer, originally, due to the ambition of the process, spaces sought an idea of 'materialization' relating to the 'concept' of 'negative' and / or 'emptiness' deriving from the reference to Lalibela previously mentioned.⁴⁴

"Our idea (for the House in Alenquer) was exactly that, as a principle. In addition, we were interested in the practice of design, trying to come up with an 'idea' as if we were constructing or materializing the negative" (MATEUS, 2023)

These 'in-between' spaces, appeared as mechanisms for solving and organizing spatial programs. The 'idea' of the materialization of 'in-between' spaces consisted of the following: 'negative' or 'empty' spaces.

In this sense, the aforementioned spaces were project's solution mechanism that linked a succession of processes that became methodological – "building the 'void', as a principle" (MATEUS, 2023), as mentioned by Manuel Aires Mateus: in relation to the project's procedural method, both intrinsically interconnected, which ultimately served to "understand the importance of space".⁴⁵

"That 'ambition' has always been a very strong one, and it has remained. It was thus decisive to understand that, as a methodology, we were building the 'void', as a principle. The House in Alenquer was a project that demonstrated the construction of 'emptiness'." (MATEUS, 2023)

As Gonçalo Byrne mentioned, in Alenquer, there was "the desire to transform space into something physical, emptiness becoming raw material for architecture" (BYRNE, 2002: 30). The 'desire' for transformation of the 'enigmatic voids' spatially unveiled the project; since it was the spaces 'between' that presupposed spaces to be lived – conducive to a spatial and experiential search.

The 'in-between' spaces are those that lead to the design solution, based on the 'schematization' of habitable spaces with a function, such as this: from the sleeping area, the living area, the contemplating area, among others.

The experience of the space 'between' aspires to a diversity of 'dimensions', having the possibility of being 'inhabited' in different ways, without any precise function – 'spaces' available for any experience, up to the awareness of (their) existence.

"Likewise, it was at this time that we began to think / reflect a lot on the 'problem' of not only what space means, but also the 'limit', simultaneously 'the relationship between one and the other'. From this thought, the process of the House in Alenquer was an interesting process because it started out as a recovery/renovation of 'that' house, in that context." (MATEUS, 2023)



Figure 14 – Exterior Photograph. Ref AL 569, Casa Dr. Emílio Vilar–Alenquer. September 2001 (Source: Studio archive © Aires Mateus).

Space: material 'dimension'

"That idea, that the ruin is a 'continuous' (time) against a precise materialized time was a very strong idea in the House in Alenquer" (MATEUS, 2023)

The matter of time ('continuous') against 'other' matter: how does the 'idea' manifest itself? Is it a quest to rehabilitate a 'memory'? Or a 'contemporary' intention of matter over a memory of an existing ruin?

In the specific case of this project, the intention arose from the 'treatment' of the ruin, that is, the decision not to keep the ruin as a ruin – a 'gesture' of consolidation of that 'limit' of a certain 'time'. This decision was not immediate, it was decided 'in process'.

The materialization of the 'gesture' derived inherently from the process (both in thought and in process and work); where first there was regularization and consolidation, followed by painting in white, leaving the existing stonework at some point, promoting reflection on a 'contemplation', and by hesitation about the 'process'.

Then, the 'gesture' materialized in an 'absolute form' – from the decision-making – and the ruin was painted in its entirety. Therefore, with the ruin in white, the assumption that was materialized (i.e., it is contemporary matter) was promoted⁴⁶. Eventually, this 'gesture' created the illusion that nothing existed – something 'deserted'. Likewise, the 'question of time' is importantly introduced, since the patina of 'time' had faded, allowing the whole ensemble to 'belong' to the same 'time'.

The ruin became 'something of a project', as if it were from 'scratch', and belonged to a certain 'moment' of the work (that of its end).

The 'gesture' – the timeless tone - white"⁴⁷ – materialized all the elements into a homogeneous synthesis: a common *layer*, which made it difficult to understand the different 'times'. Identically, it confirmed a 'material' and spatial architectural unity⁴⁸. Therefore, the 'idea' of the circumscription of space in the same matter (vertical plane) and with a common 'material' base (horizontal plane) was materialized, referring to the Church of St. George in Lalibela. With the intention of giving a "new plastic meaning to the expression of the existing walls"⁴⁹.

