

Between Earth and Sky: Art and Architecture in Dialogue in the Work of Rui Chafes and Camilo Rebelo

By Raffaella Maddaluno*

In a former hotel, bought and remodeled by a seed Portuguese producer, in Switzerland, in one of the underground spaces, an architect and a sculptor, also Portuguese, worked together to give life to an egg-shaped space. A space born from the need to give hospitality to a sculpture, Semente by Rui Chafes, has become a pretext for the reflection on numerous themes; the creative and process interaction between art and architecture, the symbolic force of a form like the egg, the possibility of creating a place inside the space and out of time. This collaboration opens the doors to a second chance of project, the client is the same, the place is Portuguese: Grandola, in Alentejo. This time the theme is housing, a concept that brings with it a series of reflections on the relationship between the identity of the person who designs the space and who will then live in it. The collaboration of the two protagonists is measured on this occasion not only with elements experimented in the previous project (the matter, the material, the form), but also with the landscape (its heights, its extensions), with nature (the colors, the smells, the temperature), with the time that will pass and that will put all this to the test. The present text aims to analyze the artistic path of both architect and sculptor, starting from the story of these two occasions in which art and architecture reach a moment of harmonious tangency in the silence and universality of forms. This analysis will reflect on their creative modes, possibly trying to recognize similarities, tangencies or deep divergences. It will also be an opportunity to continue to reflect on the timeless question of the interconnection between art and architecture.

Building a Relationship: Promise

"The place where Promise is born has the smell of immaterial dreams, the sound of the wind in the dry grass, the intense and merciless light, which I keep in my memory as a project with no beginning or end."¹

The genealogies of the encounters that give rise to architecture can sometimes constitute a separate story. However, as much you try to apply a rigorous methodology that redesigns the layout of the crossed paths, you must surrender to the inevitable presence of randomness. The history of the project *Promise* is the result of a meeting of three destinies that cross by chance. Olivier Jacout, the client, Camilo Rebelo (1972), architect from Porto, and Rui Chafes (1966), sculptor from Lisbon. The three meet around a table, and the client's request for the architect is bizarre, almost naive. "You work architecture like a sculptor: I would like you to design me a sculpture where you can live." He does not provide a detailed description for this request, only a handful of indications: two rooms, a

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1. R. Chafes, *Promise*. Interview (ed) R. Maddaluno. Lisboa. [20 July 2020.]

house for the farmer, an open-air water tank, and a place for his collection of cars. The meeting was sealed, and the challenge accepted, after a short time, again by chance, the opportunity for the location shows itself, the land of Grandôla, in the Portuguese Alentejo. A place of two facets, one towards the sea, with Comporta pines and cork trees, the other inland more arid. Everything proceeds, honoring the magic of the randomness of these events. Until the project is left too free, frightening the client, who feels the need to test this happy alchemy of crossed destinies. He entrusts the two, sculptor and architect, with an opportunity for design and collaboration; a more controlled, more accessible occasion, where it would have been easier to manage any relationship incompatibilities. The OVO project was born (2014) (see Figure 1). In his home, in the Swiss Alps, the client asks Camilo to design a space to house a sculpture by Rui, *Semente*. The shape of the space resembles an egg, and the chosen place is a rectangular room in the basement of the house. An exercise of consensual enslavement of architecture to sculpture is revealed.

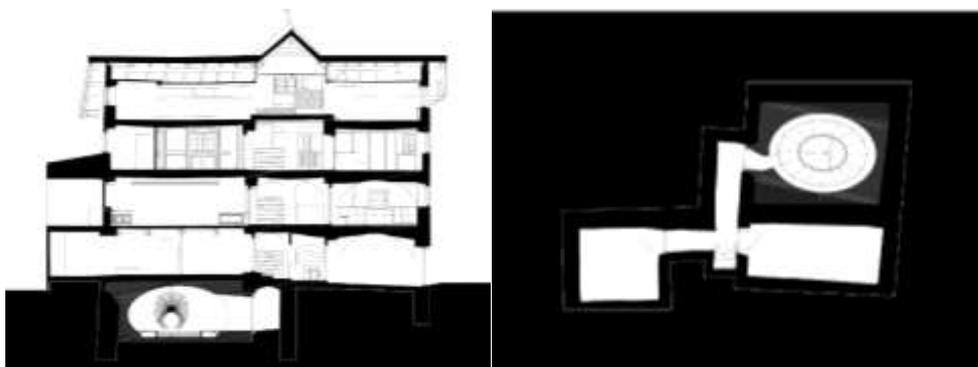


Figure 1. Camilo Rebelo, *Ovo's Project*

Source: Courtesy of the author.

