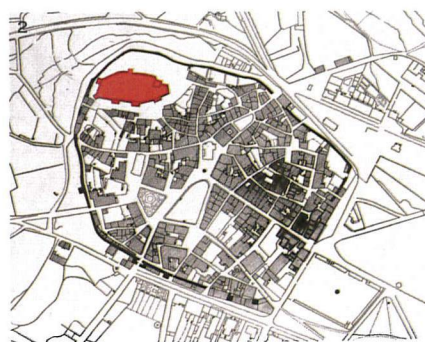




# IL NUOVO SI PRENDE CURA DELL'ANTICO. GONÇALO BYRNE E IL CASTELLO DI TRANCOSO

GIOVANNA CRESPI



L'origine del castello di Trancoso risale all'occupazione romana avvenuta nella penisola iberica nel 301 a.C.

Edificato come avamposto di osservazione e difesa, testimone imparziale di conquiste e sconfitte tra cristiani e mussulmani, la struttura fortificata fu più volte distrutta e ricostruita. Situato nella regione di Guarda, nella parte nord-occidentale del Portogallo, il castello sorge su un promontorio a 980 metri di altitudine. Con un perimetro irregolare, piegato alle regole orografiche del luogo, ha dal principio imposto la sua presenza sul territorio circostante, mantenendo il dominio visivo su di esso così come in seguito ha affermato il suo ruolo propulsore dando inizio a un nuovo centro urbano divenuto la città fortificata di Trancoso. Dopo anni di incurie che lo hanno visto abbandonato e saccheggiato, a partire dal 1993, in seguito al piano urbanistico e di salvaguardia del centro storico promosso dalla municipalità della città, il castello

è tornato a essere oggetto di attenzione. Mirati interventi di recupero delle mura, realizzati nel corso degli ultimi venti anni, hanno consentito di mantenere un adeguato stato di conservazione della struttura dichiarata nel 2001 monumento nazionale. La necessità di rendere il castello maggiormente fruibile ai visitatori ha dettato le condizioni di un nuovo intervento volto a riqualificare il complesso dotandolo, in particolare, di un accesso adeguato oltre che di una unità di servizio.

L'orlo delle mura del castello, con i volumi delle sette torri disposti lungo il suo corso, accoglie le nuove presenze architettoniche che arricchiscono con grazia contemporanea la storia rinnovata della antica costruzione. I gesti di Gonçalo Byrne sono espressione di un agire silenzioso, garbato, fatto di quiete, misura ed equilibrio; aiutati dalla piccola scala dell'intervento, sono capaci di dare una risposta alle esigenze del progetto con appropriatezza

→

Gonçalo Byrne

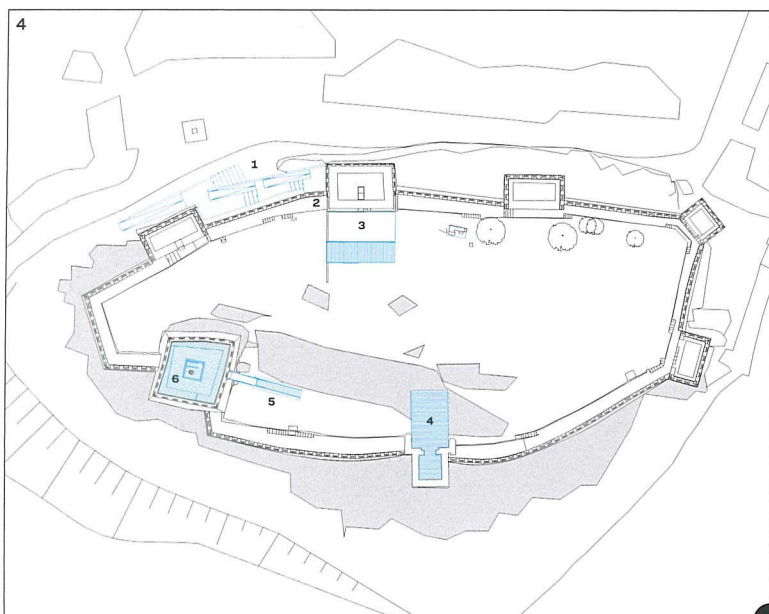
**Riqualificazione  
e consolidamento  
del Castello di  
Trancoso, Guarda,  
Portogallo**

