

# PREFACE

## AN ARCHITECTURE TO VIEW THE SEA

### NUNO LACERDA LOPES

There are architectural projects that move us, works that disturb us and others that question us. But there are also processes, ways of doing and conceiving, ideas that are developed and that are behind many of those buildings which can either impress and mark us, or be obliterated into anonymity, almost always as important as the exception and that we should know about and above all try to understand.

Sometimes the combination of a group of projects built during a particular period allows a better perception than an isolated project of the evolution, and especially the ideas behind it, that run through and are transversal to many architecture projects which are created despite the apparent formal, geometric and material differences.

It could be said that this is a book about works of architecture and in a sense they are works, projects and ideas that are presented here. But it also tries to be a proposal for reflection about a way of seeing, of thinking and of constructing, an architecture open to investigation and experimentation and that is why we say an architecture with its eyes on the sea, that characterises us, in other words, with its eyes on infinity which is no more than our capacity for imagination, creation and overcoming. It was said better by Vergílio Ferreira, “*from my language you can see the sea*”, that infinite and universal sea so typical of our culture that is Portugal.

More than a mere grouping and a simple parade of diverse projects and works of varying levels of complexity, we can discover that in the architecture projects presented here we seek to highlight a conceptual alignment which reveals the different types of intervention, thoughts and strategies that face architecture nowadays and, in that sense, it presents divergence as a working method to create an architectural identity.

The projects presented here are elements of an evolutionary process which we have produced over 20 years and are the result of a rich ongoing dialogue with the people, with the citizens, with the cities and the different demands and cultures that we experience. This is why they are revealing of our process of participating and of knowing reality and, in this sense, they seek to unequivocally translate the presence of daily life as an active part of the process of creation and construction of architecture. Thus, the design and resulting construction of buildings is an effective instrument and therefore responsible for the creation of a collective identity, which is to say, of a culture.

Consequently, in these architectures that stem from this “living and working by the sea” we find a process, a methodology, a position,... of the office and of all the rationale that justifies, motivates and conditions this or that decision, this or that intention. Rarely is the selection pre-defined, in other words, rarely are we fixated on a shape or an office “trend”. Creation is free and without preconceptions but guided by principles, causes and structures, a complete rationale that is objective and that stops us from making a choice based on shape or merely

aesthetic criteria, which despite everything are as legitimate as any others because, as Óscar Niemeyer said, the justification of a beautiful object is in its own beauty. We say it is possible. Nevertheless, we have not taken that route.

Picasso said that “not all paintings need to be masterpieces” Precisely! painting is what matters. Painting, or if we will architecting, designing, LIVING, living every day. And just as any morning fog on any beach in the north, when facing a work of art, that question always arises about “Is there anything more to see besides what the eyes can see?” – And the answer is: “Yes!” Miller tells us that “In the most humble object we can find whatever we are looking for, whether it is beauty, truth, reality or divinity. The artist, the architect, does not create these qualities, he discovers them or hides them, in the production process. When he realises the true nature of his role he can continue to paint without the danger of sinning, because he knows that to paint or not to paint means the same. After all we do not sing because one day we hope to be in an opera, we sing because the lungs are filled with joy and no one can be paid for radiating joy. Therefore, whether the world is disintegrating or not, whether you are on the side of the angels or the devil himself, take life as it is, have fun, spread the joy and a lot of chaos.”

Some of these works, with their varying scales and such diverse programmes and such different geometries, are a true example of this: of discovery, truth, reality and divinity but also of fun, joy and, surely, they try to spread some chaos.

Nuno Lacerda Lopes, Espinho, by the sea.

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