At that point, the ambition of the 'gesture' in question developed a unity. Ultimately, the homogenization (of matter, between the existing ruin and the materialization of the "small house"), perfectly intended, and the result of concerns or doubts during the process, together with another fundamental decision to continue the (identically homogeneous) pavement, until the ruin⁵⁰: it concentrated the ambition.

In the spatial relationship, space was the 'center'; in other words, the 'central' space (the tension between 'bodies') was assumed to be primordial.



In short, from the two decisions mentioned, it is possible to denounce the ambition on the 'theme' of 'space' and its centrality contained 'between limits' in a vertical sense, something unique spatially.

It can, thus, be inferred that the principle is that which was found 'between limits'; the quest for space as a 'primordial element' that articulated the logic of process and project. The ruin was materialized and dematerialized around the 'body' in tension with it. In other words, the 'limit' was laid bare, willing to be architecturally 'manipulated' as a function of another 'body'.

During the process, hesitations, doubts and certainties that led to the construction of the work, and its 'limit' (i.e., the ruin) could be analyzed. From the analysis of the documentation, it is possible to detect that during the construction of the "small house", numerous operations were carried out on the ruin, from matching or reconciling spans (depending on those of the "small house"), aligning vertical and horizontal 'limits' (e.g. ridge line), among others. Is it pertinent to ask that if the walls were to fall, the principle would 'remain'? Similarly, if the last 'limit' did not exist, would space 'remain'?

The circumstance of the existing 'limit' was decisive for the 'materialization' of the 'principle' and for the 'thought' in the process; without it, the "small house" would not 'survive'.

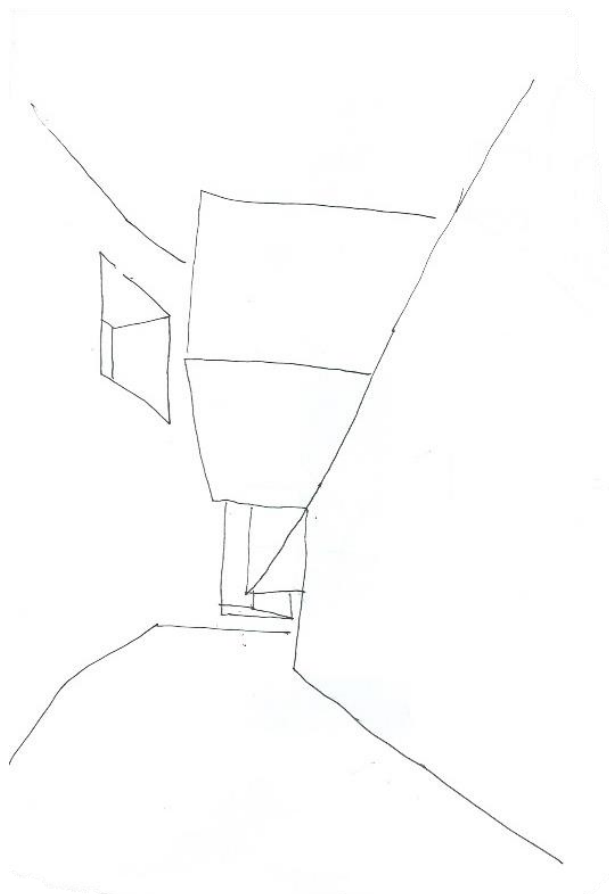


Figure 15 – Sketch of the House in Alenquer by Aires Mateus, Casa Dr. Emílio Vilar–Alenquer. n.d. (Source: Studio archive © Aires Mateus).



Figure 16 – Exterior Photograph. Ref AL 246, Casa Dr. Emílio Vilar–Alenquer. September 2001 (Source: Studio archive © Aires Mateus).

Conclusion

Overall, about the question of the ‘structure’ or ‘idea’ about the House in Alenquer, what ‘thought’ or ‘principle’ was it possible to scrutinize in the work?

In order to contextualize, it is important to mention the designation ‘about permanence’ – the title of the interview conducted by Ricardo Carvalho⁵¹. There is there a dialogue, not only about ‘principles’ and typological or spatial values relating to various projects or works, but also about the ‘project of continuity’, the ‘idea of matter’, the ‘idea of permanence’, among others. Matrices that make those relevant and allow one to circumscribe an ‘idea’ of ‘permanence’.

