



SOAR

STRENGTHENING THE SECURITY AND RESILIENCE
AT-RISK RELIGIOUS SITES AND COMMUNITIES

Call for Architectural Best Practice Examples



for Security by Design for Places of Worship

Architects' Council of Europe
Conseil des Architectes d'Europe



The Network
for Religious
& Traditional
Peacemakers



In collaboration with



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THE CALL FOR ARCHITECTURE BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES.....06

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The image shows the interior of a building with a complex wooden timber frame. The structure consists of numerous vertical posts, horizontal beams, and diagonal bracing members, creating a series of rectangular bays. The wood is light-colored and appears to be made of oak or a similar hardwood. The floor is made of dirt or stone, and a long, narrow hallway leads to a bright doorway at the far end. The walls are made of rough, grey stone or concrete. The overall impression is one of a well-preserved, traditional wooden structure.

Monastery of the Capuchins

in Alferrara, Portugal

Architect	VMSA Victor Mestre Sofia Aleixo, www.mestrealeixo.pt
Location	Estrada das Machadas, Setúbal, Portugal
Type of project	Security interventions in a historic structure
Year	2010-2012
Faith	Catholic Church
Built-up area	755 smq (gross)
Budget	€ 125.000,00
Client	Association of Municipalities of the Setúbal Region (AMRS)
Collaborators	Nuno Gaspar, Daniel Pires, Carlos Graça, architects
Conservation	António Vasques, conservator
Structural stabilization	A2P Consult - João Appleton and Pedro Ribeiro, engineers
Site supervision	AMRS
General contractor	Nova Conservação, Lda. - Nuno Proença
Photo credits	VMSA architects, José Manuel



Comment of the jury

Very thoughtful intervention to preserve the historic monument and prevent it from being vandalised and becoming ruins that people are scared to access because of their undefined status and neglect. Instead the simple but beautiful wooden supports together with the involvement of diverse local stakeholders make it a vernacular landmark and a place of historic interest and identity. This entry showcases a long-term restoration and rejuvenation of the derelict monastic site. It is a specific solution tackling decay and vandalism, as well as emergency and securing structural measures to reactivate the disused site. The jury suggests to use this SBD concept in the (current) war context. A very different approach to SBD than expected, but a very valid and timely one.

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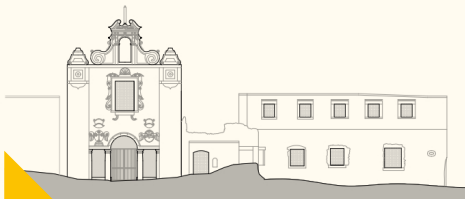
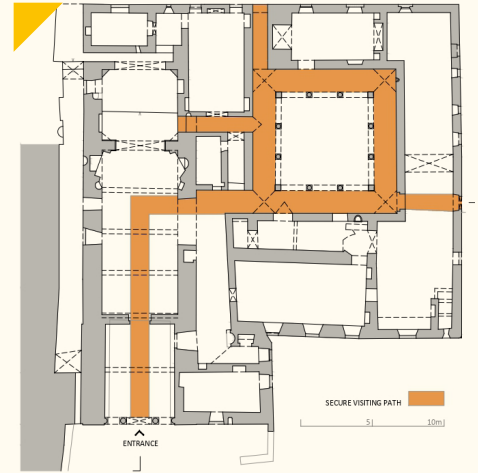
In Alferrara, a slope overlooking the city of Setúbal - Portugal, relies the 1578 Monastery of Our Lady of Conceição of the Franciscan Capuchins monks, here simply named the Monastery of the Capuchins. These monks decided to fully devote themselves to a religious life, away from society, living either alone (as hermits) or, later, in an organized community.

Restored at the end of the 17th century, the monastery was occupied by the French troops during the Iberian Peninsula War (1807 - 1813) when the monks abandoned the place, soon to be followed by the Extinction of the religious orders in Portugal (1834). After the abandonment, their ruins suggest a different use of the space, even though the original function still subliminally remains, along with its sociocultural value.