fotografie  
Duccio Malagamba

**Gonçalo Byrne** (Alcobaça, 1941) si è laureato presso la ESBAL di Lisbona. Nel 1975 apre un proprio studio e nel 1991 fonda lo studio associato GB Arquitectos ([www.byrnearqu.com](http://www.byrnearqu.com)). Ha insegnato in numerose università, in Portogallo e all'estero (Porto, Losanna, Coimbra, Lovanio, Nancy, Venezia, Graz, Harvard, Lisbona, Pampolona, Mendrisio). Sin dagli esordi Byrne ha contribuito, con il suo lavoro, al rinnovamento e all'affermazione internazionale dell'architettura portoghese, individuando quali ambiti privilegiati interventi a scala urbana e paesaggistica e di recupero e riconversione del patrimonio storico -tra le opere più recenti in questo ambito, oltre al museo Machado de Castro a Coimbra, il teatro Thalia a Lisbona (con Barbas Lopes Arquitectos) e il recupero della storica sede del Banco de Portugal, in un isolato della Baixa Pombalina di Lisbona (con J.P. Falcão de Campos). «Casabella» ha presentato opere di Byrne nei nn. 643, 695/696, 700 (2002), 775 (2009), 785 (2010), 798, 803 (2011), 821 (2013) 826 (2013); Electa ha pubblicato due monografie: *Gonçalo Byrne. Opere e progetti* (1998 e 2007).

1  
-il padiglione per l'accoglienza dei visitatori visto dalla piattaforma in legno in prossimità della cappella del castello  
-the visitors' pavilion seen from the wooden platform near the castle chapel

2  
-planimetria della cittadella fortificata di Trancoso con in evidenza il castello  
-siteplan of the fortified citadel of Trancoso, showing the castle



contemporanea evitando qualsiasi atteggiamento mimetico. L'ingresso, in corrispondenza del fronte del castello rivolto verso la città di Trancoso, accoglie il visitatore con un sistema massiccio di rampe e scale realizzate con lo stesso granito impiegato nella costruzione delle mura del castello; levigato e perfetto il nuovo, poroso e vibrante il vecchio.

La scala e la rampa, procedendo da due direzioni opposte ma parallele al paramento esterno del torrione sud-est, convergono verso una piattaforma, primo punto di accoglienza del complesso fortificato. Superato il recinto delle mura, il castello presenta i nuovi corpi architettonici che solidali allo spazio esistente lo valorizzano attribuendogli un carattere di luogo urbano flessibile e piacevolmente fruibile. A lato dell'ingresso si trova il padiglione del centro visitatori; interamente rivestito in legno Ipè, ripropone la medesima lunghezza della torre che gli è più prossima, accoglie dentro di sé la reception e un piccolo spazio espositivo oltre ai servizi igienici. In corrispondenza del volume della cappella, invece, la pavimentazione si estende all'esterno fino a costituire una piattaforma realizzata con una struttura metallica rivestita da tavole di legno Ipè; pensata per performance teatrali e manifestazioni all'aperto, è in grado di trasformare il castello in un luogo socialmente e culturalmente dinamico e attrattivo. Al volume autonomo del centro visitatori, infine, si aggiunge il corpo stretto e alto, anch'esso in legno, della scala a rampa continua che conduce al primo livello del torrione principale. Al suo interno è calata la struttura in legno della scala a chiocciola che permette di conquistare la quota più alta della torre. Dalla corona di merli aguzzi che la completa sarà possibile godere di vedute struggenti sul territorio, omaggio alle terre e agli occhi di coloro che le abitano.

*Giovanna Crespi*

3  
-veduta dall'alto del castello di Trancoso prima degli interventi  
-view from above of the Trancoso castle prior to the project

4  
-planimetria generale del castello con in evidenza gli interventi contemporanei. Legenda  
-1- scalinata e rampa d'ingresso  
-2- portone -3- padiglione per l'accoglienza dei visitatori -4- cappella e piattaforma  
-5- accesso al torrione -6- torrione preesistente  
-siteplan of the castle showing contemporary interventions. Legend  
-1- entrance steps and ramp -2- gate -3- visitors' pavilion -4- chapel and platform -5- tower access -6- existing tower

5  
-veduta dalla città del castello recuperato  
-view of the renovated castle from the city

6  
-la rampa e la scalinata in granito che conducono all'ingresso del castello  
-the granite ramp and steps leading to the castle entrance

7  
-il volume della scala che conduce al primo livello del torrione  
-the volume of the staircase leading to the first level of the tower

