

AGROTURISM IN MELGAÇO

Melgaço. Portugal

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Architect / Arquitecto: Correia/Ragazzi Arquitectos, **Collaborators:** Juliano Ribas Silva, Marta Pinheiro de Almeida, Rita Breda, **Model:** Patrícia Morais, Ricardo Amaral, **Structures, Hidraulic, Technical Facilities and electrical engineering:** OMEGA, **Entrepreneur:** Pedro Barroso Soares, Unipessoal Lda, **Site Area:** 18,74000 sqm, **Construction area:** 621,35 sqm, **Project-Completion Date:** 2013-2016, **Photographer:** ©Juan Rodriguez

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Abstract: When asked to design the rehabilitation and expansion of a traditional rural construction of the north of Portugal, we began by analysing the word preserve, and the dictionary proposes: protection and maintenance. Paradoxically, when referred to the past, these synonyms may indicate opposite concepts: do we speak of protecting the past or maintaining the past? Reflecting on the rehabilitation, we established a synthesis between conserving – the traditional construction, scale and characteristics of the plot – and rehabilitating – providing all the modern and technical facilities required and introducing new materials in dialogue with the traditional stone walls such as concrete – to achieve an intervention respectful of the history, that fits the nature of the non-urban site, promoting and enhancing the authenticity of the region.

Key Words: Rehabilitation, Portuguese architecture, Vernacular, contemporary, Concrete

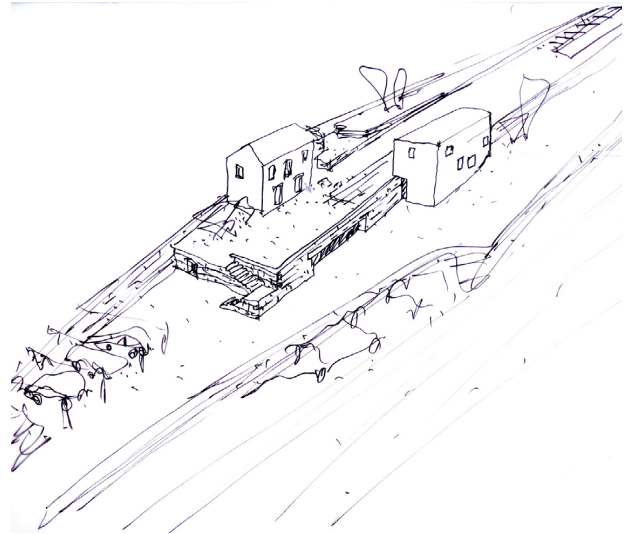


Figure 1. Model and sketch drawing of the proposal. Author drawing, 2013. ©Correia/Ragazzi Arquitectos archive.



Figure 2. Before and after of the preexisting house with the new addition volume. Correia/Ragazzi Arquitectos. 2016. ©Juan Rodríguez.

To rehabilitate, how can one intervene and still preserve architecture

A property of very interesting characteristics and cultivated land with vineyards and a pine forest, consisting of terraces in granite masonry walls and a house, characteristic of the Minho region, in the north of Portugal. The clients intended to preserve the property, to conduct a rehabilitation process with the intent of creating a tourist accommodation including a cellar and wine tasting area, being them winegrowers.

Analyzing the legislation, it was possible to increase the intervention by 300m², however, we considered it would be a distortion of the landscape characteristics having opted for a partially buried intervention - where the wine tasting area is located, overlooking the vineyard and the river - and the introduction of a second volume, away from the pre-existent, of a similar scale and establishing the same relationship with the stone walls (fig.1).

Our intention with said approach was to be respectful towards the existent, both landscape features and scale, as to "talk about tradition is to conduct a synthesis and a creation, of regression and modernity, of pre-existences and heritage that let us know where we come from and to where one foresses going."¹

As with many other heritage constructions and vacant farms, not classified as heritage however integral parts of local heritage and history, the construction target of this intervention was in a very advanced state of deterioration, also needed to be adapted to current demands and to its programmatic change.

Endowed with a new purpose - tourist accommodation combined with wine tasting – the character of the building and the architecture are renewed without eliminating its initial compositional elements, safeguarding the important particularities in a historical sense, of identification in time and in a socio-cultural context.

The intervention also ensured the maintenance of all the trees and, above all, the vineyards, as they play a special role at the farm, both at landscape level and as a productive agricultural activity. Said production is highly qualified and controlled by the Institute of Vine and Wine. It also ensured the maintenance of the local and traditional scale, characteristics and size of the existing house, equally traditional, in order for the intervention to fit the nature of the non-urban site, promoting and enhancing the authenticity of the region (fig. 2).



Figure 3. In-between green leisure area of the new volume. Correia/Ragazzi Arquitectos. 2016. ©Juan Rodriguez.

