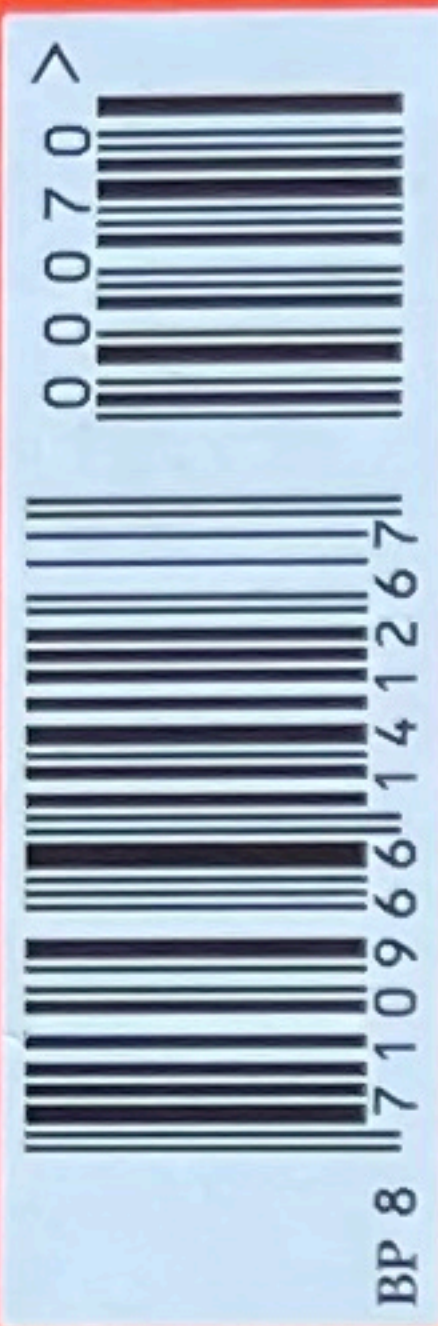


Another Architecture N°70 October — November 2017

# MARK

EUR 1995 GBP 14 CHF 30 CAD 29.50  
USD 1995 JPY 3990 KRW 40000



## Arrival

SelgasCano's Conference Centre has landed in Plasencia

**Productora**  
Bringing the Aztecs  
back to life

**Dennis Gassner**  
Designing  
Blade Runner 2049

**MVRDV**  
Colonising Seoul with  
232 plant species



# Island Spirit

Eloisa Ramos and Moreno Castellano designed a hotel for hikers on the Cape Verdean island of São Vicente.

Text and photos  
Sergio Pirrone

Eloisa Ramos and Moreno Castellano.







The Terra Lodge Hotel is situated on a hill on the outskirts of Mindelo.

# Almost

600 km west of the African coasts of Senegal, ten black stone tips emerge from the deep blue sea, like obsidian hardened and polished by the warm Saharan winds. The two groups of islands – Barlavento and Sotavento – that together form the Cape Verde archipelago, are shaped like a handheld fan.

Cape Verde is home to architects Eloisa Ramos and Moreno Castellano. They met in early 2000, at the University of Coimbra in Portugal, when they were studying architecture. They became a couple and embarked on a journey that took them first to Florence and then to Los Angeles. In 2003, they landed in Mindelo, port city of the island of São Vicente. Castellano originates from Sardinia, an island in the Mediterranean Sea, and was looking for a life where freedom and wind meet

on a surfboard. Ramos is Cape Verdean, born on the neighbouring island of Santo Antão, the most north-western of the Barlavento group and a growing tourist destination.

While São Vicente, dry and constantly whipped by strong hot winds, has a shaggy and yellowish vegetation because of the lack of rain, Santo Antão, only 15 km away, mountainous and surrounded by gorgeous deep ravines, is quite damp and green. Every year Santo Antão attracts thousands of tourists who want to experience the wonderful hiking trails in its dramatic coves. But the tourists arrive on São Vicente first, because it has the airport. Typically, they will stay there a few days, enjoying the greater cultural identity and the deserted beaches, before taking the ferry to Santo Antão. >