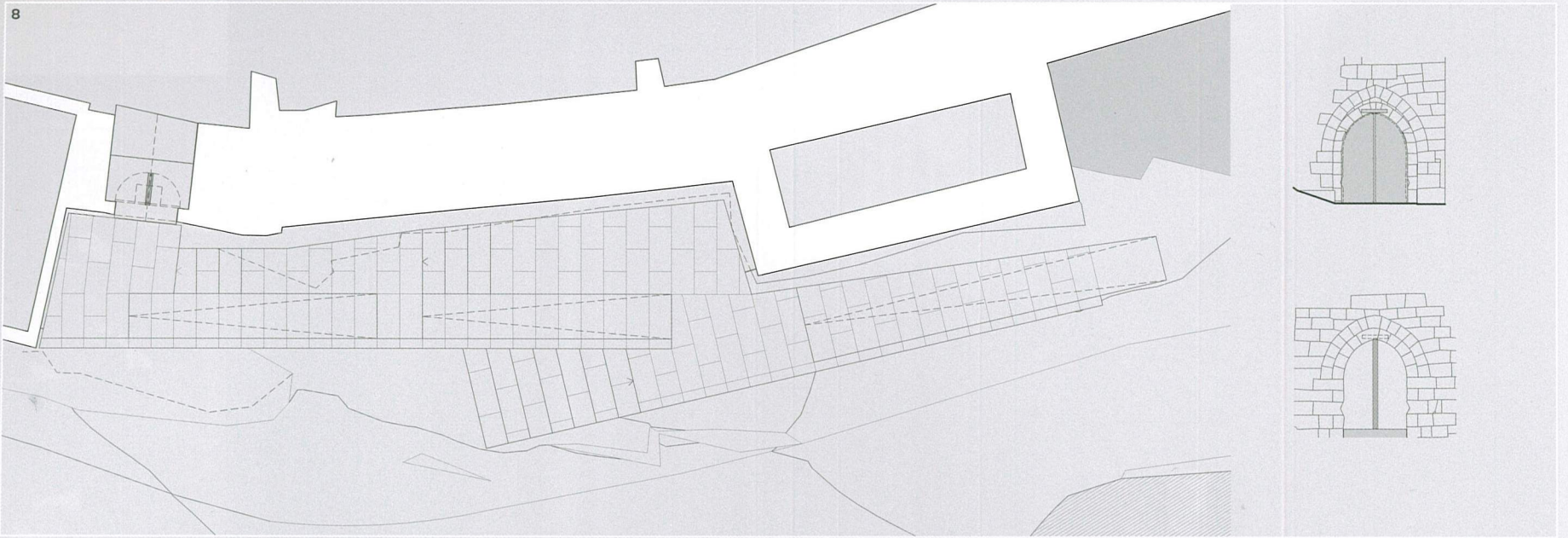


**DATI DEL PROGETTO**

- PROGETTO**  
Gonçalo Byrne  
Arquitectos
- PROGETTISTA**  
Gonçalo Byrne
- PROGETTO ESECUTIVO**  
Rodrigo Germano
- COLLABORATORI**  
Marco Buinhas, Rita Mendes da Graça, Sara Godinho
- MODELLI 3D**  
João Pedro Bicho  
con Mónica Mendonça,  
Nuno Pimenta,  
Roberto Sampaio
- STRUTTURE**  
Betar-Miguel Villar
- IMPIANTO ELETTRICO**  
Carlos Barradas  
(Ippar)
- IMPIANTO IDRAULICO**  
Betar-Marta Azevedo
- CLIMATIZZAZIONE**  
Galvão Teles
- TOPOGRAFIA**  
Júlio Riesenberger
- RILIEVI**  
RFD  
Santos Morerira
- COMMITTENTE**  
Igespar, Direzione  
regionale Castelo  
Branco
- CRONOLOGIA**  
2009: progetto  
2010: realizzazione
- LOCALIZZAZIONE**  
Trancoso, Guarda,  
Portogallo