The intervention

From our point of view, it was crucial to start with the improvement of the connection from the entrance to the property and access to the vineyard farm made at a more favourable level, before the public road became too steep, with the vineyard next to it and the set that frames and enhances the terraces. We also aimed at preserving and restoring all its original, local and traditional features.

Between both volumes, the rehabilitated and the new one, there is a green leisure area that corresponds to the green roof of the reception, wine cellar and wine tasting area. These spaces are volumetrically undetectable, announced only by the large opening

in the stone wall, which allows the view over the vineyard and the existing water line (fig. 3).

The new volume repeats the existent, respecting scale and the traditional implantation (between two terraces), however refusing the idea of the stylistic mimicry, an idea “believed to continue tradition, without understanding the dangerous of said profoundly superficial and formalistic attitude.”²

Hence, the rehabilitated volume remains with its granit walls and roof tiles, the new volume is encased with a contemporary materiality that enriches this dialogue with a prefabricated concrete cladding. The interior finishes of both houses, in contrast with the harshness



Figure 4. Interior concrete staircase connecting, via the buried volume, both rehabilitated volume and new one; interiors in wood contrasting with the concrete and stone. Correia/Ragazzi Arquitectos. 2016. ©Juan Rodriguez.

of the exterior, are in wood (fig. 4). We understand that to “conceive is not to invent (...) the work of architecture - of art, in general - acquires historical meaning by the way of responding to the system or to the aesthetic systems characteristic of the time in which it appears.”³

The architectonic intervention was rigorous, and the operation is clear: from the main access to the farm, through a public path, one accesses a courtyard for parking and entry into the extended and buried body, where, if the visitor intends to stay, will be directed to one of both houses via different internal paths (fig. 5).

The new volume has direct access at the reception level, entering one finds a living room, dining room and kitchen in open space. Over the dining area, a double height space ensures openness and brightness as well as a connection to the balcony of the first floor. At the first floor one finds a second access to this house, it corresponds to the green rooftop of the reception and wine tasting room volume, connecting, outside, both houses. On the upper floor, two suites allow for different views of the property (fig. 6).

The rehabilitated volume maintains its scale and characteristics, however, we looked for a more fluid and spacious space solution at the lower level, the social area of the house. Upstairs, also two



Figure 5. Longitudinal and transversal sections. ©Correia/Ragazzi Arquitectos archive.

suites. This dwelling is also accessible via the buried reception floor by stairs.

The pre-existing house is made of stone masonry as originally, while the second house is lined with prefabricated concrete profiles existent in the farm and used commonly on the vineyards, with a contemporary interpretation of a traditional material (fig. 7). And at the same time meeting the client's expectations of assuming a great contemporary materiality, by the use of concrete.

Conclusion

We believe that the option for an intervention that sought to rehabilitate the original features, which updated the construction according to contemporary requirements without, however,

distorting its character, turning it into a tourist venture that maintains the relationship with the traditional scale, is a correct approach. The introduction of exposed concrete elements on the buried volume, emphasizes the sense of excavation while the prefabricated pieces, often used on the rest of the property to support the vineyard, have not only brought new utility to a current local system, treated with a contemporary and new language, as it gave coherence to the intervention that intended at using local labour and materials, without resorting to the artifice of the copy of the traditional but reinterpreting its values at modern light (fig. 8).

It is the strong texture that the concrete coating work endows in the new volume that resembles the strong texture of the traditional stone walls. "And although, seen for afar they seem slightly different, it is exactly said difference that hides their true sense of time."⁴ And



Figure 6. Interior spaces of the new volume. Correia/Ragazzi Arquitectos. 2016. ©Juan Rodriguez.

so, stone, concrete and nature coexist in what today seems to be an intervention that has always been present, that is integrative and not intrusive, in an area that seeks to be renewed and revived (fig. 9).

Maria da Graça Ribeiro Correia Ragazzi. In 1989 she graduates in architecture at Oporto's University, FAUP. Since that date until 1995 cooperates with the architect Eduardo Souto Moura, with whom sporadically does some co-authoring works.

Being a FCT's scholarship defends the doctoral thesis, at Catalonia's Polytechnic University, titled Ruy de Athouguia: A Modernidade em Aberto (published in 2008 by "Caleidoscópio"). Associate teacher and Doctorate's Program Director at FCATI, ULP has made critical reviews in several national and foreign universities, namely Coimbra, Lausanne and Darmstadt. Was Professor at the "Construção 1"

discipline at FAUP for two lecturing years, after already having done that job in the three preceeding lecturing years at FAA-JULN (Oporto).

It's a CEAU-FAUP ("Teoria e Práticas de Projecto T2P") and a LEAU-ULP investigation groups' integrated member. Was an Architects Order (OA) active member between 2005 and 2014, namely being CND-OASRN 2008/10's Vice-President and integrated the Training's section Regional Directive Council.

In 2005 has founded "CORREIA/RAGAZZI Arquitectos" with Roberto Ragazzi.

