

PRO MON TORIO

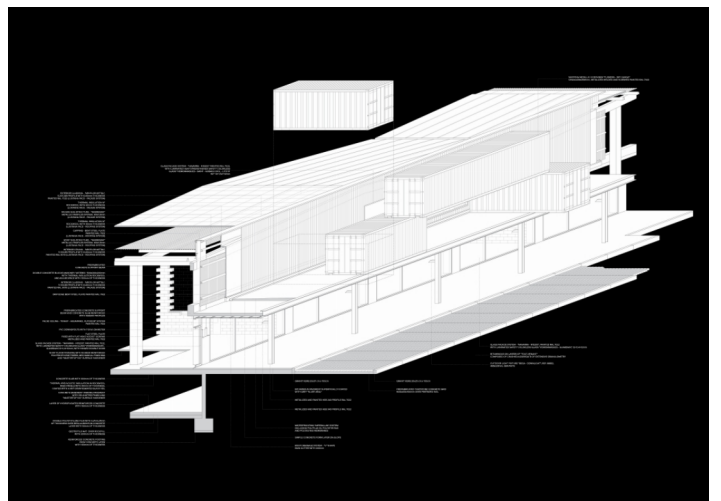
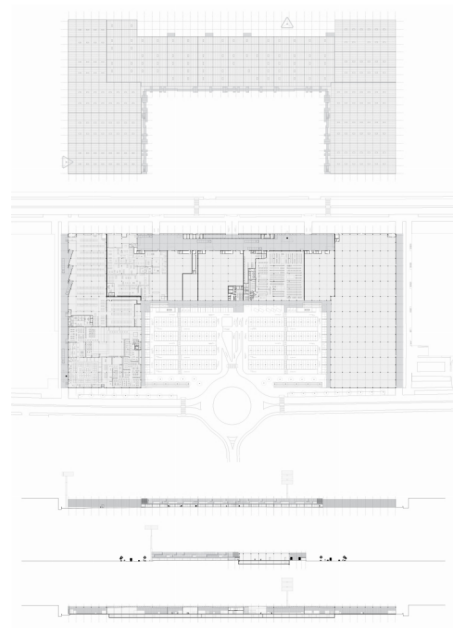
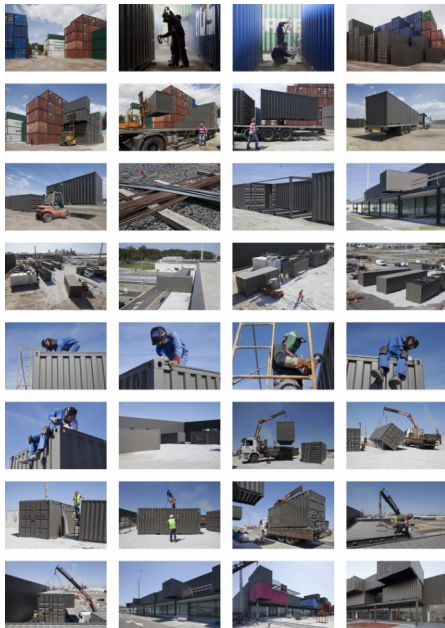
MATOSINHOS RETAIL PARK
MATOSINHOS, PORTUGAL
2017–2010

A retail park built with piled up containers
as a contextual inspiration
from the nearby harbour terminal

Next to Oporto, as a municipality, Matosinhos is intimately associated with the Port of Leixões and all its logistics, of which the berths, the stowage areas and the container parks are an integral part. The site is a complex overlapping of historical layers which, in the vicinity, includes such disparate facilities as a petrochemical campus, Porto's exhibition centre or the celebrated Quinta da Conceição — the remnants of a 15th-century convent — converted by Fernando Távora, together with his young disciple Álvaro Siza, into an urban park in the early 1960s. In recent decades, however, and given the ease of access and the road infrastructure, some of these industrial activities have been replaced by large-scale retail projects, including a plethora of big-box retailers.

In this disruptive context, the relentless authenticity of the containers and the erratic and colourful juxtaposition of these piled-up boxes with their bright freight logos was the starting point for the design of this retail park. In terms of programme, it is basically a large and cost-effective warehouse with an appealing frontage and abundance of parking. From this vantage point, the recycling of used containers, acquired from a nearby container park, to create the façade walls proved effective in terms of availability, transportation and fast-track assemblage, with the cubic capacity of the façade space being used for storage and technical areas. The reused ship containers were chosen from a consignment that is usually designated as 'one-trip', as opposed to 'used' ones, which usually have had multiple journeys and many of which are severely damaged. The chosen units were restored and painted on-site at the container park and shipped by truck to the plot, piled up, assembled and welded. The chosen colour, a deep anthracite pigment, gives the ensemble a unity, as well as emphasising the abstract and sculptural dimension of what could otherwise be misconstrued as just another container park.

The ensemble forms a U-shaped square with outdoor parking at the centre, connecting the various retailers via a steel arcade, with the loading bays and employee facilities located at the back, in addition to a single level of underground parking. When fully occupied, the ensemble will accommodate between 10 and 12 tenants, most of whom operate in the so-called 'hard-discount' market for consumer goods, such as home appliances, furniture and electronics, in addition to a midsize supermarket.



Location: Matosinhos, Portugal

Client: Santander Bank (Novimovest)

Scope of services: Architecture

Project brief: Retail park

Gross floor area: 50,800 sq. m

Gross leasing area: 33,000 sq. m

Parking: 880 places

Construction cost: EUR 20m

Project status: 2010 (competition, 1st prize) – 2017 (built)

Photography: Tiago Casanova