Based on this thought, this study researched the ‘role’ of the process and, similarly, if ‘something’ can be decoded from it. Is it possible to consider the House in Alenquer as a process that served as a reference or a ‘foundation’? Was the work in Alenquer a ‘process’ that showed signs of intellectual ‘permanence’ in the studio?

Comprising the development of the work’s construction, referring to the ‘Second Process’ between 2001 – 2003, the House was defined as a ‘renewed disciplinary ambition’⁵²; the House that (does not) hide the enormous complexity – process. Other questions could therefore be addressed, such as: what path did the project ‘open’? Was research a differentiated process; with the ambition to materialize “fields close to eternity” (CHAVES, 1999: 16)? What did emerge from the process, which became ‘permanent’? Was the ‘idea’ of permanence the ‘legacy’ of the House in Alenquer?

Circumstance became an important factor. From the moment they were “released”, the “walls took on a value of their own in the process” (MATEUS; MATEUS, 1999: 23). It becomes possible to understand an ambition ‘for something’ based on research.

The studio travelled to Alenquer every week to check on the current state of the work, to meet with the necessary stakeholders and coordinate the development of the ‘process’ – in a sense of searching for solutions for the House and above all, in a sense of both photographic and videographic recording.

The work was constantly ‘manipulated’ during the construction phase. The original owner referred to the numerous alterations carried out by Francisco and Manuel Aires Mateus at that stage; to give an example, the addition to the top of the ruin in order to level the level out the ridge between all the ‘bodies’; or, as mentioned above, the ‘manipulation’ of the vertical planes (walls), adding or reducing areas in order to achieve an architectural correlation between the ensemble. As Emílio Vilar said, “work would never end”, since the architects were ‘modelling’ not the “small house”, but the exterior walls (ruin)⁵³ – but, curiously, from his perspective, that was the most interesting phase, i.e., the process. In short, the House was a work in progress.

The constant development of a work under construction unlocks the question of an ambition of a ‘permanent research’, that is, the non-satisfaction or continuous search for architectural solutions for the project in question. Likewise, one can refer to another notion of ‘permanence of principle’, identified in this process, which will consequently serve as a recurrence for subsequent ‘processes’.

The House had permanently an objective ‘idea’, a circumscription of a principle materialized architecturally and anchored by ‘concepts’. Something previously not so noticeable in other processes and projects, where it was possible to identify a diversity of conceptual intentions, rather than a systematization of themes.⁵⁴

In this way, the process in Alenquer clarified and materialized the principle of ‘limit’, refined here from ‘concepts’ – reinforcing the ‘idea’ that a project is (primarily) a field of research. However, it aspired to an inherent transformation of ‘principle’ into matter.

"Rehabilitations, reconversions, must be anchored in deeper harbors than those of mere efficiency and economy of the project, referring first and foremost to the difficult and longed-for fields close to eternity in the sense that the will of the idea superimposes the transformation of matter" (CHAVES, 1999: 16)

Does the identification of ‘concepts’ enumerated demonstrate a ‘reinvention of memories’ and a synthesis? What links and analogies can be identified that definitively address issues inherent to ‘place’ and the spatial relationship ‘between limits’? It connotes a ‘conceptual precision’ – the ‘principle’ – being a synthesis of numerous ‘concepts’.

The ambition of materializing ‘tension’ between ‘bodies’ simultaneously questions ‘spaces between’. ‘Concepts’ about space and ‘limits’ (of them) are reinvented: the space between volumes, its tension and its inherent relation between them (reference to the Project Description: “The interior spaces have a first physical limit in glass, but their limit is, sensitively, in the wall and its openings”).

The 'spatial dimension' is found in matter, centering the 'theme' of space – also through the 'foundation' of 'times'. Light and matter are understood in a unique way, as space allows for a clairvoyant experience of exceptional spatial sequence. The 'limit' principle is paramount, promoting the purpose for space to be the 'centre'.