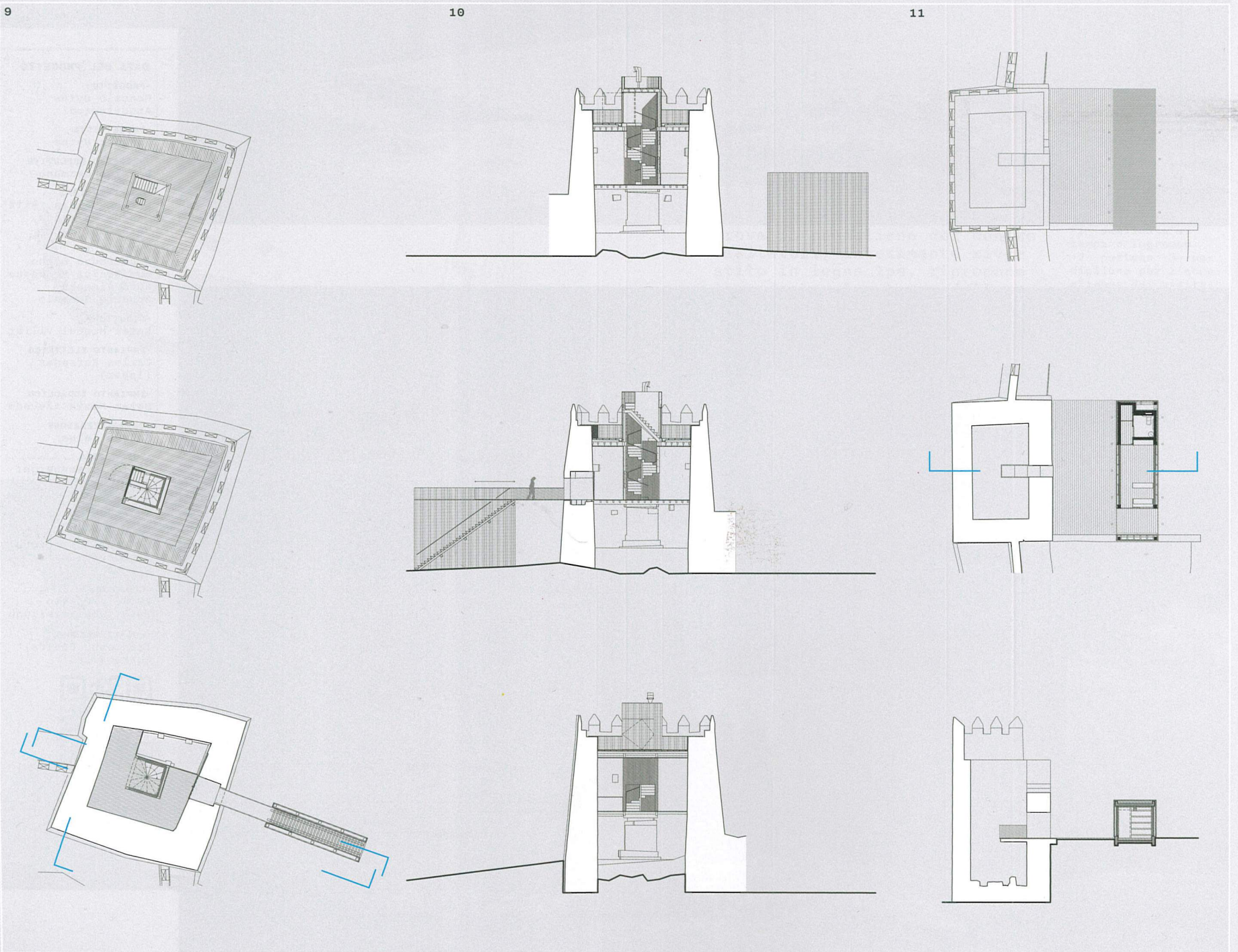
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9

10

11



8  
-pianta del sistema di rampe e scale d'ingresso e prospetto chiuso e aperto del portone d'accesso al castello

-plan of the system of entrance steps and ramps, closed and open elevation of the castle access gate

9  
-piante dei piani d'ingresso, primo e secondo del torrione esistente con le nuove scale di accesso

-plans of the entrance, first and second floors of the existing tower, with the new access stairs

10  
-sezioni longitudinale e trasversale del torrione esistente e prospetti est e ovest del volume della scala di accesso al primo piano

-longitudinal and cross-sections of the existing tower, east and west elevations of the volume of the staircase to the first floor

11  
-piante delle coperture, del piano terra e sezione del centro per l'accoglienza dei visitatori adiacente alle mura

-plans of the roof and ground floor, section of the visitors' reception center next to the walls