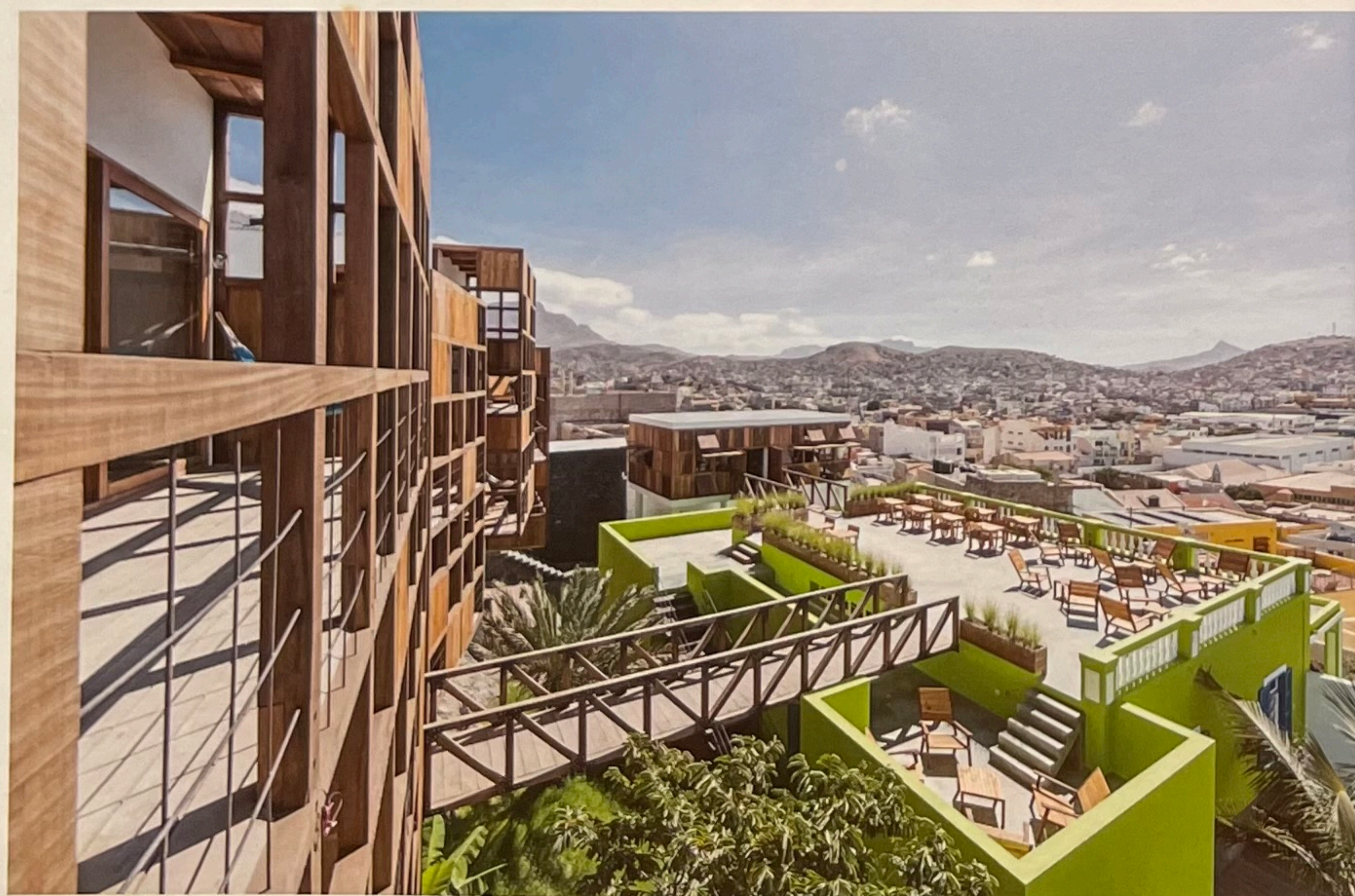
The entrance gate is made of recycled metal cans.







The raised volume containing the breakfast room provides a shaded area beyond the entrance gate.



The roof terrace on the old colonial house is the heart of the complex.

This inspired Theo Lautrey, a French trekking guide, to develop ideas for a hotel for those adventurous trekking pilgrims on São Vicente. He bought an old colonial house on the edge of the historical centre of Mindelo, the capital of the island. His idea was that it would both house the tourist travel agency and be the core of the hotel he wanted to build around it. By offering both services and lodging, the project would embody a complete tourist package, combining the charm of a frontier post with the comfort of a four-star hotel.

