

REFURBISH- MENT OF THE TRANCOSO CASTLE 2006-2010, Trancoso – Portugal

Client Grupo IGESPAR (Castelo Branco)

Engineering Betar (structures, water, sewage) Galvão Teles (HAVAC), IPPAR (electrics, safety)

Contractor STAP, S.A.

Photography Duccio Malagamba

The origin of the *Trancoso* Castle dates back to the Roman occupation around the year 301 B.C. albeit the first written reference dates from the year 960 A.D. This first structure – mainly an outpost for observation and defense - was destroyed by successive invasions and reconstructed in the century IX. Until the XII century, it testifies several processes of conquest and regains alternatively by Christians and Muslims ending with the final conquest by *Afonso Henriques*, the first king of Portugal. This conquest determined the construction of a fortified perimeter to shelter a local community and to guarantee the visual domain over the surrounding territory and the control over the existing network of roads. During the reign of *D. Dinís*, the perimeter of the castle was reinforced and expanded into the configuration that practically remained until the present day.

After decades of gradual decay, the castle was classified as National Monument in 2001 leading to a few campaigns to rehabilitate and consolidate the fortified walls which enabled a posterior subtler design approach and, therefore, a silent valuation within the scope of the strict consolidation and enjoyment of the existing structure, providing it with contemporary accesses and visitor support units.

The small and chirurgical interventions – consisting of “installations” rather than buildings - try to avoid mimetic gestures, pastiche or camouflage, assuming a contemporary language albeit pursuing a balanced harmony with the ancient structure. In the entrance, a massive granite polished body lays on the ground composing a system of ramps and staircases oriented in two directions parallel to the walls of the castle without however touching them and converging to a first reception platform.

Inside the castle, the architectural interventions are related to the castle’s singular characteristics, proposing a stroll between them to fully enjoy the monument and the surrounding landscape. There is the welcoming center, a volume clad in wood with the same length as the closest tower, containing the reception, a small exhibition room, and restrooms; in another moment, right next to the existent Chapel, one finds a platform in wood designed for theatre performances, concerts, and other outdoor events; and, finally, a *new tower*, in wood as well, contains a staircase that gives access to the main tower of the castle, where at its very heart, a spiral staircase allows visitors to reach its highest level from where is possible to enjoy an unobstructed view towards the territory and the horizon. The *new* and the ancient tower are linked by a motorized retractable drawbridge that allows keeping the individuality and autonomy of each one of the elements and reinforcing the difference of language between old and new.

