

CLARANET PORTUGAL HQ

BEATO CREATIVE HUB, LISBON, PORTUGAL

2023–2019

Claranet is an IT company that provides network hosting and managed application services (Hybrid Cloud Hosting), among other related services for corporate clients in various countries in Europe and in Brazil.

The practice was invited to design its headquarters in Portugal on the site of a former military depot which, in turn, was built on the grounds of the 17th-century Grilas Sisters' convent. The latter, while surviving the 1755 earthquake, despite its being then literally on the Tejo riverfront long before land reclaims, it did not, however, outlast the 1834 extinction of the religious orders and would eventually become a state property, converted into warehousing facilities for the military in 1897. Finally, in the wake of the 2016 Web Summit, it was rescued by the city to become Lisbon's International Innovation Hub. It now functions as hub of concession buildings by the Lisbon municipality, catered for tech-based services and creative industries.

Considerably dilapidated, the existing ensemble consisted of three interconnected wide wings with load-bearing arches at ground level, — presumably remains of the convent —, and slab and columns on the upper floor, — added later —, with wood trusses holding the gable roofs above. Topographically, the building is partially imbedded in the site with two floors on the west elevation and barely one, on the east side. The new programme brief, devised on a post-Covid 19 framework, called for an office concept that would service 300 permanent employees and an additional 100 occasionally dropping in from their WFH (work-from-home) status. It called for a fluid system of non-assigned workstations, informal and formal meeting rooms, gender neutral bathrooms, showers for bikers and yoga practitioners and medical station, as well as generous amenities like relaxation pods, and a large shared kitchen with a lounge area. In addition to these programme requirements, the design concept introduced the idea of 'biophilia,' by bringing into the workplace the presence and fruition of nature. This was achieved through the hollowing out of part of the roof, thereby generating two large triple-height courtyard gardens, simultaneously bringing natural light and ventilation deep into the building. Given the aforementioned depth, on both floors the back of the building concentrates functions that do not require or prioritise natural light such as restrooms, fire escapes, data centre and servers. The main meeting rooms, including the crisis/ situation room, are located at the core of the building and receive natural light from the courtyards. Access to the building is made through the campus's yard, wherein a round staircase-*cum*-lift at the lobby/ reception creates a circulation hinge for the whole ensemble. A small *mezzanine* floor where board rooms are located, runs across the entire west perimeter of the building, with its steel exterior fire escape stairs creating a stunning accessible balcony to the river. Given the archeologically sensitive nature of the site, almost all new built is above ground to avoid unnecessary excavation, with all electrical cables running on accessible technical floors and mechanical ductwork exposed for maximum flexibility.

In terms of materiality, the guiding principle was to retain a certain industrial expressiveness in keeping true to its late historical context and which permeates the choices of metalworks, terrazzo finishings and bronze-tinted aluminium frames. In addition, the choice of finishes is reflective of a search for sustainable materials, both recycled-based or naturally sourced. Such is the case with the carpets made of recycled fishing yarns, the use of cork in floors and the cork-based interior plastered walls, or the acoustic ceilings sourced from recycled paper and the acoustic roof panels based on wood fibers (*Celenit*).

Location: Beato Creative Hub, Lisbon, Portugal

Client: Claranet Portugal, SA

Project Brief: Renovation of warehouses into offices

Gross Built Area: 5,050 sq.m

Project Status: 2019 (concept design) – 2023 (built)

Photography: João Carmo Simões