

CONVERSION OF THE ESTOI PALACE INTO A CHARM HOTEL

2003-2009,
Faro –
Portugal

Client ENATUR – Empresa Nacional de Turismo, S.A.

Engineering Betar, Estudos e Projectos de Estabilidade (structure), Galvão Teles (HVAC), Joule (electricity), Grade Ribeiro (services), A. Teixeira, Gás-Engenharia (gas), Multitec, Consultores Técnicos Associados (health and security), Barrento da Costa, Serviços de Engenharia (acoustics) Ceregeiro – Arquitectura Paisagista (landscape), Nova Conservação – Restauro, Conservação do Património Artístico Cultural (restoration), Oficina Ideias em Linha – Arquitectura e Design (Interior design and furniture), FBA – Ferrand, Bicker e Associados (design)

Contractor Casais

Photography Duccio Malagamba

The *Estoi* Palace is located in Southern Portugal, Algarve, and it was built during the late XVIII century. The upper part of the Palace rests on an artificial platform, clearly built, as part of a complex topographical and landscape project where one denotes the Illuminist logic, from the succession of gardens arranged in different levels and along several axes with their centre in the Palace, to the work of capturing the water, which develops in a series of small aqueducts, drains into a waterfall, and follows to irrigate the orchards and the stables, and, finally, in the architectural composition itself, in the spatial sequence of the noble halls, the chapel, and of the lateral wings.

Although spatially interesting and easy to transform into a hotel, the Palace's available area was not enough for the program proposed by the client, and the addition of a new part was inevitable. The project of the new wing follows the topographical arrangement of the gardens: the level of the Western suspended garden is extended in terraces on three levels and the retaining walls give birth to the rooms, which in their turn are like walled holes open onto the landscape.

With this gesture, we sought to simultaneously highlight the dignity of the Palace (where are located all the living areas of the new hotel: lounges, restaurants and main accesses to the exterior terraces) and its spatiality, reinforcing its centrality in the general composition and its relationship with the gardens, of which it is a structuring part. Another intervention replicates the volume on the other side, where the reception is located (the bell tower works as a hinge marking the entrance) and a huge window denounces the relationship with the landscape. The new wing is built to have an eminently landscaped presence when viewed from the Palace and adjacent gardens. Indeed, either by form or by materials (stone and garden coverings), the aim is to interpret it as an "inhabited" garden.

The landscape architect João Ceregeiro, of recognized merit in the area of garden restoration, coordinated the restoration of existing gardens and the construction of the new ones, which, in reality, correspond to the roofing of the area of the rooms. When one arrives, one does not see anything built.

Both the spa and the outdoor pool are also part of this logic of several garden terraces, subtly inserted in the landscape. The set of stables and the farm warehouse were recovered and restored to receive events of various types, while the gardens remain a public space, a condition imposed by the Faro City Council.

