

URBAN REHABILITATION OF SÃO MARTINHO DO PORTO 2005-2008, Alcobaça – Portugal

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Client Alcobaça Municipality

Promotor Housing Development Funds

Engineering A2P Estudos, Projectos e Consultadoria (structure); G.R. Estudos, Projectos e Consultadoria, Lda. (hydraulics); Joule, Projectos, Estudos e Coordenação, Lda (electricity); José Galvão Teles, Engenheiros, Lda (mechanics); Marta Byrne (landscape)

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Photography Duccio Malagamba

São Martinho do Porto is a village around a sea bay whose beach resort became popular among the nobility and the bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century.

The village consists of two distinct nuclei. The lower part of the village, adjacent to the beach and organized along a marginal avenue and streets running towards it, is mainly composed of buildings for tourist activities or second-homes. The higher part of the village consists of its historic centre with an urban fabric of traditional houses and main public spaces, such as the *Comendador José Bento da Silva* Square, one of the main viewpoints over *São Martinho do Porto's* bay.

The project completes a three-phase cycle of the urban rehabilitation of the village, comprising the renewal of the marginal avenue along the bay, two public (infra)structures, the Tourism Information Centre and a Public Panoramic Elevator integrated into the former, and respective surrounding areas (including the above-mentioned square). This operation aims to contribute to the enrichment of the public space and, above all, to overcome the barrier between the lowest level and the highest level of the village which will improve significantly the daily life of the village's inhabitants.

The Tourism Information Centre – with entrance both from the lower and the upper parts of the village - dissipates the contrast between the public and the private dimensions, and it is designed to be a multifunctional space, organized vertically, rather than having a predefined program. The interior and the exterior act as one, gathering in a small area multiple uses like a gallery, a meeting room or the information point. A birch staircase and a glass bookshelf link the different levels of the building, ending in a glass box that gives access to the roof plan and to the *Bela Vista* Street.

From the *Bela Vista* Street, one may access to the elevator or to a public stair – a white concrete body - that embraces a coffee-shop and esplanade. Both the elevator and the public stairs allow to reach the *Comendador José Bento da Silva* Square and to discover the different views and levels of the urban fabric and, at last, of the bay.

In the lower part of the village, the redesign of the marginal avenue was thought to reduce the impact of car traffic by means of a pavement that induces slower circulation. The rehabilitation of this important public space also included the design of a bicycle lane and of larger sidewalks with several seating areas combined with the shadow of the pine trees and new urban furniture. A low wall separates the marginal avenue from the beach and it may be used as a bench as well.

