

BRAAMCAMP 11

LISBON, PORTUGAL

2020

The design comprises the façade renovation of a redundant 1980s residential building in downtown Lisbon, occupied as a bank office building. By contrast, the corner where it is located is particularly notable from a cultural perspective. In addition to being highly visible and iconic, its opposite corner buildings, Franjinhas and Castil — respectively designed by Francisco Conceição Silva and Teotónio Pereira/ Braula Reis, and listed as ‘monuments of public interest’ — were exceptionally relevant to the historical debate of modern architecture in Portugal.

From this vantage point, the proposal aims to create an architectural identity that is discreet and subtle, yet solid and elegant. Admittedly contemporary, it is also evocative of the periods that mostly define this district of Lisbon, namely the Art Nouveau and Art Deco of Avenidas Novas (and of Rua Braamcamp in particular). In addition, and as the city’s air becomes less polluted, the project anticipates that the possibility to use operable windows and access exterior balconies is something that future office tenants would appreciate.

Tectonically, the design is based on robust materials, quick to assemble, with low maintenance and high durability: GRC panels with a finishing in terrazzo composed of Lisbon’s limestone aggregates; slim aluminium frames in anodised bronze finish with metal railings in similar bronze metallisation and colour. In addition to the qualities already mentioned, this set of materials has the advantage, as a system, that most construction companies in the Portuguese market are familiar with it. Based on this, the choice was made to limit the glass area to about 40% of the total surface, which still provides generous windows. These are to be equipped with exterior electric screen blinds, which still constitute the most effective form of window-shading by preventing heat reaching into the building from the very outer layer.

Finally, the façade is complemented by a permanent art installation by artist João Louro across the building’s 78 lintels. Louro is well-known for working with narratives and texts by different authors (notably, his renowned ‘blind images’), and his proposal was to draw a hypothetical cartography of remarkable authors related to literature and thought — a constellation of 20th-century authors identified with the idea of humanism and the search for a better society. Thus, figures who inspire us are evoked and percolate into the daily lives of everyone who passes the corner. As noted by the artist, ‘like a letter from the skies that sparkles to the rhythm of human breath, the metallic letters on the façade are backlit with a LED system and light up randomly like stars in a constellation.’ Here and there, discreetly, the names appear with a small halo of light around the metal, enticing the eye and curiosity of the passers-by.



Location: Rua Braamcamp 11, Lisbon, Portugal
Client: Allianz, AG
Art project: João Louro
Scope of services: Architecture
Project brief: Façade renovation
Project status: 2020 (shortlist competition, 2nd prize)
Rendering: 4+Arquitectos