

# DRAWING MATTER

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Smithsons' Obelisk and Siza's Columns relocated on adjacent sites**

On Saturday 23 April 2016 Drawing Matter will commence an evolving programme of installations which will see two celebrated architectural projects that explore the relationship between architecture, sculpture and landscape, re-erected on new sites in the valley adjacent to the farmyard at Shatwell, in Somerset.

These are Alison and Peter Smithson's *Obelisk* (designed 1994) and Álvaro Siza's *Columns* (designed 2014).

Over the coming months both works will be carefully reinstated on new permanent sites under the direction of Drawing Matter, an organisation that champions the process of architecture through collecting, archiving and commissioning. Phase 1 of the programme will see *Obelisk* erected at Shatwell on Saturday 23 April. Siza's *Columns* will follow at the end of the summer.

*Obelisk* was originally conceived in 1984 by celebrated British architects Alison and Peter Smithson for an intensely urban site in Siena, then reworked in 1994 as a woven spiral called the Inlook Tower (a playful reversal of Patrick Geddes's Outlook Tower in Edinburgh). Peter lived to see the 15 metre timber obelisk fabricated and first raised into position within the parkland of the estate of Hadspen House, Castle Cary in 2002, in an act of architectural patronage by Drawing Matter's principal Niall Hobhouse. It was then seen as an obelisk within the landscape, to be viewed in the round, fabricated of oak cut from the trees planted on the estate by Niall's grandfather, which would weather whitish in the prevailing wind, and reinforced with stainless steel banding and a stainless steel cap.

Now at Shatwell Farm a team of specialists overseen by Lucas Wilson, grandson of the Smithsons, is preparing for the re-erection of *Obelisk*. It previously stood on a concrete foundation, but in an experimental technical departure, Surefoot – a concrete-free foundation system – will be used to simplify the installation.

Speaking of *Obelisk's* relocation, Lucas Wilson said:

'Niall is a hugely generous patron of architecture, and Drawing Matter is putting architecture at the forefront of a discussion which champions the work of great architects without agenda. It is a real privilege to work with Drawing Matter, and with our collaborators and installation team, to ensure that my grandparents' designs remain relevant.'

*Columns* by Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza was originally commissioned by The Royal Academy of Arts as a site-specific installation in the courtyard of Burlington House in London, as part of the 2014 exhibition *Sensing Spaces*, in which a select group of contemporary architects created installations exploring the sensory experience of architecture. Cast of bright yellow concrete the ensemble comprises three columns,

one of which lies on the ground with its capital beside it, the second stands capital-less, the third with its capital intact. Inspired by the architect's first response to the original courtyard setting, viewing the Burlington House façade through the archway from Piccadilly, these fragments refer back to the birth of the column.

The arrival of *Columns* at Shatwell marks its second reinstatement in a rural location: last spring it was exhibited at Hauser & Wirth Somerset in Bruton. As at Bruton, here at Shatwell Siza has directed the choice of location, placing the arrangement of columns within their new setting to charge the spaces around them. Siza himself says that with the new placement 'we risk doing something very interesting' by deliberately challenging the expectations of the visitor.

In their new positions *Columns* and *Obelisk* will raise questions about the true nature and possible future of Shatwell, a semi-derelict agricultural complex deep in the countryside, which has played host to a series of architectural commissions in recent years.

Siza's *Columns* will be sited by Shatwell's Dairy House (by Skene Catling de la Pena) and the Archive building (by Hugh Strange Architects). A hundred metres to the north, the Smithsons' *Obelisk* will stand in open ground between two agricultural buildings, Cowshed and Haybarn (by Stephen Taylor Architects).

The erection of these two works is part of the ongoing evolution of the Shatwell site. Current commissions for Shatwell include projects by Clancy Moore Architects, Florian Beigel and Philip Christou, and Siza himself.

**Press enquiries:**

Claire Curtice Publicists  
+44 (0)20 7613 1442  
claire@clairecurtice.co.uk

**Notes to editors:**

Credits

Obelisk

Design:	Alison and Peter Smithson
Collaborators:	Jim Blackburn, The Timber Frame Company Cameron Scott, Timber Design Limited
Engineer:	John Beveridge
Construction:	The Timber Frame Company
Stainless Steel:	Bannell Engineering
Project Management:	Lucas Wilson

Columns

Design:	Álvaro Siza
Engineer:	Sampaio
Fabrication:	Pregaia

**Drawing Matter** is an organisation founded by Niall Hobhouse. It is a family of activities championing the belief that buildings act in concert with their surroundings and conditions. Drawing Matter is grounded in a collection of drawings, dating from the Renaissance to today, forming a body of works which allows us to examine the practice of drawing and the impact of the designer's hand on the discourse of architecture.

The Drawing Matter collection is made accessible to the research community, on request, to stimulate new lines of enquiry. Works within the collection are often included in public display as a result of Drawing Matter's on-going collaborations with international museums, archives, exhibition spaces and educational institutions. Aspects of the collection are also made widely visible through publication, research workshops, and a dedicated website.

[www.drawingmatter.org](http://www.drawingmatter.org)

### **Shatwell Farm**

Still in part a working farmyard, Shatwell has been the site of a series of contemporary architectural commissions, loosely based on a strategic masterplan by Cedric Price from 2002. These include: Dairy House by Skene Catling de la Pena, 2005; Cowshed by Stephen Taylor Architects, 2013; the Archive by Hugh Strange Architects, 2014; Haybarn by Stephen Taylor Architects, 2016.

Current commissions include: a residential and storage scheme by Clancy Moore Architects; the refurbishment of an old tractor shed into a new administrative building by Florian Beigel and Philip Christou; and a service link between two grain silos by Siza, due to be built this autumn.

### **Alison (1928 – 1993) & Peter Smithson (1923 – 2003)**

The subject of much discussion and debate, Alison and Peter Smithson hold a central place in any conversation about post-war British architecture. Their ideas about design helped shape and rebuild a country completely changed after the war. Their prolific written works and teaching created a legacy that has outlived their relatively few built works, a legacy that has continued to grow with new publications and studies still appearing. The Smithsons continue to inspire a generation of younger architects.

### **Álvaro Siza (1933)**

Celebrated Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza has received the world's top architectural awards, including The Pritzker Architecture Prize and the Royal Institute of British Architects' Royal Gold Medal. His work can be found in Europe, South America, North America and Asia, and spans all sectors. In the UK he was selected to design the Serpentine Pavilion (2005) with Eduardo Souto de Moura. Siza's work is distinguished by its seemingly effortless integration with the surrounding landscape.

### **Surefoot**

Surefoot is a light-weight, highly portable concrete-free foundation system. A series of structural pins or micro piles are driven with portable tools to form a 'battered array' joined by a steel plate cap. In contrast to conventional piling systems, Surefoot functions in a very similar way to how a tree's root system works, resolving foundations at comparatively shallow depths.

Low cost and incredibly fast, Surefoot provides instant bearing capacity and can be used for practically any structure, from multi-storey dwellings to obelisks!

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