Ovo: An Exercise in Respect

It is around this presence and within this idea of origin that the whole story of the relationship between a space and an object of art unfolds. From an interview, we clearly apprehend that the sculptor Rui Chafes recognises a fundamental difference in method between the sculptural process and the architectural process, but that they have always in some way been integrated. It is on the nature of this integration that space is built. Both processes are 'languages of space', and space exists only in the presence of limits, geometry and construction. There is a proximity to architecture, in this specific case, as the artist himself states. His work process is quite close to the architectural process, more than other artists: the iron sculpture requires a project and a technical distance motivated by the very same time of the technological process, which is different for example from what happens with most of the atelier painting.²

2. "Personally, my work process is much closer to architecture than what happens with many other artists: iron sculpture requires a project and a technical distance motivated by the time of the



Figure 2. Rui Chafes, *Semente*

Source: Courtesy of Camilo Rebelo.

The architectural necessity was to create a space to "accommodate" the seed, with a series of restraints required by the sculptor himself: that space had no edges that did not produce shadows or reflections on the sculpture, that it was homogeneous as a surface. The goal was that the dramatic and dark appearance of the materials would not be imposing. The architect welcomes these requests in their absolute legitimacy, shares its rigour and authoritativeness. This project is an exercise in enslaving a work of art. His previous design experience, the museum of Côa (2007–2010),³ had already put him to the test regarding the discretion of the architectural space in the face of the need to exhibit works of art and had already educated him about the humility to put at service his compositional activity. Usually, we see common practice concerning art museums to superimpose the architectural space on the exhibited works, which causes a certain difficulty on the part of the artists to feel "welcomed". A mistake that has not been made in the

technological process itself, which is very different, for example, than with most studio painting." R. Maddaluno, From an interview with Rui Chafes. [23 February 2019.]

3. A project with Tiago Pimentel.

museum of C oa.

The artist's requests set in motion a series of hypotheses also about the materials to be used: the continuity of the required surface could only convey towards choices such as marble, plaster, cement. The first solutions in the form of models presented by the architect were marble cubes, this being a material that would have alluded to the customer's origin (Alentejo) and that would have, due to its uniform materiality, met the sculptor's requests.

The realisation process starts from the construction of a wooden mould in full-scale that would have been the negative of the egg. Built on site, cast in concrete, the wooden egg is disassembled when the drying process is finished. The sculpture offers an image of lightness, of levity, and required around it a unitary space that did not fracture in the construction details, that offered itself continuously and devoid of moments of suspension, of fruition. The lightness of the sculpture needed something that would suggest mass, weight and protection. This ovoid space is completed by a marble floor, a desire not to lose the Alentejo reference. A translucent floor, which allows light to pass, transforming it into a large lamp. A significant effect obtained due to the constructive arrangement of superimposing thin slabs of marble and sheets of tempered glass like a sandwich. The light from below, indeed, does not create shadows.

Another design choice related to light is the introduction of colour, which together with some mandala drawings on the entrance door, transforms this space into a temple that leads to our origins. Each origin is associated with a colour, which has to do with the colour of our energetic aura, and every visitor who enters this space has the possibility of choosing the colour to light it. All this transforms it into a ritual space, but a secular rite that transports us to a journey to the origin, our origin, at the depths of the bottom of our path (see Figure 2).

This space offers something scarce today: a complete silence. And silence is the endpoint in which art and architecture meet, welcoming each other. As Camilo Rebelo states he looks at his space and without Rui's sculpture he hears noise. With Rui's work, he feels that there is silence, alliance, harmony.⁴

Silence irritates, makes presences more alive, forces a sudden awakening of the other senses. It causes angst because sound familiarity is lost, even if, very often, it is noisy.

