

WEST ENTRANCE OF THE *MONDEGO* GREEN PARK 2004-2006, Coimbra – Portugal

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Client Coimbra Municipality

Engineering Betar (structures), G.R. Estudos, Projectos e Consultadoria, Lda. (hydraulics), Joule, Projectos, Estudos e Coordenação, Lda (electricity), Proap (landscape)

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Within the scope of the Polis program for the city of Coimbra and the Detailed Plans for the *Parque Verde do Mondego* and the *Portagem/Av. João das Regras* Axis, was established the need to qualify and revitalize the area formerly known as “*Terreiro de Santa Clara*,” (*Santa Clara* Yard) “which mediated between the Monastery of *Santa Clara* and the River *Mondego*” (A. de Vasconcelos), through the creation of a garden of historical evocation that would also allow the connection between the left bank of the river and the *Mondego* Green Park, located on the other bank.

In the process of “domesticating” the river flow, with the construction of the *Aguieira* Dam and a flood control and protection system, the yard was sectioned, becoming a residual space, where the Monastery of *Santa Clara*, partially buried, confirmed the abandonment to which this whole area was voted. The archaeological campaigns and the works of consolidation and drainage of the last years finally allowed uncovering the Monastery, whose protection of the surrounding area led to the creation of a slope/dyke as part of the garden design.

The apparently simple garden design departs of the definition of a stone platform that marks the entrance to the park and simulates the old image of the Monastery located on a lower level flanked by an immense water plane. From this platform, the main walkway rises at the crest of the slope/dyke, which allows the observation of the interior of the Monastery from a high elevation. In turn, when looking from there towards the historic centre of the city of Coimbra, the walkway allows attenuating the intense movement of Avenue *Inês de Castro*, directing one’s gaze towards the image of the acropolis of Coimbra.

The remaining pathways are also framed by singular moments in the city landscape, privileging points that, for different reasons, used to remain hidden or barely visible, establishing both pedestrian and visual connections, further reinforced by the alignment and crown of tree species. Between the paths appear green surfaces of grass, occasionally dotted with bushes in situations where it was intended to condition the access of visitors.

The western entrance to the *Mondego* Green Park is made through a tunnel with 5.00 m wide, 2.50 m high and an extension of approximately 27.50 m. The tunnel walls are covered with a metal structure supporting high-strength glass panels, which hide the lighting system. The glass itself has a high resistance, but also the characteristic of being easily washable and easy to remove paintings and graffiti. The two-level lighting (one for the day, one for the night) aims to create comfort and safety on the tunnel.

