

1 ARQUIPÉLAGO

CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTRE

2015. RIBEIRA GRANDE, AÇORES, PORTUGAL.
MENOS É MAIS AND JOÃO MENDES RIBEIRO

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Quiet Variation/Continuity strategies

The Arquipélago - Contemporary Arts Centre seeks to unite the different scales and times of its parts. It is a transdisciplinary project whose mission is to disseminate, create and produce emerging culture: a space of exchange and interface for people, knowledge and events.

The site plan became the "parti" for the main idea which was to build a "city within a city", with special concerns regarding the relationships between buildings, paths and public living spaces.

The project of the Arquipélago does not exaggerate the differences between the old and the new buildings. On the contrary, it seeks to unite the different scales and times of its parts throughout a pictorial manipulation of the form and materiality of the buildings - the existing constructions are marked by the volcanic stone masonry and the new buildings are characterized by an abstract form. One material unifies the ground platform without reference or allusion to any language, built with local dark basalt stone cutted in a contemporary way, continuously working with the variation of surfaces' textures and rugosity, complementing the mass of the buildings with the emptiness of the patios.

The central courtyard (core) acts, as Mediterranean reference to the forum, part of the structural axis of the public path that links all buildings. The courtyard, like any outdoor space is paved in basalt flagstones, of the volcanic island of S. Miguel layed parallel on the north-south axis.

The uniform treatment of the surface of the floor and exterior walls as well as a certain uniformity on the surfaces of new and existing buildings seeks to reaffirm the frank character and expressive simplicity of the factory building.

The entrance was focused at south and urban relations of proximity, human scale and smooth mobility.

The old walled factory is now open to the city and integrates the domestic scale of the surrounding dwellings. The walls disappear and it creates a "new public space".

The exterior design is committed to the quality of what exists. The new platform coexists in a serene manner with the pre existing buildings.

Context and contiguity contribute to the autonomy of the new public space.

The new program reinvents the existent building, making it a meaningful space in a peripheral region in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

The Plinth: the former "walled" factory - the island within the island - an abstract reference of belonging to the collective memory of the Azores archipelago. A new public space is created, physical and virtual, that unites the islands.

The Arquipélago - Contemporary Arts Centre adds meaning to the social and cultural context where it is built. A new Public Space is materialized in a central square/patio where art feels comfortable and blurs the frontiers between private and public spheres, leisure and work, art and life.