And so the young French guide began his search for the right architect to realize his dream. But whoever has been to São Vicente knows that the 227 km<sup>2</sup> of volcanic earth, flailed by oceanic waves and hot winds regularly exceeding 20 knots, is not an easy

place to live. Without raw materials and mainly developed by the former Portuguese colonists to be a stop-over for charcoal-carrying ships between Europe and America, Cape Verde only survives thanks to small businesses, tourism and regular aid from Portugal. On the one hand, the archipelago's geographic isolation, scarce resources and relatively small number of inhabitants have shaped a strong cultural identity, but on the other the new generations have not learned to adapt to change and pursue innovation. Contemporary Cape Verdean architecture is pretty unremarkable: simple cubic volumes, flat roofs and aluminium fixtures. In this barren architectural landscape, Lautrey met Ramos and Castellano and commissioned them to design what would turn out to be the Terra Lodge Hotel.

Ramos actually already knew the colonial house from her childhood. Castellano got to know it by spending a lot of time on site, getting a sense of its potential before his daily surf. Inspiration arrived one day, when the architects were standing on the rooftop of the house, then still almost a ruin, facing the breath-taking panoramic view of the island. Its colourful roofs were like steps descending to the south-west towards Baía Do Porto Grande, and beyond, to the hardened hills and the iconic Monte Cara. The thought hit them that the anarchistic growth of houses on the arid lava rocky mountain could be understood as its vegetation. Ramos and Castellano: 'We decided to respect the context and use the same philosophical architectural approach of the surrounding buildings, adapting the spaced >

The 15-m-long footbridge to the roof terrace adds a sense of adventure.



**'São Vicente must be respected for what it has managed to become despite the difficulties it has faced'**





The hotel rooms are distributed over four separate volumes.





Instead of a TV set and air conditioning, guests are offered a view of the bay and natural ventilation supplemented with electric fans.



The breakfast room is raised on pilotis.

units to the terrain morphology. Because São Vicente is both beautiful and ugly, it must be lived as it is, without being judged, and it must be respected for what it has managed to become despite the difficulties it has faced.'

The architects divided the hotel rooms (11 rooms and one suite) into four volumes, separated by circumnavigating paths that connect to the reception and main entrance. They decided to use the significant slope of the site to create various terraces and, through several stone retaining walls, chose to allude to the rocky nature of Santo Antão, the final destination of the hotel guests. The four volumes, three equal- and one double-sized on the west side, blend into the built environment and overlook the city and the bay. Rather than being set in line, there are small variations in their orientation, just like the surrounding buildings. Their terraces have been placed according to precise solar path studies. Wooden panels in the verandas block direct solar radiation during the day and provide protected spots for the guests to enjoy the views.

The four volumes rest at different heights on stone walls, as if they are rocks taken from the overhanging mountain. The sun-sheltered paths at the back lend access to a 15-m-long wooden suspension bridge, leading to the terrace on the roof of the old colonial house. Crossing the bridge evokes



Cross ventilation keeps the breakfast room cool.

a certain Indiana Jones feeling – a sense of adventure. The large panoramic terrace, where guests can enjoy drinks and the sunset, is the pulsating heart of the complex. And if the four volumes holding the rooms can be seen as the oxygenating lungs of the complex, the breakfast bar suspended on *pilotis* is the stomach. Like the hotel rooms, it has numerous openings to guarantee cross ventilation.

As the architects say: 'Every solution has been simplified and adapted to the island. The complex is simple and essential, satisfying

basic needs and not catering to ephemeral fashions.' Like an exquisite dish cooked with a few ingredients found in the fridge, the two young architects have done the best with the very little they had at their disposal. Sustainability, sociality and respect for the people and place that welcomed them when they moved to São Vicente are three of the pillars of the Terra Lodge. The fourth is love for architecture and, in their small way, the desire to change the world through beauty. In order to get the essence of that beauty, Castellano >



