

## EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE

LISBON, PORTUGAL

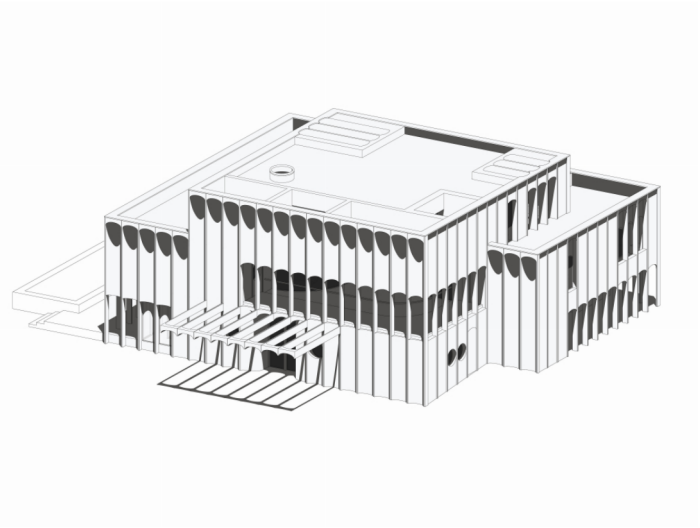
2023–2019

A large villa designed  
as the aspirational identity  
of a country

The project is located in the affluent Lisbon district of Restelo on a plot in Avenida das Descobertas, near the new Embassy of Egypt. This wide avenue is typologically characterised by a string of large freestanding villas, many of which are occupied by diplomatic services. Based on this context, the building is set as a sort of Palladian villa: a semi-symmetrical front-facing structure, subtly evoking a combination of Cairo's Heliopolis district, with its Art Deco and modernist villas, and Lisbon's own Portuguese suave modernism. Municipal planning regulations meant that the building had to be compact, which ultimately proved to be an interesting conceptual point of departure, generating an essentially monolithic volume, vertically counterpoised from the outside by a series of fluted panels. Following a classical compositional system, these flutes are either interrupted at specific points to form windows or their edges are freed to become columns that form pergolas and balconies to provide shading areas.

Careful consideration was given to visitor traffic and the circulation strategy, so as to maintain a privacy for the ambassador and respect principles of protocol. The distinctiveness between the movement of the public and staff/service personnel, including full visibility in the visitor access area, is a critical security issue at the core of the design concept for the residence. Positioned as a large villa at the centre of and half way up the plot, the residence building is accessed via a wide ramp from the security gateway at Avenida das Descobertas, while to the south it is sheltered by an extensive lawn, flanked by soaring stone pines. Guests arrive at a ceremonial front courtyard facing the main entrance, which is level and covered by a wide canopy able to fully shield a car from rain.

The residence comprises four floors (basement, ground-level, first and second storeys) and four different operational units (garage and staff area, official rooms, private residence and guest suites). Currently, the proposal is to form the façade out of precast concrete elements, set in bas-relief with the window frames in bronze aluminium. Inside, the floors of the key official rooms are covered in a wood finishing using solid oak boarding with a herringbone pattern, intended as a contemporary interpretation of the floor marquetry in 19<sup>th</sup>-century villas. Finally, a system of coffered ceilings emphasises an atmosphere of solemnity, fitting for the representational character of a diplomatic residency. In the library-cum-study, a winter garden — inspired by Portaluppi's Villa Necchi — is created using a double-window casing with a gap wide enough to hold flower pots, meaning that the room can function as both a conservatory and the ambassador's private study.



Location: Avenida das Descobertas, Lisbon, Portugal  
Client: Egyptian Building Fund Authority (EBFA)  
Scope of services: Architecture and landscape architecture  
Project brief: Official residence  
Plot area: 4,000 sq. m  
Gross floor area: 1,040 sq. m (plus 70 sq. m basement parking)  
Project status: 2019 (shortlist competition, 1<sup>st</sup> prize) – 2025 (estimated completion)  
Rendering: 4+Arquitectos