When the artist first entered this egg, he felt an absolute and almost distressing silence. As Rui Chafes states, there is no doubt that perfection and beauty are present there, harmoniously, but there is an almost 'religious' dimension in space that does not cease to distress him. At the same time, he always has the feeling that he enters that space in order to start a journey and leave for another dimension. It is a starting point; it welcomes and makes one feel uncomfortable.⁵

All the space is designed so that Rui's sculpture can disseminate presence and silence. However, probably the most awaited result from this seed was the success

4. Maddaluno, From an interview with Camilo Rebelo. [1 December 2019].

5. A part of this paragraph was recently in an article by the same author: Maddaluno, "Uovo-Egg-Oeuf-Ovo: from the origins of the world to a creative objective," in *Intelligence, Creativity and Fantasy*, 65-70 (ed.) M. Kong, M. R. Monteiro and M. P. Neto. London: London: CRC Press, 2019, 67-68.

of the collaboration between the protagonists, and the rational verification that the project had gone in the correct direction.

The Verbal Traces of Living

These projects give the opportunity to reflect on an ancient and complex verb: to live. Although living is a reality, it can only be grasped through a representation, a form because we perceive it only if it is transmuted into figures, models, with the task of describing forms of life. It is not simply a verb but the traces that this verb leaves because it brings into play the physicality of the body with all its needs, but at the same time organizes them according to patterns of habits that belong to the cultural sphere.⁶

The difficulty of relating to the concept of living lies in the fact that it embodies the forms of life and its most elusive characteristics such as heterogeneity, plurality, cyclicity. We are not just talking about physical bodies, although the needs of the latter are contemplated and functionally resolved, but about relationships between bodies, spaces, and voids between spaces, gestures, things, ceremonies and rituals.

The etymology of the verb *Abitare* (habito-as) underlies the gesture of having, habitually possessing, which opens the meaning of the verb to the idea of property and belonging.

The protagonist of this verb, or rather of its traces, is the body that positions itself, as physicality, in a space that it possesses and dominates, but at the same time to which it belongs. The consciousness of this body lives by the same protagonism, which through the abstraction of thinking detaches itself from what surrounds it. This coexistence between body and consciousness sets in motion a dynamic dialectic between objects and subjects, between interior and exterior, between forms of life and the essence of life. The living space welcomes the body but also welcomes the project of constant flux that one's life implies. Therefore, when we talk about living, we must contemplate another element which is temporality, because living manifests itself in space but takes place over time. The time of living, however, is not resolved in its constant mutation, but in the eternal present of everyday life, in the gestures that are always the same, which are renewed at every sunrise.

In the circularity of the actions, and in the network of movements, a rituality is consummated which is defined by the inhabitant but which in turn defines and identifies him. This is why it is difficult to separate the town from those who live in it, and it is for this reason that it is difficult not to design a home without contemplating who will live there.

The architect's task is hard, as they enter this circular temporality in a desperate attempt to grasp an exceptionality that can give life to the project. The artist's task is even harder, as they have to grasp the temporal abstractions of living, or the whispers of the client's sensibility just waiting to manifest

6. M. Vitta, *Dell'abitare. Corpi, spazi, oggetti, immagini* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 2008), 4.

themselves. When asked how to enter a private house with one's art, Rui Chafes replies that one does not enter, one is already there, the works are already present, in the client's head, in the maze of the house. The artist enters only to confirm that those are the right sculptures just waiting to be born. He continues by stating that the artist only has to find out where the eggs are waiting to hatch.⁷

This project is designed to lose the habits that the client has developed in his life and force him to reconnect with his nature and the nature of the spaces around. Hence the fragmentation of spaces, the idea of a shape almost resulting from an explosion, where each fragment has its place far from the others. The house away from the parking lot, the pool away from the house, the outbuilding away from everything. And when everything is far away, the only hypothesis is to reduce the distances, how? By walking.