In this paper, when analyzing the 'process' of the House in Alenquer, it is stated that it is 'unanchored' from criteria based on "remodeling"⁵⁵. In addition, what was decisive was not found in the relationship between author and client, or the notions of living in the space, among others; what is important in the argument is the series of decisions coming from the process that gave rise to a possibility, which demonstrated a character coming from the principle, which eventually generated several nuances.

However, from a 'principle' one acquires the 'new meaning' and the ambition to refer to "the difficult and longed-for fields close to eternity in the sense that the will of the idea overrides the transformation of matter" (CHAVES, 1999: 16).

"So, in short, this is a bit of the story of the House in Alenquer, which in essence, has continually become a house with this 'capacity' to be a starting point of an 'idea', it becomes a different 'substance' for us." (MATEUS, 2023)

The House presented a 'unique process' that has become a crucial and reference point in the career of the Aires Mateus studio.

The House 'remains' in memory, being a 'foundational' research⁵⁶. The "small house" with a solution "of ambiguous limits between the light glass plane and the heavy walls" (MATEUS; MATEUS, 1999: 23) of the existing ruin, 'carried' the principle of 'limit' as the 'global' reference. (The House) concentrated 'the' theme, a 'global' ambition, which materialized.

The transcendent, non-tangible 'idea' becomes matter, or a materialized 'possibility'. The importance of the possibility that House in Alenquer conveyed was that it revealed the materialization of a 'process', and a precision of project conception "in a global way" (MATEUS, 2023).

Although architecture is not truly perpetual, its principle can aspire to eternity.⁵⁷

The House proved to be a 'quantum leap' because it was a research of 'space' as the primary element that articulated the materialized process, starting from the 'limit' principle: "because the usefulness of architecture has allowed it" (CHAVES, 1999: 17). Basically, the purpose was what lied 'between limits'.

Overall, the questioned premises were recovered, such as: what 'research' did the House in Alenquer develop and provide? Was it a 'process of experimentation', which highlighted structures?

The House in Alenquer, present in a certain context and circumstance, was a work of ambition that continuously goes “(...) reinvented memories and themes at the same time” (RODEIA, 2002: 67), both in the present, and for a series and sequence of future processes / projects⁵⁸, where “precision (...) served to address each new statement”.⁵⁹

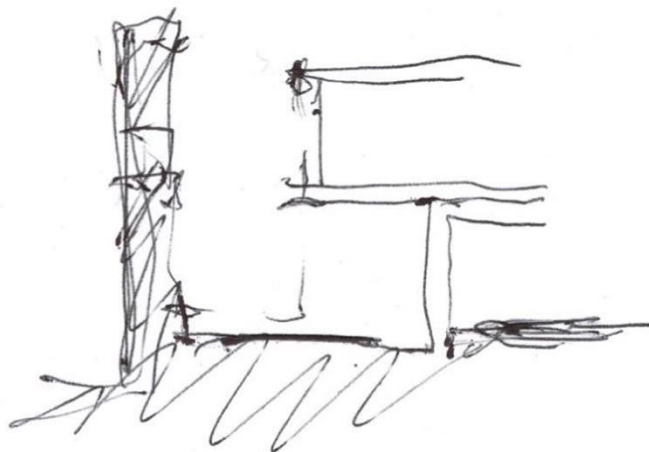


Figure 17 – Drawing by Manuel Aires Mateus in the Aires Mateus Archive, Dr. Emílio Vilar–Alenquer House. April 2023 (Source: Studio Archive © Aires Mateus).

