

PRO MON TORIO

PARK KINDERGARTEN
CASCAIS, PORTUGAL
2015–2008

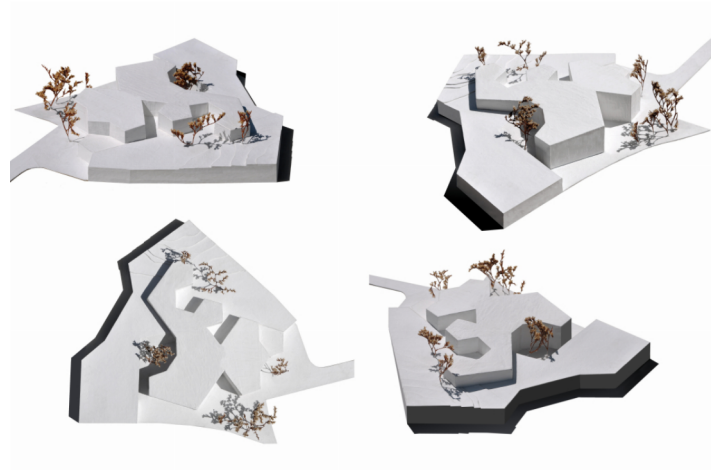
A pedagogic vision
of educational design
made into a great
learning place for children

Located close to Cascais, the kindergarten occupies a steep and quasi-triangular plot in an area of oversized villas. Densely vegetated, the plot forms a cul-de-sac, with the two-storey building occupying its core, accommodating the topography and with a gently inflected volume to save as many existing trees as possible.

Working in close collaboration with the teachers and educationalists, the design attempted to challenge the preconceived tenets of classroom space-planning to produce a more fluid and dynamic spatial interaction. Correspondingly, at both kindergarten and primary school levels the project aims to meet the increasing demand for flexibility in learning methods. After research and mock-up testing, what crystallised was a pentagonal classroom module, creating a unifying environment with the capacity to respond to a dynamic multitask educational project.

Conceptually, these spaces form a type of Euclidean honeycomb, its tessellation generating a series of irregular polygons with variable heights and freely arranged to organically accommodate the programme. In doing so, the scheme pays tribute to long-standing explorations of honeycomb- and organic-patterned designs — an endeavour that proved particularly fertile from the second half of the 20th-century onwards. From the likes of Yona Friedman and the Japanese Metabolists, to Dutch Structuralism and the Italian Neo-Liberty Movement, or even to late-modern American architects such as Minoru Yamasaki and Larrabee Barnes, the honeycomb has constantly been promoted as a psychosomatic metaphor of a progressively augmented spatial weaving that emphatically involves the buildings' bystanders. The same is true in the kindergarten, where the inner circulation space in the pentagons on the larger edge unfolds by sinuously meandering along angular hallways.

Ranging in scale and height, the classrooms, the library, the art room and the canteen flow in a sequence of generous and surprising spaces, both from the outside and the inside. Whitewashed in burnt lime, the tectonic articulation between the load-bearing walls of bond brickwork, with expressively tooled concave joints framed by cast-*in-situ* concrete, contrasts to the large and transparent panes of glass cased in thick white-painted wooden frames. When open, these frames blur the boundaries between exterior and interior. In addition, the occasionally punctured brickwork lets air and light into a series of secluded patios.



Location: Cascais (greater Lisbon), Portugal
Client: Parque, Soluções Infanto-pedagógicas, SA
Scope of services: Architecture and landscape architecture
Project brief: Kindergarten and primary school
Gross floor area: 1,400 sq. m
Construction cost: EUR 1.8m
Project status: 2008 (concept design) – 2015 (built)
Photography: Fernando Guerra