Paraphrasing a quotation from Zevi, architecture is a bipolar structure, with an "artistic" pole, defined by the text created by the author (in this case the architect) and an "aesthetic" pole, corresponding to the concretization implemented by the reader (in this case the client, or those who live in the house). This polarity produces a consequence: the final work never completely coincides neither with the text (in this case the designer who performs the role of author function) nor with its concretization (the inhabitant as protagonist). The architect finds himself in the difficult role of the curious spectator, who welcomes and respects the present and future freedoms of the inhabitant.⁸

The architect's difficult task is having to relate to the identity of the client. In addition, the identity of a person has a part destined to remain unchanging over time: what is called the *idem identity*. And this is the easiest to identify and welcome by the designer. But the identity is also composed of another identity, which takes into account the changes in that it considers the person as a character in a story that must be told. This is the narrative identity or *ipse identity*.⁹ In the history of each individual, there is their identity, which is the result of a narrative. This narrative cannot simply be an autobiography, because it would represent the way in which each of us sees ourselves. But it must be resolved in a biography, that is, in the writing of how others see and talk about us.

If we wanted to extend this reflection on the duplicity of the roles of landscape, paraphrasing Turri, it is of no less importance than the research on how the man actor undergoes the scenario and intones his performance in the landscape is about the way in which he sets up the landscape to act or represent his own stories.¹⁰

7. Chafes, *Promise*, 2020.

8. Vitta, *Dell'abitare. Corpi, spazi, oggetti, immagini*, 2008, 117.

9. On the theme of identity and recognition Paul Ricoeur has dedicated profound reflections. See *Soi-même comme un autre*, (Self as another) 1990, (trad. It. *Sé come un altro*), Jaka Nook, Milano 1993); *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, (Path of Recognition) 2004 (trad. It. *Percorsi del riconoscimento*, Raffaello Cortina, Bompiani, Milano 2005).

10. E. Turri, *Il Paesaggio come teatro. Dal territorio vissuto al territorio rappresentato* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1998), 36.

Living between Spirit and Nature

"Architecture, like the fire of Prometheus, separates culture from nature, the discrete from the continuous, and unites time and space while extracting the defined object from the indistinct and undifferentiated; it is universal particularity, separate entity and measured limit, and it is sacred as such for this: in the most ancient texts of humanity it is already written that existence is taken from non-existence through measurement."¹¹

The final project of the house is a set of constructive events: the main house, the farmer's house, an open water cistern / swimming pool, a garage. The choice to start from the suggestions of the nature of the place goes against a common design practice of imposing presences through formal language. The gesture of "letting emerge" has replaced the gesture, dear to the modern movement, of "placing" objects formally pre-established or partially adaptable to the place (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. *Planimetric View of the Project Promise*

Source: Courtesy of Camilo Rebelo.

As Bonesio states, the logic of places is, contrary to what a modernist homologating abstract vision has imposed on us, "a logic of singular, concrete, differential, territorializing plurality."¹²

Although the conviction that intervening is always a constructive gesture that implies an unavoidable modification of the space is maintained in the project, it is clear that the approach is one of dialogue with nature. In this design work mode, the tools of the architectural language go beyond the conventions and construction customs, leaving open new possibilities: a tree, or a typographic dimension, a wall, a window, have the same potential to define and limit the space.

Paraphrasing Simmel in an essay on the aesthetics of landscape, this journey towards nature leads us to perceive, each with different degrees of attention, water and trees, meadows and fields, hills and houses, and the myriads of transformations of light and clouds. But this observation made of single details does not convince

11. G. Bilancioni, "Prefazione. I cardini celesti dell'architettura sacra," in *Architettura, Tempo, Eternità. Il simbolismo degli astri e del tempo nell'architettura della tradizione*, XI-XXV. (ed.) A. Snodgrass and G. Bilancioni. Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2008, XII.

