

VILA UTOPIA 2005-2012, Oeiras – Portugal

Vila Utopia integrates a residential neighbourhood of detached houses designed by several architects within a master plan set by architects Aires Mateus near to the Santa Cruz Park in Oeiras, about 15 minutes drive from Lisbon.

From the beginning, there were two concomitant questions that the project ought to address: on the one hand, the privacy of the living spaces and, on the other hand, the creation of exterior spaces as generous as possible, protected from the wind and visibility from outside.

In order to obtain the desired privacy and protection, a ring was created that surrounds, at the level of the upper floor, the perimeter of the house, corresponding in plan to the maximum possible limit. The house occupies about half of the polygon's base, compressing the living spaces in a volume with three transparent overlapping floors, so as to free up as much outer space as possible creating a generously sized patio with a swimming pool, to which the main spaces of the house open. A second narrower patio is created at the opposite side to create a transversal transparency across the several spaces of the house.

The relatively hermetic nature of the exterior surface of the ring - a distended, anodised and polished aluminium membrane capable of reflecting the changes in colour of the sky and vegetation - creates a clear separation between public and private spaces. Inside, the atmosphere is of clarity, lightness and transparency. The daytime spaces - living room, kitchen and dining room - are located on the lower floor, directly connected to the large outdoor patio. Its large windows open in their totality allowing to create a continuous outdoor space. Since the ring only surrounds the upper floor of the house, it is possible for the rooms on the lower floor to benefit from a double sun exposure, taking advantage of the transversal dimension of the lot and the introduction of the abovementioned transversal extension and transparency.

Two symmetrical staircases, one at each end of the house, define, albeit subliminally, a hierarchy of use of the vertical circulations. On the upper floor, the distribution is made by a corridor, wide enough to accumulate domestic support functions, such as study, library, reading, writing, among others, with a table running along its length. The rooms (and respective bathrooms) face the patio, with the exception of the bathroom of the main suite which faces the corridor. There is also the possibility of connecting all the rooms, or only part of them, through a sequence of sliding doors, which allows the transformation of an intermediate space between the patio and the rooms which may be used as a balcony, for instance, or simply to establish several scenarios of common or privacy use on this floor.

Client WISE - Investimentos Imobiliários, S.A.

Engineering CENOR, Projectos de Engenharia (structures, water, sewage, gas), EACE (HVAC, electricity, installations, security), F&C, Arquitectura Paisagista (landscape)

Contractor TBJ + Imocliente

Photography Fernando Guerra FG+SG Photography

