

ALGARVE BUILDING

The Algarve is not only Portugal's foremost tourism region. Uniquely Mediterranean in an Atlantic country, its building customs have long been markers of historical and cultural specificity, attracting both picturesque-driven conservatives and modernists seeking their lineage. Modernism, regionalism and the 'vernacular' – three essential tropes of twentieth-century architecture culture – converged in the region's building identity construct and, often the subject of strictly metropolitan elaborations, they are examined here from a peripheral standpoint instead.

Drawing on work that won the Royal Institute of British Architects President's Award for Outstanding PhD Thesis in 2013, *Algarve Building* challenges the conventional inclusion of Portuguese modern architecture in 'Critical Regionalism' narratives. A fine-grain reconstruction of the debates and cultures at play locally exposes the extra-architectural and widely participated antecedents of the much-celebrated mid-century shift towards the region. Uncelebrated architects and a cast of other players (clients, officials, engineers and builders) contributed to maturing a regional strand of modern architecture that, more than being the heroic outcome of a hard-fought 'battle' by engaged designers against a conservative establishment, became truly popular in the Algarve.

Algarve Building shows, more broadly, what the processes that have been appropriated by the canon of architectural history and theory – such as the presence of folk traditions and regional variation in learned architecture – stand to gain when observed in local everyday practices. The grand narratives and *petites histories* of architecture can be enriched, questioned, revised and confirmed by an unprejudiced return to its facts and sources – the buildings, the documents, the discourses, the agents and the archives.

Algarve Building

Modernism, Regionalism and Architecture
in the South of Portugal, 1925–1965

Ricardo Agarez

First published 2016
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Names: Agarez, Ricardo Costa, 1972– author.

Title: Algarve building : modernism, regionalism and architecture in the south of Portugal, 1925–1965 / By Ricardo Agarez.

Description: Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2016. | Based on the author's thesis (Ph. D. – University College, London, 2013) under the title: Regionalism, modernism and vernacular tradition in the architecture of Algarve, Portugal, 1925–1965. Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2015043719 (print) | LCCN 2015044604 (ebook) | ISBN 9781472456847 (hardback: alk. paper) | ISBN 9781472456854 (ebook) | ISBN 9781472456861 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Architecture—Portugal—Algarve—History—20th century. | Architecture and society—Portugal—Algarve—History—20th century.

Classification: LCC NA1329.A39 A48 2016 (print) | LCC NA1329.A39 (ebook) |

DDC 720.9469/60904—dc23

LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2015043719>

ISBN: 9781472456847 (hbk)

ISBN: 9781315566573 (ebk)

Typeset in Myriad Pro
by Swales & Willis Ltd, Exeter, Devon, UK

For Cristina

Cover image: M. Laginha, Guerreiro house in Paderne, Albufeira, c.1949. Detail of the roadside façade and adjacent building. © Arquivo Pessoal Manuel Laginha, Direção-Geral do Património Cultural – SIPA.

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