12. L. Bonesio, "Il paesaggio come luogo dell'abitare," in *Estetica e paesaggio*, 239-268 (ed.) P. D'Angelo. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009, 258.

our mind that it needs a totality that he defines as landscape, but which in this case we could call a project an idea, an overview, or intuition.¹³

As Dewey warns, the enemies of aesthetics are the conventional experiences of the world, those that oblige us to monotony, to experience the rudimentary. And it offers us as a solution, the great power of imagination, which represents an important resource, together with perception, to accept with conscience the aesthetic challenge that nature launches, and to create new points of view of the world. Points of view that the architectural project contemplates at the exact moment in which the creative process begins.¹⁴

We should try to fully understand the importance of this creative moment, probably helping us with the definition of the fields of our semantic discourse. First, when we talk about nature, we mean the infinite connection of things, becoming through being born and destroyed, the unitary flow of the future, in spatial and temporal continuity. Nature, as Simmel states, is not composed of parts, on the contrary it is THE UNITY OF A TOTALITY and in the moment in which something is separated from it, it can no longer be called nature. Nature is unity without boundaries. When we refer to nature as an element of reality, we are probably talking about an internal quality of it. Instead, to be more specific, we should talk about landscape and with it the project, where delimiting is absolutely fundamental for its existence in a temporal horizon. The parts of a landscape may have the value of nature but require an individual act with respect to the universal and the indissoluble unity of nature.¹⁵

What man does, when he produces phenomena (among which we can include built projects) in the landscape category is a real spiritual act composed of: a complete vision felt as self-sufficient, but connected to something infinitely more extensive, where the limits of feelings are not perceived.

The work of man exists as an objective structure, yet intimately connected with the vitality of his being, of his soul. Nature, which in its being and in its deep sense, ignores individuality, is transformed into the individuality of the landscape by the gaze of man, who divides and configures what it has divided into distinct forms of unity.¹⁶

What the architect does on this place starts from a simple gesture: to feel the place in its dual meaning, as a landscape and as part of a natural totality. Feeling is fuelled by a relationship that is established through walking, walking, stopping and observing.

Eugenio Turri talks to us about the importance of walking by observing, walking in the perception of reality. He considers it a pause from the action, which allows us to immerse ourselves in the landscape, to breathe its breath. Walking allows you to relate to the landscape in a twofold way: as actors (insiders when

13. G. Simmel, "Filosofia del paesaggio," in *Estetica del paesaggi*, 39-52 (ed.) P. D'Angelo. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009, 41.

14. J. Dewey, *Arts as experience* (New York: Perigree Books, 1980), 40.

15. Simmel, "Filosofia del paesaggio," 2009, 42.

16. *Ibid*, 43.

you are inside), but also as outsiders, that is, as spectators, because in walking we do nothing but look, not being finally engaged in anything.¹⁷

This is what somehow, we are called to do when we visit the place where Promise was born. You start walking, for no particular reason. And so the constructive realities present there manifest themselves, as if to force us to stop to observe, to then start walking again, to observe and then again to stop.

Sensory perception must lead us to the rules of artifice, or project. And the big question of a creative project that is imposed not without a certain violence is: How can I experience the artifice without necessarily having to forget the nature of elements? These elements of Nature obliges us to an experience in which the body must necessarily be solicited. These elements, the wind, the sun, provoke physical reactions: cold, heat, comfort, discouragement. For a highly urban person, such as the client, who spent most of his life between London and Paris, the experience of nature meant in terms of the project, obliging him to go on foot.



Figure 4. *Access to the Garage and Sculpture by Rui Chafes*

Source: Courtesy of Camilo Rebelo.

The housing complex has become an opportunity to experience through spatial fragments, connected to each other by nature. Between the point where you arrive by car (the garage) and the main house, you can walk three hundred meters. The route tests the body: the ground is not flat, you can feel the wind, feel the heat, possibly catching the rain, seeing the landscape, listening to the voices of nature.

17. Turri, *Il Paesaggio come teatro. Dal territorio vissuto al territorio rappresentato*, 1998, 186.

And as you walk, the words of Rui Chafes come to mind who says you have to allow yourself the luxury of time to be able to listen to the voices in the wind.

The composition welcoming the different natures, both of the protagonists, and methodological, resembles a jazz musical ensemble, where everyone contributes with their individuality, and respecting the rhythm of the place, to create an episode of constructive life. It is no coincidence that Promise is the name of a musical album by Omar Sousa, a friend of the client and who has sometimes accompanied the creative meetings of the project.



Figure 5. *Details of the Interior of the Garage and the Iron Door of Rui Chafes*
Source: photographs by the author.