12, 13  
-particolare della rampa e della scala d'ingresso

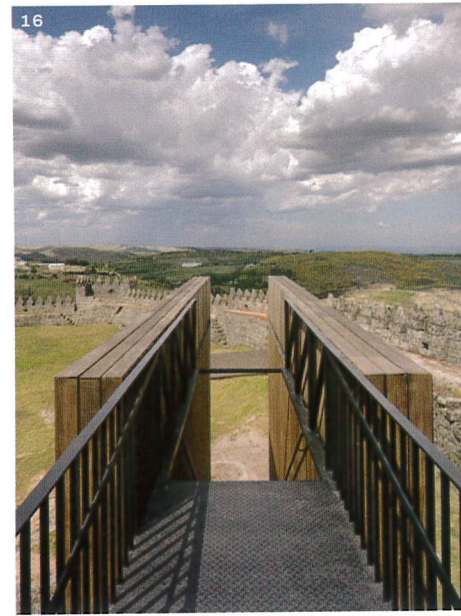
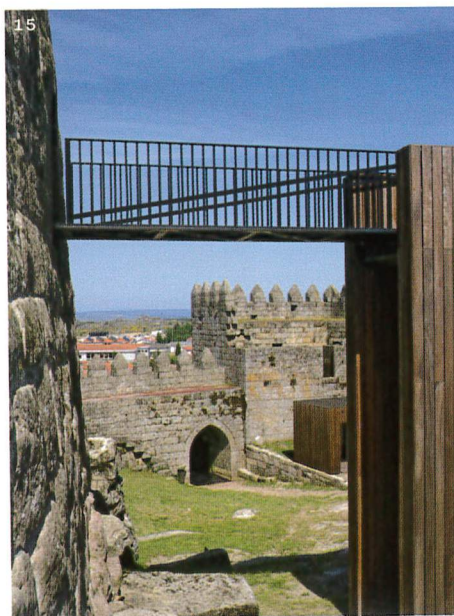
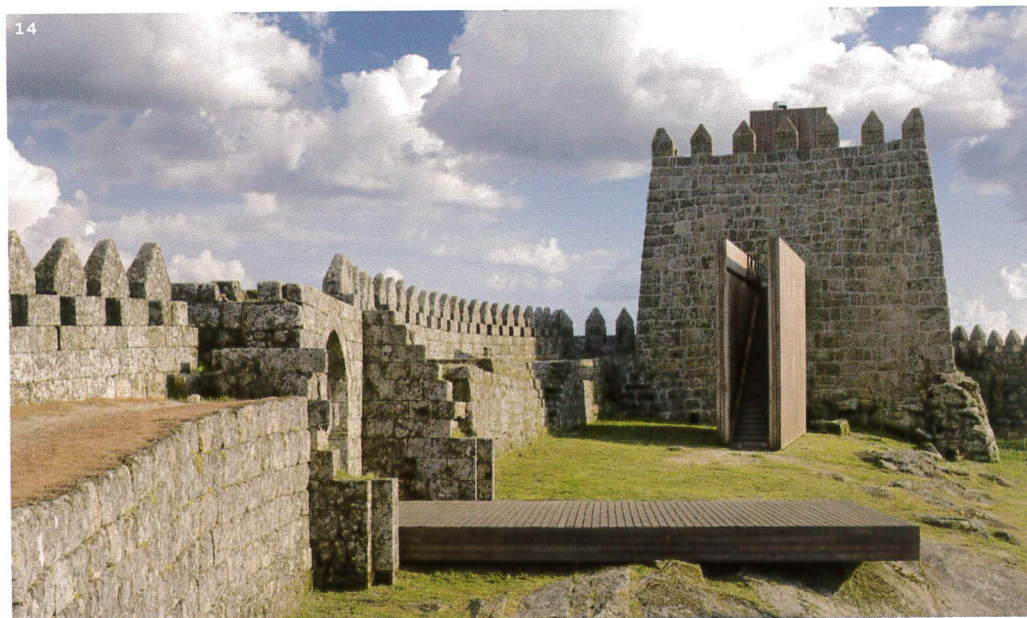
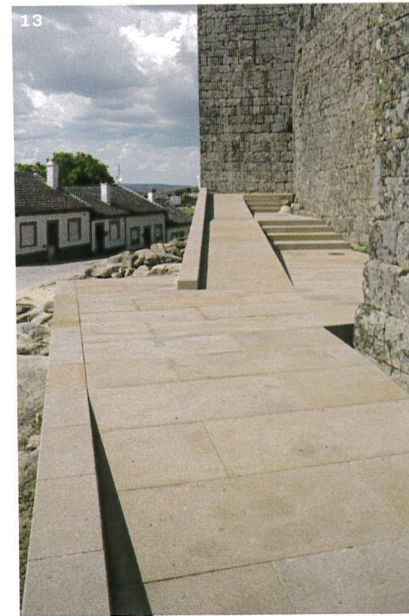
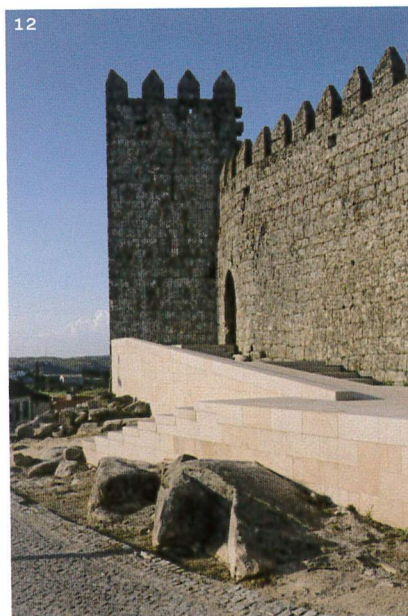
-detail of the entrance ramp and staircase