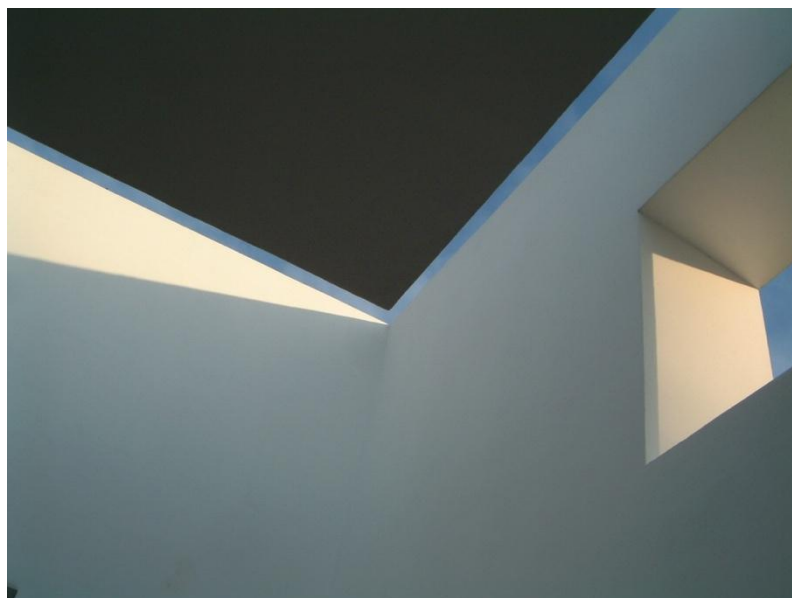


Figure 18 – Exterior Photograph. Ref AL 494, Casa Dr. Emílio Vilar–Alenquer. December 2001 (Source: Studio Archive © Aires Mateus).

“Basically, the project allowed the materialization of this idea, in a ‘clear way’, which allowed us, in some way, to find (future) logics to respond to other projects. This moment clearly reflected the importance of this ‘House’” (MATEUS, 2023)

Post scriptum © Daniel Malhão







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Archive Alenquer Municipal Council

Testimonials

- Francisco e Manuel Aires Mateus, Lisbon, 2023.
- Emílio Távora Vilar, Lisbon, 2023.
- Jorge P Silva, Lisbon, 2023.

¹ See, on this subject, the introduction to the aforementioned publication (2G) by João Belo Rodeia (1961-), entitled "Línea de tierra: presentación de una nueva generación de arquitectos portugueses". See, also, on this subject, in Rodeia (2001) the introduction of the studio's practice by the critic João Belo Rodeia, from this contemporary publication, the House in Alenquer of the Aires Mateus studio emerged as a very significant project both in the practice of the collective and in the theoretical/critical practice at the beginning of the 21st century. As mentioned by the critic, the number of projects that emerged in the early 1990s already promoted some signs of experimental intentions, although not as evident, and the projects that emerged in the late 1990s at Aires Mateus studio (published) proved to be crucial, with an experimental connotation of identity search relevant in the establishment of a maturity about (project) practice and the "ideological" materialization. In this sense, this period and the projects associated with such a context, "marked" in a symbolic way a special character for the studio's career, as they themselves mention. The practice is concentrated in a mental construction transported to 'something' material, in the discipline of architecture. And, in short, due to its context, it is shown as a manifestation of experimentation in the practice of the Aires Mateus studio, complete with a "renewed disciplinary ambition".

² The photographs mentioned are by the photographer Daniel Malhão (1971-), who completed the Photography Course in Ar.Co between 1995 and 2000 and participated in the exchange program at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, with a scholarship from FLAD.

³ The publication emphasizes not only the value in a panorama of contemporary Portuguese architecture, reinforcing the ambition and quality of the project, but also the relevance of the Aires Mateus duo. Likewise, this issue is of special importance, where there are several mentions of the Aires Mateus studio: from its relevance as a “new generation of architects” to emerge, as well as several mentions not only to projects of a public nature previously conceived and built (for example: the Student Residences of Pole II of the University of Coimbra – between 1996 and 1999 – and the Canteen of the University of Aveiro between 1997 and 2001, or the Rectory project of the NOVA University of Lisbon (in 1998), as well as the teaching practice both nationally (in the department of architecture of the Autonomous University of Lisbon) and internationally (Pamplona, Spain, and Mendrisio, Switzerland, more precisely Manuel Aires Mateus).

⁴ See, on this subject, (RODEIA, 2001).

⁵ Similarly, it is important to mention that the essay and its composition relied heavily on the incessant search (and retrieval) of original materials. These materials come from both the physical and digital archives of the Aires Mateus atelier and the archive of the Alenquer City Council. The materials presented are courtesy of the aforementioned archives, consulted in 2023. They may not be used without prior authorization.

⁶ In some way, it would be possible to promote an analysis of each ‘phase’ of the House in Alenquer, situating the project at ‘different times’, exposing and possibly contrasting: the first “logical project, a recovery of the existing house”; followed by a “house had the purpose of consolidating itself as a ruin”, as mentioned in (ADRIÃO; CARVALHO, 2007: 70). However, the present study aimed to consolidate the ‘narrative’ of the House in Alenquer, concentrating the singular research on the materialized ‘project itself’, unveiling some of its crucial points, avoiding confrontations with contemporary projects from the Aires Mateus studio, and seeking a comparative analysis.