This contact with nature implies abandoning all that is not our body, all that artificially complements our identity. This is what happens for example in the process of identification with objects. Those three hundred meters in the project divide the two moments where the artifice enters into a relationship with our

identity: the first through the object (garage-car), the second through living (home). In the middle, we, the body, who through the experience of nature, experience our essence. Sculpture and architecture meet in this first place of the project: the garage. A circular space, which refers to timeless models, such as the Pantheon. A place where time is measured through light. A place where an iron nail reminds us of the hand of a clock and the divine circularity of the passing of the hours. In this circular space, which is accessed through a heavy and light portal at the same time, where the artist's hand has been able to bend the rigidity of the iron in favor of lightness and transparency, we begin our transformation towards ourselves. Everything is artifice, even the walls: a continuous corrugated wall reminiscent of a curtain that separates from the world. Its archetype of reference seems to be the tholos of the prehistoric cave: a space like that of the Gurfa cave in Sicily, or the sacred building of Peter Zumthor, a space enlivened by the changing light that enters the oculus (as later seen in the Pantheon) and from the dust atmosphere that that light projects on the rough surfaces of the rock (see Figures 4-5).

The main house is positioned in such a way that noises from the cars are not heard, even the windows give their backs to this reality of the car. As Carlos Martí Aris says, "the noise of the world is oppressive and deafening." The whole project is designed to have an experience of silence, just like the OVO project. "The only one capable of opposing noise is silence. Silence opens a deep breach in the convulsive and feverish scenario of our daily life. It generates a cavity and an empty space, which distracts us from the vortex of current affairs. However, paradoxically, this invocation to silence is only a demand for the word. In fact, silence is not opposed to the word, of which it is a faithful ally, but to the noise, which is its archenemy¹⁸ (see Figure 6).

Promise has the ability to generate silence, and when a project has this property, as Martí Aris says, it allows you to look at reality with an abstract look, thanks to which you can enter the dimension of contemplation, and not only of function. And it is in this dimension that the work of Rui Chafes works, allowing housing to transcend. This silence that is heard here does not cancel language but transcends it.¹⁹

18. C. Martí Arís, *Silenzi eloquenti* (ed.) S. Perini. (Milano: Christian Marinotti Edizioni, 2007), 120-121.

19. *Ibid.*, 121.



Figure 6. *Photos and Drawings of the Main House*
Source: Courtesy of Camilo Rebelo.

A Built Void

"A house is a space that does not exist, which must be built daily, without ever stopping, infinitely. And that it will never be over." Rui Chafes²⁰

20. Chafes, *Promise*, 2020.



Figure 7. *One of the Windows of the Main House*

Source: Courtesy of Camilo Rebelo.

This transcendence from language takes him even further, when he affirms that art is not personal or individual expression. Art is an expression of emptiness and of the ancient, primordial ideas of humanity that have been transmitted, learned and reworked over time. It is for this reason that we are able to love a Greek, Egyptian, Etruscan sculpture without necessarily loving its creator who we do not know. The artist's journey is to transport the flame, passing it on to others through new images and objects.²¹

Rui Chafes in his art always tries to preserve a space for silence, for the incomprehensible, and even a space for mystery. He is only interested in art as a producer of irrational and acute energy because art is anything but communication. The Promise House recalled the works of Oteiza, in its process of emptying and unemployment of matter. The empty space that is obtained from this process is a static, calming and contemplative space, a refuge.

"If the current sculpture - explains the author - tends to imagine the movement and produce it, merging with nature or with man himself, I instead look for the statue for an empty solitude, an open spatial silence, that man can occupy spiritually "(...). "I need - he adds - to break the connection of time with space, that is to transform the space of external reality into a space of internal reality, into an immobile spatiality, which means capable of living outside of time."²²

21. Chafes, *Sob a pele* (ed.) S. A. Matos (Lisboa: Documenta. Cadernos do atelier-museu Júlio Pomar, 2016), 62-63.

22. J. Oteiza, "Hacia un arte receptivo. Towards a receptive art," in *Espacialato. Oteiza*. (Pamplona: Cultural Rioja, 2000), 123.

