

INSPIRA FLORES HOTEL
PORTO, PORTUGAL
2007

Located at the core of Porto's unesco listed World Heritage Site, the Manor of Maías, also known as Ferraz-Bravo on account of the family crest on the facades, dates back to the 16th century. A number of changes were made by different owners and most of the current building dates from the first quarter of the 19th century. The project consists of the renovation and extension of the stately home and its conversion into a 4-star hotel with 60 bedrooms and suites.

Porto's Douro valley landscape with its steep slopes and the densely packed buildings of its medieval centre cascading down to the swirling river is a unique and timeless sight. The 2-storey-plus-attic manor occupies a characteristically deep and steep gothic plot, and its lowest level and main façade face the Rua das Flores. There is a split-level courtyard between the lower Rua das Flores manor building and the higher street level, which has wonderful views towards the cathedral hill. The courtyard contains a baroque chapel by the Italian master architect Nicola Nasoni, which was allegedly brought onto the site from a nearby house and rebuilt.

The new extension building faces the higher street level and its impact on the surroundings is reduced by excavating a part of the courtyard's slope. There is natural light for all the usable spaces, and a spa with an indoor pool and a gourmet restaurant have the benefit of this terrace.

Using a precast concrete system stained with natural pigments, the new façade subtly folds in a series of vertical openings breaking down the contrasting modernity of this volume and bringing it into scale with the smaller and picturesque historical surroundings. For the same reason the horizontal rooftop is covered with a corten steel mesh that colour-wise blends with the terracotta tile of the nearby rooftops.

In order to emphasize the historic character of the old listed palace, the design strategy aims to preserve most of the existing granite wall structure, solid wood boarding and coffin ceilings. The interior design has been conceived as a way of combining the grandiose spatiality of the old building with present-day comfort and state-of-the-art technology.



Location: Porto historic centre (Rua das Flores), Portugal
Operator: Inspira Hotels (Inspira sgps)
Property: JV Blandy Group & Investoc
Programme: 4-star 60-bdr city hotel
Partner architects: [A] ainda arquitectura (Porto)
Interior design: Promontorio Interior Design
Project: 2007