⁷ “(...) ‘ability’ to be a starting point of an idea, becomes a different ‘substance’ for us” (MATEUS, 2023).

⁸ Reference about the House in Alenquer: “Basically, there is some way to obtain and build very different ‘principles’ in projects like this, definitely associated with the same typology or not. Likewise, it was at a time when we begin to think/reflect a lot on the ‘problem’ of not only what space means, but also of the ‘limit’, simultaneously ‘the relationship between one and the other’.” (MATEUS, 2023).

⁹ Testimony of Manuel Aires Mateus on the ‘process’ in Alenquer. The relevance of the recovery and revisiting is based on the premise that the project can be considered, not only a ‘turning point’ (a manifesto work or an ‘experimental’ project) for the studio’s career, supported by several communications.

¹⁰ ‘Limits’ on architectural possibilities and discussions are circumscribed in response to moments of ‘process’, situated in certain ‘concepts’ about construction, space, matter, limit, time, etc.

¹¹ The commission by Emílio Vilar to the architects Francisco and Manuel Aires Mateus of the project for his house in Alenquer marked the beginning of a “process” relevant on the national and international scene, in countless ways.

¹² Testimony obtained through Emílio Manuel Távora Vilar about the ‘process’ in Alenquer.

¹³ In his testimony, Emílio Vilar confirmed that the House in Alenquer (materialized) was the result of three independent projects. The mention of the three processes is consistent with the read documentation; however, it was possible to identify only two as having been submitted to the Alenquer City Council.

¹⁴ See, on this subject, the quote in the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer (1996).

¹⁵ *Idem.*

¹⁶ *Idem.*

¹⁷ Reference to "From this point of view, the process of the House in Alenquer is an interesting one since it began as a recovery/renovation of 'that' house, in that context. In fact, it is a house built in two 'stages', and we (in the project) recovered it in a clear way: not only by building a living room area, but also one for the bedrooms (among others)." (MATEUS, 2023).

¹⁸ See, on this subject, the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer (1996).

¹⁹ See the quote in the descriptive memorandum 13/05/1996. And, additionally, "On the crown of the walls, honed glassstone will also be applied, recreating the cornice effect". Reference to the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer (1996).

²⁰ See the quote in the descriptive memorandum 13/05/1996. Reference to the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer (1996).

²¹ (...) "Or alternatively using yellow clay", as described/mentioned in the descriptive memorandum. Reference to the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer (1996).

²² See, on this subject, the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer (1996).

²³ See, on this subject, the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer: Draft Amendment to the Approved Project (1999).

²⁴ See, on this subject, the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer (1996).

²⁵ *Idem.*

²⁶ Reference to "The alteration, which greatly reduced the construction area, was due to the situation encountered on site. There was a structural inability of the exterior walls, due to their poor constitution, to receive the roof. It was thus decided, as part of the work at that stage, to consolidate the aforementioned walls, essentially for safety reasons when they contacted with the public road". Excerpt from the first paragraph of the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer: Draft Amendment to the Approved Project (1999).

²⁷ Reference to "For reasons of cost limits, since the operation involved large expenses at this stage, we opted for a small house with a very reduced program" in the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer: Draft Amendment to the Approved Project (1999).

²⁸ See, on this subject, (RODEIA, 2001).

²⁹ See, on this subject, the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer: Draft Amendment to the Approved Project (1999).

³⁰ *Idem.*

³¹ *Idem.*

³² *Idem.*

³³ Reference to "(...) Casa de Alenquer, which, was our first project! It was the first in which we felt it was truly possible to control a real project, in every sense, to control what we were doing." (RAMALHETE; LOPES; 2014)

³⁴ Through research and reflection on the "question" that raises the need for architecture. See, on this subject, (CARVALHO, 2011).

³⁵ Approximately between 1995 and 1999. The 'first process' determined the 'bases', although concentrated on remodeling / recovery, and the valorization of the whole set, as previously exposed.