The author's goal is therefore purely spiritual and is manifested not in the movement but in the stillness conceived as a final silence -totem.²³

While the sculptural/architectural mass tapers away, the internal void takes shape and takes over the space. This evacuated space becomes available, but traces of the sub-action process still remain available. This manipulation of matter, through the necessity of technique, brings sculpture and architecture closer together. As Rui Chafes says, "mediation" introduced by technique and also by manual work brings sculpture closer to architecture. But he also goes on to say that there is a fundamental difference that unequivocally delimits its areas. Architecture exists because it provides answers to a series of practical problems, which relate to space (see Figure 7).

On the contrary, the artist does not look for solutions to practical problems, instead he looks for the best way to ask uncomfortable questions, to create problems, to disturb the world. Maybe that's why, says Rui Chafes, art is absolutely useless, because it has no function. In summary: In architecture "for every problem there is a solution". In art "for every solution there is a problem."²⁴

It is work on the void that Rui Chafes has always done. It guards the void with its iron armour, it protects it because it generates mystery. In reality, he says, art is a construction and will always be a language of emptiness. The void can be at the same time, the most sterile hell, the nest of the impossible, and the only possible field where we can deposit a shape, a color, a word, a sound, little more (...) the void, nothing, are the closest attitude to God.²⁵

23. M. Pelay Orozco, *Oteiza, su vida, su obra, su pensamiento, su palabra* (Bilbao: La Gran Enciclopedia Vasca, 1978), 194.

24. Chafes, *Sob a pele*, 2016, 120-121. Camilo and I found ourselves at this point of enormous respect for each other, in this wait for the decisions of the other to move forward. Camilo works with a team that develops ideas and models and I am unable to work with models and plan sculptures on models. I can only react to real space, I have to live a space, be physically inside it, in its presence, to be able to react and think about some sculptures. This is a point of procedural disagreement with Camilo or any architect (Chafes, *Promise*, 2020).

25. Chafes, *Sob a pele*, 2016, 56.



Figure 8. Cottage House

Source: Courtesy of Camilo Rebelo.

A Non Conclusion

In Promise The matter, transformed into constructive materials, continues to perceive itself in all its essence. The walls are reminiscent of the earth, even if they are not earthly. The whole house, in its constructive episodes, is the result of sophisticated and expensive excavation and construction techniques. *Promise* is a constructive action not yet completed; therefore, the totality and completeness of the final result is not perceived.

What clearly emerges, however, is that we are in the presence of an architecture that has the ability to test us. It forces us to reconsider the automatisms and images of the house we are used to. It requires us to leave the numerous cultural, social and well-being restrictions that our time has become accustomed to. And free us from the layers, we and our body can walk from one place to another, thinking in the end that architecture is a conquest (see Figure 8).

Promise, as Rui Chafes tells us, is a large space, the result of a dream of a man who does not consider it just his dream, but a gift to be left to those who recognize the beauty of forms and non-forms. Each space is the gesture of trust in the immateriality and continuity of the dream: this is why it is called *Promise*. There will be no end word, because there has never been a real beginning.²⁶

26. Chafes, *Promise*, 2020. "Promise is a large and wide space, made for the dream of one man that does not consider it his own dream, nor his own property, not even his own decision. "Promise" started with a dream, the dream of bringing a space to the world that belongs to the world, not to a single person. In that matter, Olivier's point of view was always very clear and lucid,

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without any kind of craving or material attachment: he always wanted "Promise" to be a gift to the world, to the others, to the ones who recognise the beauty of Form and the beauty of Non-Form. We can see it as a high form of generosity as well as a high form of future vision and absolute trust. It is a gift to the ones who can pass through the world without wanting to leave traces, like birds in the sky. We are building "Promise" at the same time as we are dreaming "Promise", as a house without beginning neither an end. It will not be a "work in progress" but much more an unfinished state of mind, where each wall, each spot of light, each room is part of an immaterial and continuous trust in Beauty and Dream. That is why it is called "Promise". No one will ever finish it, because it has never begun. We all hope that this unnameable project will offer people the desire of freedom and conscience of the greatness and ephemere beauty of our lives. Without wanting to own what it is impossible to own. It is the shadow of a brief permanence, always moving in time, back and forward." from a text written in English sent by mail by Rui Chafes to the author [20 July 2020].