

FUNDAÇÃO L L LIVRARIA LELLO

FOUNDATION LIVRARIA LELLO UNVEILS HEADQUARTERS AT THE MONASTERY OF LEÇA DO BALIO TO OPEN JUNE 22 WITH INAUGURAL PROGRAMMING

Dedicated to the human costs of misinformation, the first exhibition at the Monastery of Leça do Balio, "Act The Thought", will unfold the stories of personalities like Salman Rushdie, Malala Yousafzai, and Ai Wei Wei

The recently requalified Monastery includes an extension and stand-alone sculpture "Wayfarer" by Álvaro Siza

Open to the public June 22, 2024



Courtesy of Alexandre Delmar

Porto, Portugal, May 8, 2024 – Foundation Livraria Lello announces the opening of the newly requalified **Monastery of Leça do Balio**, its headquarters and a multipurpose nucleus open to the community. Acquired in 2016 by the **Lionesa Group**, the Monastery features an extension designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect, **Álvaro Siza**. Foundation Livraria Lello will inaugurate the Monastery with a robust public program, including "**Act the Thought**", an

exhibition dedicated to the theme of misinformation and its human costs, highlighting the stories of personalities such as **Salman Rushdie, Malala Yousafzai, and Ai Wei Wei** along with an installation created through JR's global art project, *Inside Out*. **The exhibitions will be open to the public from June 22 to December 31, 2024.**

In response to the growing concern about misinformation, identified by the World Economic Forum as the greatest threat of 2024, Foundation Livraria Lello opens the doors of the Leça do Balio Monastery with the exhibition "Act The Thought." The exhibition symbolizes the Foundation's approach to the complexity of truth, acknowledging the multiple shades it can take on. By promoting information and digital literacy, Foundation Livraria Lello reaffirms its commitment to the pursuit of truth and the promotion of an informed and critical society.

On June 15th, outside of Lello Bookstore in Porto's city center, the *Inside Out* mobile photo booth will capture the faces of community members, promoting an artistic manifesto against the rise of misinformation. The photographs will be exhibited at the Monastery in a large-scale photographic intervention starting June 22nd. Portuguese artist **Diana Policarpo**'s sound installation invites the public to immerse themselves in deep reflections on the phenomenon of misinformation. In combination with "Act the Thought" and Siza's serene tribute to the Monastery's history, Foundation Livraria Lello rounds out a program that encourages critical reflection among all who visit.



Courtesy of Filipe Braga

“The inauguration of “Act the Thought” marks a pivotal moment in our journey—a fusion of history with contemporary thought, where literature and art meet to spark discussion and inspire action against the backdrop of our times. The exhibition, deeply meaningful to our mission, directly confronts the challenge of misinformation, recognized by the World Economic Forum as the greatest global threat of our era. It urges us to reflect on our capacity to influence and to be influenced, to speak and to understand, to act and to think critically in the face of pervasive untruths.” shares **President of the Foundation Livraria Lello, Rita Marques**.

A National Monument, the Monastery of Leça do Balio dates to the Roman period. **Álvaro Siza**’s project, in tandem with landscape architect **Sidónio Pardal**, promotes a dialogue between the storied past and a forward-looking vision that seeks to preserve and enhance its cultural and spiritual significance. Siza’s new, open-air landmark spans 4,305 square feet and is crafted in white concrete. The towers that articulate the structure stand 40 feet and 46 feet tall, and the interior and exterior sidewalks are constructed of permeable, stabilized gravel. Siza’s free-standing sculpture, **“Wayfarer,”** stands 6 feet tall and anchors the structure to act as a poetic tribute to the pilgrim’s inner journey and physical passage along the nearby **Camino de Santiago**. As a result, the additional space offers a serene retreat for visitors to reflect on the Monastery’s exhibitions. Outdoors, the gardens of the campus will be inaugurated in 2025 and have been maintained by Sidónio Pardal and integrated into the landscape with new pathways.

“I was asked to design a building project that would highlight, that would mark the importance of Leça do Balio in the Way of Saint James. A new landmark in the building that occupies part of a geometric garden belonging to the monastery and has a connection with the church itself,” says **Pritzker Prize-winning architect Álvaro Siza**

The requalification of the Monastery of Leça do Balio and the addition by Álvaro Siza represent a fusion of history, architecture, and landscape, while also paying tribute to the roots of the Monastery as an important structure along the Camino de Santiago. The integration with Lionesa Business Hub, a business center with 7,000 employees from over 50 nationalities, underscores a unique blend of tradition and modernity, fostering a creative environment for employees and visitors alike. Drawing inspiration from the literary legacy of the eponymous bookstore, Livraria Lello, the Foundation advocates for reading as a transformative tool. Livraria Lello Foundation is a cultural entity dedicated to promoting access to books and knowledge, amplifying critical thinking, and empowering the relationship with territories and heritage.

The Monastery of Leça de Balio is open to the public from June 22.

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ABOUT FOUNDATION LIVRARIA LELLO

Foundation Livraria Lello is a cultural organization dedicated to promoting critical thinking, access to knowledge and empowering relationships between communities and heritage. Inspired by the literary heritage of Livraria Lello, the Foundation aims to create a contemporary heritage, encouraging reading as a transformative tool. With the audacious mission of "empowering people to read the world", the Foundation seeks to inspire actions that bring prosperity, contributing to a more inclusive and culturally rich society.

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ABOUT LIONESA GROUP

Lionesa Group is a family-run group from the North of Portugal that owns the brands Lionesa Business Hub, Livraria Lello, and Teatro Sá da Bandeira. With the mission to transform Porto and the North into the happiest territory to live in, its actions are centered on 4 pillars: talent, culture, art, and heritage. The group manages a diversified portfolio of businesses in the areas of retail, tourism, culture, and offices, with the vision of attracting and retaining talent to the territory - the great engine of the North's economy.

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ABOUT INSIDE OUT PROJECT

In 2011, French artist JR launched the Inside Out Project. Using his artistic practice as inspiration, he created a participatory platform that helps individuals and communities convey a message through large-scale black-and-white portraits that are exhibited in public spaces. More than 500,000 people from over 150 countries have participated in Inside Out. The project has reached every continent, with initiatives tackling topics such as diversity, community, feminism, racism, climate change, education, children's rights, and art. The result of this work is then documented and shared online.

ABOUT ÁLVARO SIZA

Álvaro Joaquim Melo Siza Vieira was born in Matosinhos (near Porto), in 1933. From 1949-55 he studied at the School of Architecture, University of Porto. Throughout his career, Álvaro Siza has received numerous awards, distinctions, and other honors, including honorary doctorates. In 1988 Siza received the **Gold Medal from the Madrid College of Architects**; he was the first winner of the renowned **Mies van der Rohe Contemporary Architecture Prize**. In 1992, Siza was awarded the **Pritzker Prize** from the Hyatt Foundation and, 6 years later, the **Alvar Aalto Medal**, the **Prince of Wales Prize** from Harvard University, and the **Imperial Prize of Japan**. In 2002, he received the **Golden Lion** for the Best Project at the Venice Architecture Biennale, where 10 years later Siza would receive the **Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement** at the Venice Architecture Biennale; he also received the **Urbanism Special Grand Prize of France** in 2005 and the **Spanish National Architecture Prize** in 2019. Siza is the recipient of the highest honorary distinctions in Portugal and France. The academies of various countries have also honored him with several *honoris causa* in Spain, Switzerland, Italy, Peru, Brazil, Romania, Argentina, China and, of course, Portugal.

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