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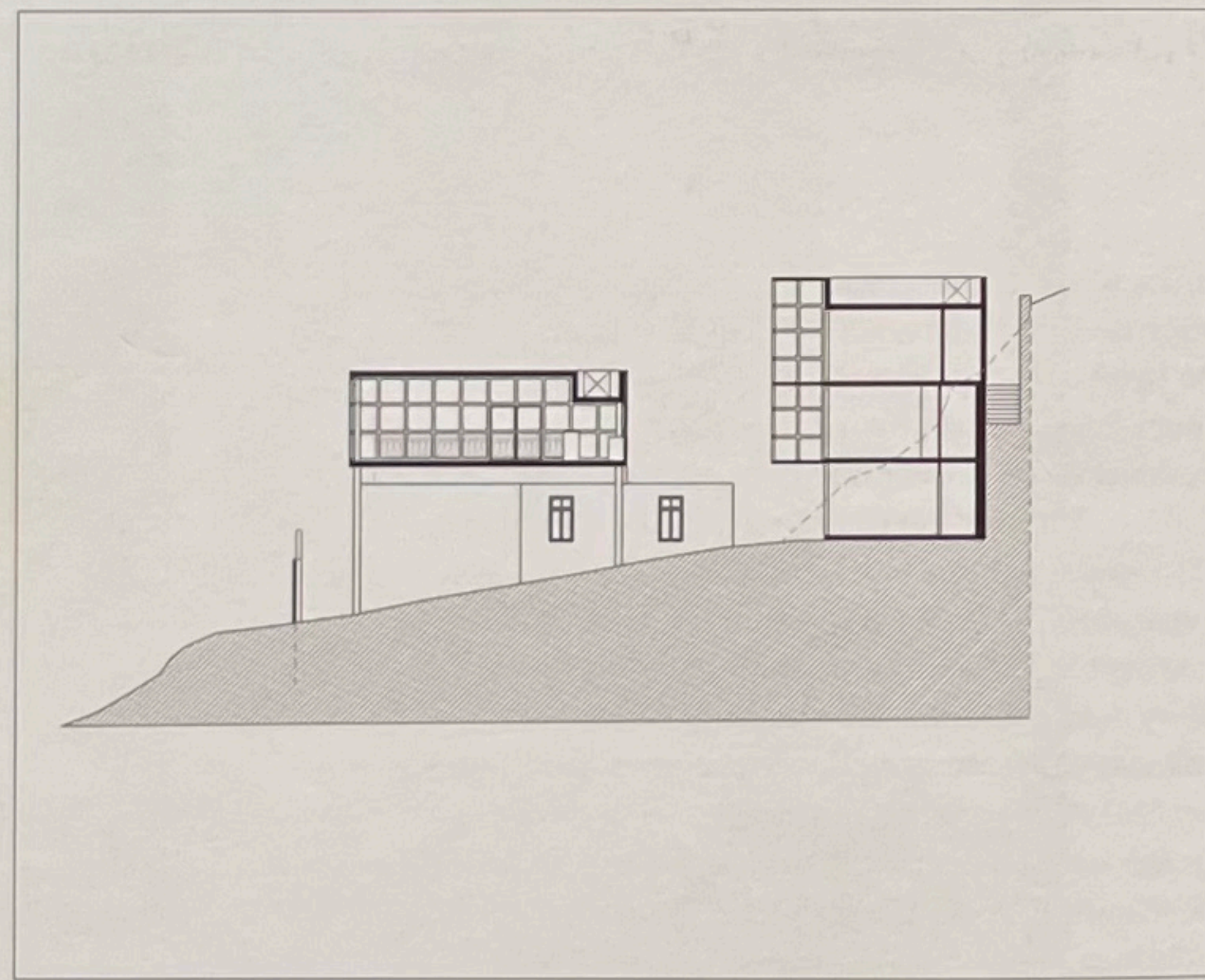


+2



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Cross Section



- 01 Veranda
- 02 Entrance
- 03 Office
- 04 Den
- 05 Reception
- 06 Bedroom
- 07 Storage
- 08 Terrace
- 09 Pool
- 10 Garden
- 11 Roof terrace
- 12 Footbridge
- 13 Breakfast room
- 14 Kitchen
- 15 Water storage



The hotel rooms are accessed from the north, via a configuration of paths, stairs and small bridges.

***‘Every solution has been simplified and adapted to the island’***

spent days sleeping on site, in a tent, and studied the sun from sunrise to sunset, feeling the gusts of wind. Such a ‘holy’ approach led to a totally handmade project, using the local labour taken from the neighbourhood, ‘trying to distribute the economy of the building construction into the social environment’.

The external materials have been left raw: wood for the verandas, lime putty for the white plaster. The ecological soul of the project is embodied in the adopted recycled material, such as the colourful entrance gate made of cast-off petroleum barrels – used for shipping goods and employed by the locals to make artisanal objects. Furthermore, the building is self-sufficient thanks to the photovoltaic panels hidden on the roofs and the water-recycling systems used to irrigate the native plants. Finally, all of the furniture, including the lighting, was designed by the architects and built by local handcrafters out of recycled wood taken from electric cable reels. In spite of the very happy ending, construction was not always easy and it encountered delays, as also happens in any couple’s life. ‘During the past two years, we have also learnt that the same rules should be applied to both architecture and private life. We all need passion and compassion, respect and (a lot of) patience,’ say Ramos and Castellano, smiling. –

[ramosc Castellano.com](http://ramosc Castellano.com)

The 12 rooms combine contemporary comfort with the character and appeal of historical heritage.

