

PREGAIA OFFICES

VILA NOVA DE GAIA, PORTUGAL

2000

The pre-cast concrete company Pregaia held a short-list competition for the designs of its offices on an industrial campus in the outskirts of Porto. Inscribed within the orthogonal matrix of the plant, the proposed building occupies the given plot with a single pitched roof volume complemented by a sunken patio adjacent to the boundary of the plot, on the West edge of the compound.

Conceptually, the proposed scheme evokes the classical theme of “the house inside the house”, in that the rigorous monolithic shell envelops a loose 3-storey glass volume of office rooms generating and interstitial space that serves as circulation. Eminently tectonic, the embryo of this space-form springs from the articulation between structure and construction: a system of pre-fabricated panels, that function both as structure and walling, shape and sustain the shell which houses the office glass box. Inside this shell, the tectonic form is revealed in its essence, with the surface of white concrete of the porticos exceptionally interrupted by the punched sash windows and the vertical joints between panels, while the tympanum of the shed is fully enclosed by a concrete wall, cast *in-situ*.

Outside, however, subverting the logic of concrete as an all-encompassing material, the building is clad in exposed concrete panels, gripped onto to the structural porticos, with a stereotomy reminiscent of their mineral condition. On the outside, the austerity of this self-contained volume, echoing the roughness of the industrial campus, contrasts with the quasi-scenic lightness of its interior. On the foyer of the building, the triple-height showroom displays the concrete prototypes and samples in like manner to the 18th-century *Pinakotheks* where the works were exhibited by simply optimizing the available space in the walls.

Location: Vila Nova de Gaia (Greater Porto), Portugal

Client: Pregaia SA

Scope of services: Architecture and Interior Design

Project brief: Office building and showroom

Gross built area: 1,500 sq. m

Project status: 2000 (shortlist competition)