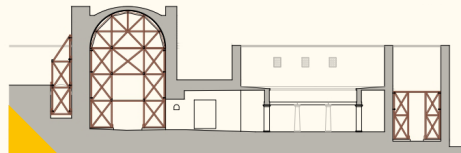
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In a state of decay and vandalism, in 2010 urgent emergency procedures started to prevent collapse and to minimise further development of decline and vanddlism - such as loving dedications inscribed in walls and stollen tiles.

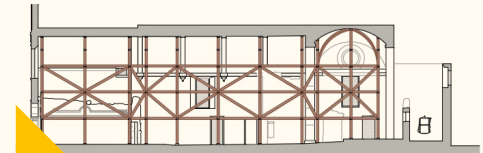
The security of this religious site needed therefore to be improved so that visitors could admire, feel and breath the values in place, in a full respect for the place, open to nature, weather and wind, while at the same time making them more secure through minimal physical protection measures that would still allow people to walk about freely and safely. We believe that cultural heritage not only refers to material remnants, such as ruined churches and convents, but also to intangible elements including sense of place, memories, faith, and character of place. We further believe that local communities, groups, and some specific individuals who use religious heritage places are important actors in the processes of safeguarding, maintenance, and transmission of cultural heritage from the past, including their secure and qualified use and/or adaptation for contemporary needs, purposes, and pleasures.



South facade



Transversal section



Longitudinal section

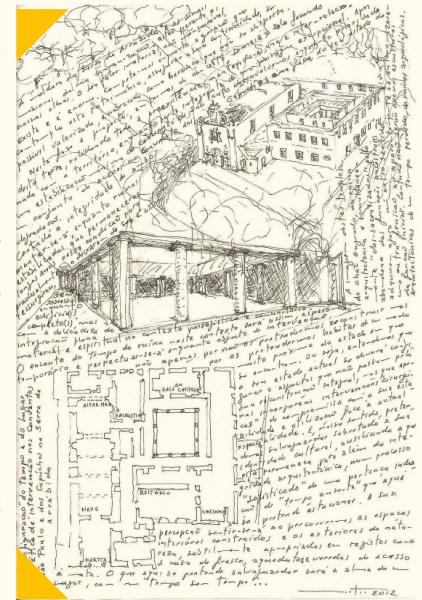
ARCHITECTURAL APPROACH

In 2011 preliminary work included a topographical and architectural survey, deforestation, provision of access, and an assessment of the structural conditions were executed. Although it was necessary to attend immediately to the collapsing structures, there was still time to record the conservation condition of the built structures, the context of the cultural landscape, the atmosphere, the aura, the genius loci, and the feelings aroused by the experience of these empty spaces, full of light, shadows, and sound. For this, we used “drawn writing” to better understand the observed situation, in which time and place became one.

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To rescue this building from the ruined condition, a planned strategy for 25 years was designed. We set up a think tank, by grouping a body of experts to provide advice and ideas on specific ethical and heritage problems found in this place. This group, coordinated by the conservation architect, comprised the owner, a structural engineer, a stone expert, a landscape architect, a hydrology expert, an archaeologist, an art historian, and an expert on the history of monasticism. As an interdisciplinary team, it provided a solid basis for raising awareness about the heritage value of the place and explaining it to the owner, and, as well as the relevance of making good decisions, rather than rushed ones, regarding the future of the place.

The intervention was guided by the aim to establish a way to achieve a sustainable management of this cultural heritage, so that afterwards, partners, together with local stakeholders (from e.g. culture, education, innovation, community), could develop and test new approaches to define the next strategic steps to be taken in this place, to propose and jointly work on new creative and cultural initiatives.