14  
-il volume che contiene la scala di accesso al torrione con, in primo piano, la piattaforma in prossimità della cappella

-the volume containing the access stairs for the tower, with the platform near the chapel in the foreground

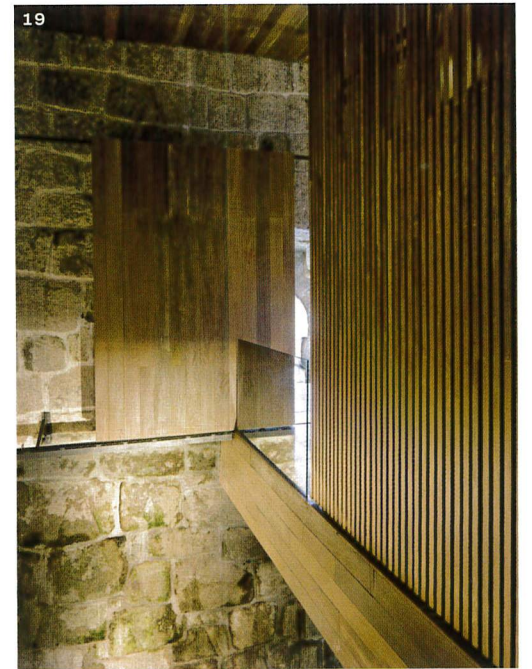
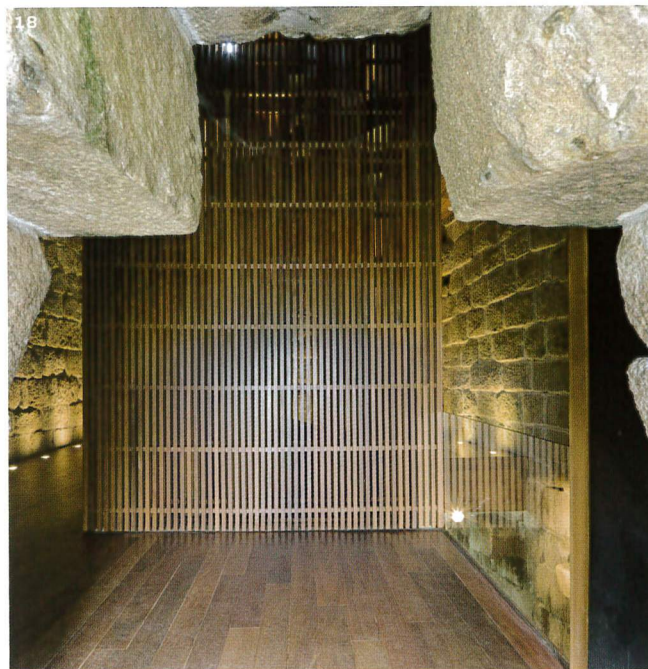
15, 16  
-la passerella in ferro che collega il torrione al volume della scala

-the iron walkway connecting the tower to the staircase volume





17, 18, 19  
-il volume in legno  
che racchiude la  
nuova scala a  
chiocciola all'in-  
terno del torrione  
-the wooden volume  
containing the new  
spiral staircase  
inside the tower



20  
-il belvedere alla  
sommità del torrione  
-the belvedere at  
the top of the tower



20



the antique structure's acquisition of yet another value, the "usage value" that arises not only because restoration makes it possible to assign a new function to monuments, but also because they are used as values in their own right. Even if things are seen in this way, the usage value attained by a historic building thanks to restoration, Riegl observed, implies the sacrifice of historical value. This game of compromises can take on a very wide range of forms; it involves the antique in all its dimensions, but it is at its most cruel when it involves architecture. These forms lie at the origin of the conflicts Riegl never tires of listing, and that accompany the modern spread of the veneration of monuments.