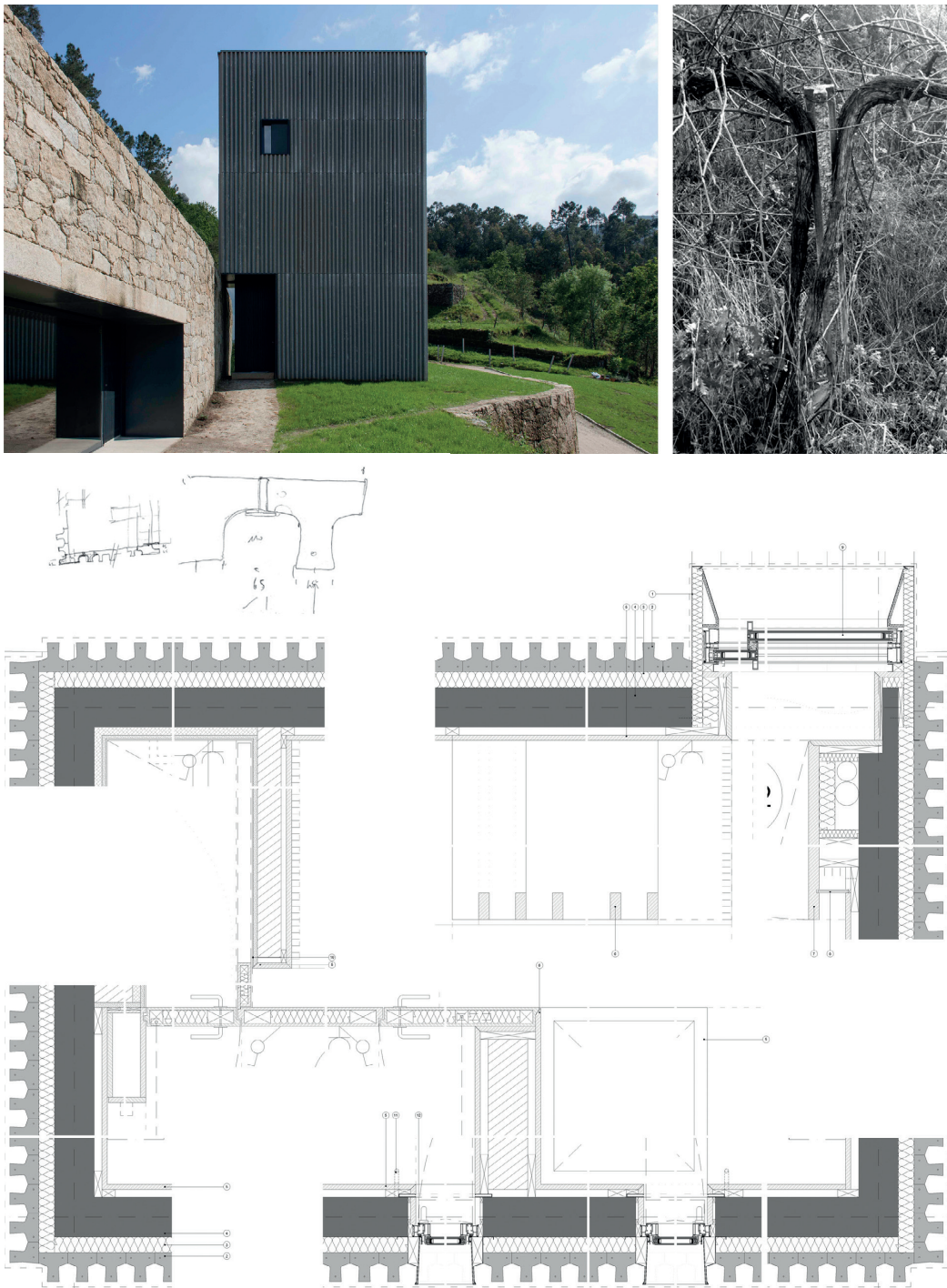


Figure 7. Sketch and detail drawing of the prefabricated concrete profiles. Author drawing, 2013. ©Correia/Ragazzi Arquitectos archive.



Figure 8. Buried volume: access to both volumes (houses) and winetasting room. Correia/Ragazzi Arquitectos, 2016. ©Juan Rodríguez.

Figure 9. Concrete cladding and interior room of the new volume. Correia/Ragazzi Arquitectos, 2016. ©Juan Rodríguez.

Notes

- ¹ Juan Domingo Santos, *La tradición innovada: escritos sobre regresión y modernidad*, (Barcelona: Fundación Caja de Arquitectos, 2013), 59.
- ² José Miguel Rodrigues, *O mundo ordenado e acessível das formas da arquitetura* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2013), 237.
- ³ Hélio Piñón, *El Proyecto como (re)construcción* (Barcelona: Edicions UPC, 2005), 26.
- ⁴ Alvaro Siza, *Imaginar a Evidência* (Lisboa: Edições 70, 2012), 133.

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