³⁶ Reference to "The House in Alenquer is the most decisive project we have done, and, in a way, it prepared us for a condition where we understood that 'ideas' are fundamental in practice (along with a lot of research that has to be done for the construction of a House)." (MATEUS, 2023).

³⁷ See, on this subject, (BLÁZQUEZ JESÚS, 2019).

³⁸ Reference to the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer: Draft Amendment to the Approved Project (1999).

³⁹ Firstly, not only about the concept of 'between limits' introduced by João Belo Rodeia in 2002, but also the notion of a 'broad theory' (described by Manuel Aires Mateus in 2023) about 'limit' that was present before the project of the House in Alenquer: the Aires Mateus duo, Francisco and Manuel, demonstrate principles about the researching this same concept, looking for its materialization. In the middle of the process (work) of Narciso Ferreira House (1993), in Alcanena, Francisco and Manuel Aires Mateus dialogued about it with Manuel Graça Dias (Três Casas em Alcanena / 1996, Edgar Feldman, 25'), evoking concepts such as excavation and 'limit'.

⁴⁰ See, on this subject, (RODEIA; BAEZA, 2003).

⁴¹ *Idem.*

⁴² See, on this subject, the reference to the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer: Draft Amendment to the Approved Project (1999).

⁴³ *Idem.*

⁴⁴ Reference to: "Basically, also resorting to the memory of this project (St. George's Church) where the space that was used was the 'space between'." (MATEUS, 2023).

⁴⁵ Reference to "In this project, as fundamental, we were not only in fact aiming to 'build that void' between two things, but also, and above all, we were building the 'voids' on another scale. The same scale, referring to the ambition of project design always at numerous scales, in order to understand the importance of space. As a representation, we were building 'voids' at different scales, and we represented these same 'voids' at different scales in the project." (MATEUS, 2023).

⁴⁶ See, on this subject, (BAEZA, 2003).

⁴⁷ See, on this subject, (BLÁZQUEZ JESÚS, 2019).

⁴⁸ See, on this subject, (RODEIA; BAEZA, 2003).

⁴⁹ See, on this subject, in the Project Description (1999): "Respecting the relationship between the historic centre and the built environment, this project gave a new plastic meaning to the expression of the existing and recovered walls.", in the Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer: Draft Amendment to the Approved Project (1999).

⁵⁰ See, on this subject, (TUÑON ÁLVAREZ, 2016).

⁵¹ See, on this subject, (CARVALHO, 2011).

⁵² On this subject, the House mirrored a 'quantum leap' due to the circumstance. It is relevant to understand the positioning of the project in its contemporary context. Its reasoning, defined by the circumstances and between constraints, can be questioned. It will thus be prominent, obviously, to consider the materialized body as a result (loaded with ambition and intellectual intentionality) of the series of constraints that have occurred.

⁵³ Testimony obtained by Emílio Manuel Távora Vilar about the 'process' in Alenquer.

⁵⁴ See, on this subject, (CARVALHO, 2011).

⁵⁵ Reference to Project Description and Justification Memorandum / Remodelling at Rua da Judiaria, nº7 in Alenquer (1996).

⁵⁶ Reference to "Regarding the House in Alenquer, a foundation or continuity research? The House in Alenquer was a foundational project/research. I would go so far as to say that the House in Alenquer was the largest of the foundations. This is because it was a 'decisive turning point' for us, as a studio; it was the project and the moment in which we understood the possibility of 'controlling an idea'." (MATEUS, 2023).

⁵⁷ See, on this subject, (CARVALHO, 2011).

⁵⁸ Reference to "Basically, these three projects (Alenquer, Azeitão and Melides) were the most decisive in the course of professional practice, and they built the "vocabulary" (of work) of the studio (Mateus). Finally, the "vocabulary" that will allow us to build other (future) projects, such as the Sines Cultural Center (2001-2005), among others." (MATEUS, 2023).



⁵⁹ See, on this subject, (CARVALHO, 2021). In this sense, the process of materialization of a 'clear' idea allowed a continuity of working logics; considering that the House initiated a process (*modus operandi*) with the intention of permanence, a process / project in permanent fine-tuning, which characterized it. However, with a principle 'in constancy', identically, starting from the revealed possibility, it will be possible to analyze the latter both in processes and consequent works, until the most recent days.