The conflict is at the center of Riegl's "theory of values," as confirmed by the pages we read that the cult of value of antiquity of a monument «requires the preliminary work of historical value» in order to «best match the novelty value.» And it is this matching, which no technique can pursue and no certificate of originality can guarantee, that reveals the «awareness that fills us with the joy of finding ourselves in such an ancient building that has passed through various destinies [...], bearing witness to human life and activities, to the efficiency of the thousand forces of nature». For the "novelty value" to produce this pleasure, in tune with the "antiquity value" of monuments, it is necessary to recognize the innermost connections with their "usage value." But this is the founding value of the architectural project whose practice is a plot of conflicts very similar to the one described by Riegl. As an age-old tradition teaches us, it is truly naive to think that technique can make it possible to set aside protected spaces, to define borderlines in order to guarantee the possibility of a scientific approach, as people put it today, to the antique, which always leads to the assertion of the "novelty value" that undermines any illusion of being able to put down roots in the continuum of history, the object of the reflections of Riegl on the meaning of words like safeguarding, conservation, restoration and reuse, that accompany the spread of the cult of monuments. This cult follows a movement similar to the one captured by Klee in the *Angelus Novus* and which Walter Benjamin, a careful reader of Riegl, described as a movement into the future, while turning one's back on it. The movement behind the architectural project is also similar, and as such was it explained and pursued by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: «Were

we to attribute to every thing what it essentially merits, then things would return, almost on their own, to their corresponding order, and only here would they fully be what they are [...]. This implies abandoning originality and making what is necessary [...]. In other words: to serve rather than to rule. Only those who have experienced just how difficult it is to do even simple things correctly can recognize the weight of this task. This means continuing with humility, renouncing effect and faithfully accomplishing the necessary and the right,» and this is also true for the "restorers," while it also erases the tracks of the walls of the citadels in which they think they can freely practice their own "scientific cult of antiquity."

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### **Astley Castle: like a melancholy watercolor**

Nicola Braghieri

The small castle of Astley stands out from a distance, even in the morning mist. Like a vermilion signal planted in the green landscape of the Midlands, Warwickshire, less than ten miles north of Coventry, a few more to the east of Birmingham. This is deep, ancient, noble, pastoral England, theater of ancient wars and peasant uprisings. The England that still bears the scars of the bombs from the last World War. But the little castle burned down suddenly one morning in 1978. In peacetime. No flaming arrows, no German bombs. Maybe a toaster or a pan left on the burner by a guest in the sordid little inn once hosted in the antique walls. Then abandon, neglect, the catastrophe of water eroding things under the walls, the ivy that dislodges stones. A few years of oblivion, after century upon century of faithful service. All around, a perfect landscape, large isolated oaks, a mosaic of walls in dark stone forming the fields, old Land Rovers to accompany herds of sheep, dogs, sturdy rugby players on bicycles. It seems like being in a cartoon, a leftover of pastoral paradise in the center of the Empire's most industrialized landscape. Years have been needed to salvage the castle and restore it to its original role as a noble abode. But there will be no more countesses, grooms and sheriffs. New, much quieter human beings will inhabit the rooms of this small manor. Four beds and a large hall to welcome the eight paying guests of a new hospitality facility. In short, a vacation getaway with many stars

(1000 pounds gets you the whole castle for a week, less than a bungalow in Sardinia). Nevertheless, the ruin is still ruined. From a distance, it looks as if the architects had failed to complete the job. The stone has been washed, but behind the skeletons of the windows we can still see the sky. Maybe the roof is missing. The architects have not reconstructed the antique walls with stones found on the ground, have not restored the collapsing vaults, have not salvaged broken cornices. They have cleaned things thoroughly, and then they listened to the old stone, closed some cracks, reinforced some vaults. Later, they built walls, light though in brick, and inserted architraves in prefabricated concrete. They assembled wooden floor slabs and built staircases as they are built in the present. The large ballroom is still open to the sky, the starry heavens contrasting with the smoke from the fireplace, as in the days of the ancient Saxons. The project seems like a tribute not to the ruin as such, since this is a precious artifact, an archaeological cult object, but to the deeper sense of the ruin in its melancholy, capricious spirit. A sentiment the English character proudly and jealously conserves, in its attitude of looking to the past and living in the present, as if history had been devised by other persons, but experienced in a continuous, open condition. Before the stones of Astley we can understand the meaning of millions of watercolors, paintings and photographs made over the centuries by the world's most painterly population. All of pastoral England is a grand watercolor, continuously receiving new surface coats. A great watercolor that should absolutely never be allowed to finish.