Before the intervention



After the intervention

SECURITY BY DESIGN

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The intervention used **Security By Design (SBD)** as a tool for gaining users' trust in intervening the least possible in the spiritual spaces whose attractiveness and openness were enhanced by the wooden structure and filtered light, along a trail of orange gravel on the floor, enabling large public attendance with effective protection. Therefore, SBD was at the very beginning of the planning process and design of this intervention. In the design of future interventions, security aspects will also be considered guiding principles to be duly incorporated.

Strategic measures were implemented on site in order to preserve the resilience and robustness of the existing building structures, to reduce vulnerability, secure visitors and to enable socio cultural activities on site: wooden structures and waterproofing materials were placed on rooftops; a secure circuit was outlined, below the structures; and openings were closed, by strategically placing perforated concrete blocks in windows controlling the light, fitting gates and railings to doors avoiding unwanted access to the site and preventing the recurring vandalism. As protective temporary and easily removable measures, when the future decides how to intervene in the whole, they can be taken out.

The implementation of Security by Design principles in the intervention enabled the visit of the empty spaces, full of history and memories, in its original and current natural context for cultural and social use. The improvement of security of this religious site provides the required time to be safely used by communities. Several cultural activities have since then taken place, from visiting guided tours, to music events, to workshops, etc., bringing people to see, use and enjoy this place.

The project has increased the awareness of communities for the benefits of usufruct of such social and cultural asset mitigating its human security threats, in the meaningful spaces. It further delivers time to think, study and reflect on how to prevent and mitigate physical threats to places of worship, and so select in





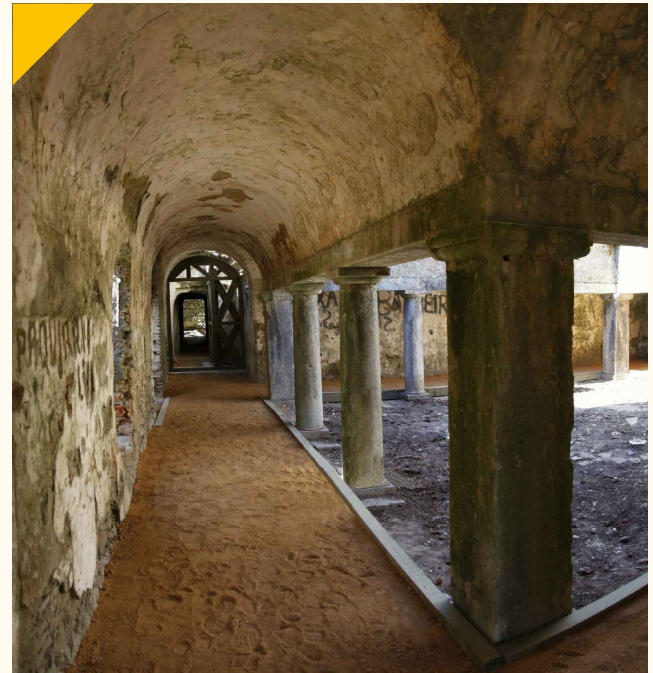
full consciousness the best interventions, such as conservation or restoration, to be conducted on existing structures.

To do so, at an immediate stage, there was no need to call upon the most recent technology of architecture towards conservation, but merely to basic construction tools, methods, and materials.

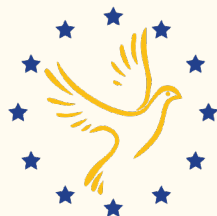
The time gained with this intervention, which stop the degradation of this religious site by implementing simple Security by Design measures, enables knowledge to be produced to advance the

protection and safeguarding of places for worship, and to better answer to challenges raised by degraded fabric and its increasingly challenges for the future of our historic built environment.

Our new conservation approach argues for a comprehensive methodology that goes far beyond funding the conservation, or reconstruction, of neglected, vandalised or destruct religious heritage. It argues for time...it claims that to stop existing decay, and enable a continuous use of places of faith, is possible, with not very costly interventions. It considers the threat of decay as an opportunity to begin the planning, not to quickly be reconstructed, but to provide safe places in the future.







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