

CONVERSION OF THE ALMADA-CARVALHAIS PALACE INTO A CHARM HOTEL 2017, Lisbon – Portugal

Promotor *Sete Colinas* Real Estate Investment Fund
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The *Almada-Carvalhais* Palace, which dates from the 16th century, was built as a private home for an important Portuguese aristocratic family. Taking into consideration the historical sources, it seems almost clear that the palace occupied an unbuilt terrain, although we may wonder about the existence of an earlier defensive construction system or of agriculture platforms and watering systems due to the presence of some wall fragments, since the terrain was located near the beach and the river. From what we may presume regarding its Renaissance typology, one would reach the main courtyard from the main door located at the tower gate, and from there connect directly to the noble floor, as it used to be the main space in this highly stratified class society private houses. In the conversion of the palace into a charm hotel, the proposal follows the spatial principles of the Renaissance typology through a careful restoration work. This implies to restore some of the original conditions such as: to highlight the tower in the façade and its specific material expression (a new open joint will reveal the west vertical cornerstone of the old tower); to maintain the original vaulted corridor bringing it back to the original level and recreate the original relation to the courtyard; to eliminate all the additions made to the original courtyard (which is an unique example of private architecture of the Portuguese Renaissance period); to re-open the double staircase that leads to the main level of the palace; to align the several rooms accordingly to the painted ceilings and respective beams; to eliminate most of the disruptive transformations of the late uses of the Palace that had subverted the original entrance accessibility and the connection between the palace and the garden; and, finally, to restore part of the garden in a contemporary approach and concerning the new wing (located where it was supposed to exist one of its ancient platforms).

The conservation works go together with new spatial solutions: three empty spaces (either open-air or covered), a vertical movement organised around a thick, tall and pierced wall (a “time sculpture” evoking the fortified walls) which links the several levels both of the Palace and the new wing; and a new wing of large rooms with private patios or balconies over the garden. The first void is the main garden, which frames the symmetrical façade of the Palace, and forms a spatial mechanism with the main courtyard creating a softer transition between a semi-public space and an intimate court with plants and a whispering fountain. The two other voids are designed in existing spaces and have skylights that can be open under favourable weather conditions. A semi-external space, in-between the breakfast and tea room and the open garden, designed as a winter garden can support events or function as an extension of the breakfast area. The last void concerns the new hotel reception lobby, a vertical tall skylighted space allows the discovery of the “time sculpture” that holds the vertical circulation core behind.