«[...] The greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, nor in its gold. Its glory is in its Age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity». John Ruskin, "The Lamp of Memory", *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849).

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### **The new cares for the old. Gonçalo Byrne and the Trancoso Castle**

Giovanna Crespi

The origin of the castle of Trancoso dates back to the Roman occupation

in 301 BC. Built as an outpost for observation and defense, an impartial witness to alternating victories and defeats of Christians and Muslims, the fortified structure has been repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt. Located in the Guarda region, in the northwestern part of Portugal, the castle stands on a promontory 980 meters above sea level. Its irregular perimeter follows the topographic rules of the site. From the outset, it has imposed its presence on the surrounding territory, overlooking it and later becoming the stimulus for a new urban nucleus, which became the fortified town of Trancoso. After years of neglect, abandon and plunder, starting in 1993 an urban plan for the safeguarding of the historical center has brought the castle back onto the municipal agenda. Strategic projects of recovery and consolidation of the walls implemented over the last twenty years have made it possible to suitably reinforce the structure, listed as a national monument in 2001. The need to allow visitors to explore the castle set the conditions for a new project of renovation of the complex, adding a suitable access and a service unit. The edge of the castle walls with the volumes of the seven towers arranged along the way welcome the new architectural presences that enhance, with contemporary aplomb, the renewed history of the construction of the castle. The gestures of Gonçalo Byrne are the expression of a quiet, tactful way of working based on measure and balance; aided by the small scale of the project, they provide a response to the needs of the site in an appropriate, contemporary way, avoiding any attempts at imitation or camouflage. The entrance, corresponding to the front of the castle facing the city of Trancoso, welcomes visitors with a massive system of ramps and staircases made with the same granite used for the construction of the castle walls. The new granite is polished and perfect, while the old stone is porous and vibrant. The staircase and the ramp, proceeding from two opposite directions but parallel to the external facing of the southeastern tower, converge towards a platform, an initial reception zone of the fortified complex. Beyond the enclosure of the walls, the castle offers new architectural volumes integrated with the existing space to enhance it, giving it the character of a flexible, pleasant urban place. Beside the entrance stands the pavilion of the visitors' center, entirely clad in Ipe wood, with the same length as the closest tower. This pavilion contains the reception and a small exhibition space, as well

as restrooms. Near the volume of the chapel the paving extends outward to form a platform with a metal structure covered with Ipe boards, designed for theater performances and outdoor events, to make the castle a place of social and cultural dynamism and appeal. Finally, the independent volume of the visitors' center is joined by the high, narrow volume, again in wood, of the continuous staircase that leads to the first level of the main tower. The structure in iron and wood of the spiral staircase is inserted there, to allow visitors to reach the highest level of the tower. From the crown of crenellations, it will be possible to enjoy breathtaking views of the territory.

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### **Postindustrial landscapes**

Matteo Vercelloni

The "Museum of Steel, Furnace 3" opened a few years ago in Monterrey, Mexico, is connected with a widespread new sensibility that from Europe to the Americas takes the form of dynamic, innovative salvaging operations for abandoned industrial structures, whether in entire neglected areas like the Ruhr in Germany or the Parco Dora in Turin, approached along an exemplary path of landscaping by Latz+Partner, or in individual structures, like the Zollverein Kohlenwasche in Essen, a coal refinery transformed by OMA into a cultural center, or the ArtsQuest Center by Spillman Farmer Architects, created in the Bethlehem steel mills in Pennsylvania («Casabella» n. 806), or operating on structures that are part of more complex realities, connected with specific local productive histories, as in the case of the area of Monterrey, in Mexico, of which this monumental blast furnace was an integral part. Here the flourishing steel industry, managed in the 1960s by the *Compania Fundidora de Fierro y Acero de Monterrey*, was interrupted by bankruptcy halfway through the 1980s.

The transformation of the large industrial structure into a museum of the history of steel, thanks to the work of a team of architecture studios coordinated by the guiding idea of Grimshaw Architects, is the result of the initiative of a municipal administration that immediately after the closing of the mills encouraged a process of conversion of the whole area, to create a large public park, the *Parque Fundidora*, with an area of over one million square meters. In this big new park, together with the Horno3 museum,