

Landscape Architecture Europe



# Fieldwork

Birkhäuser  
LAE Foundation

Location Coimbra (P)

# Garden of the Cerca de São Bernardo

**Programme** Garden design for a part of the ancient São Bernardo enclosure

**Designers** Margem, Arquitectura Paisagista Lda

**In collaboration with** Teixeira Duarte Lda (construction)

**Client** municipality of Coimbra, Portuguese Ministry of Culture

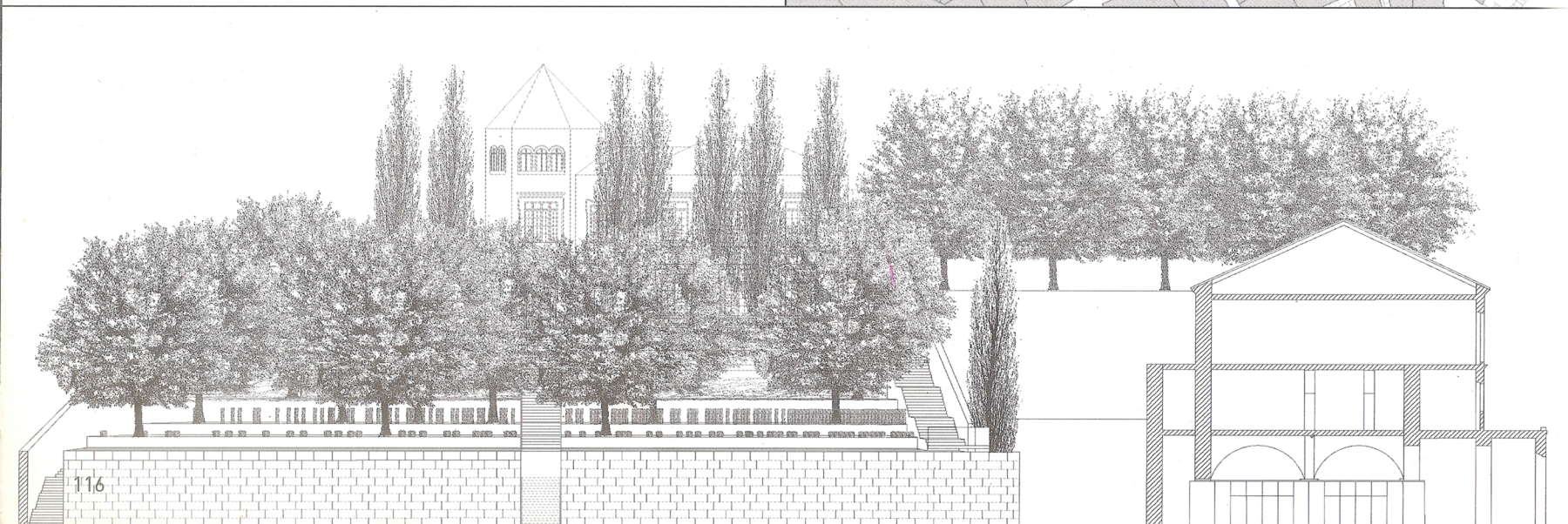
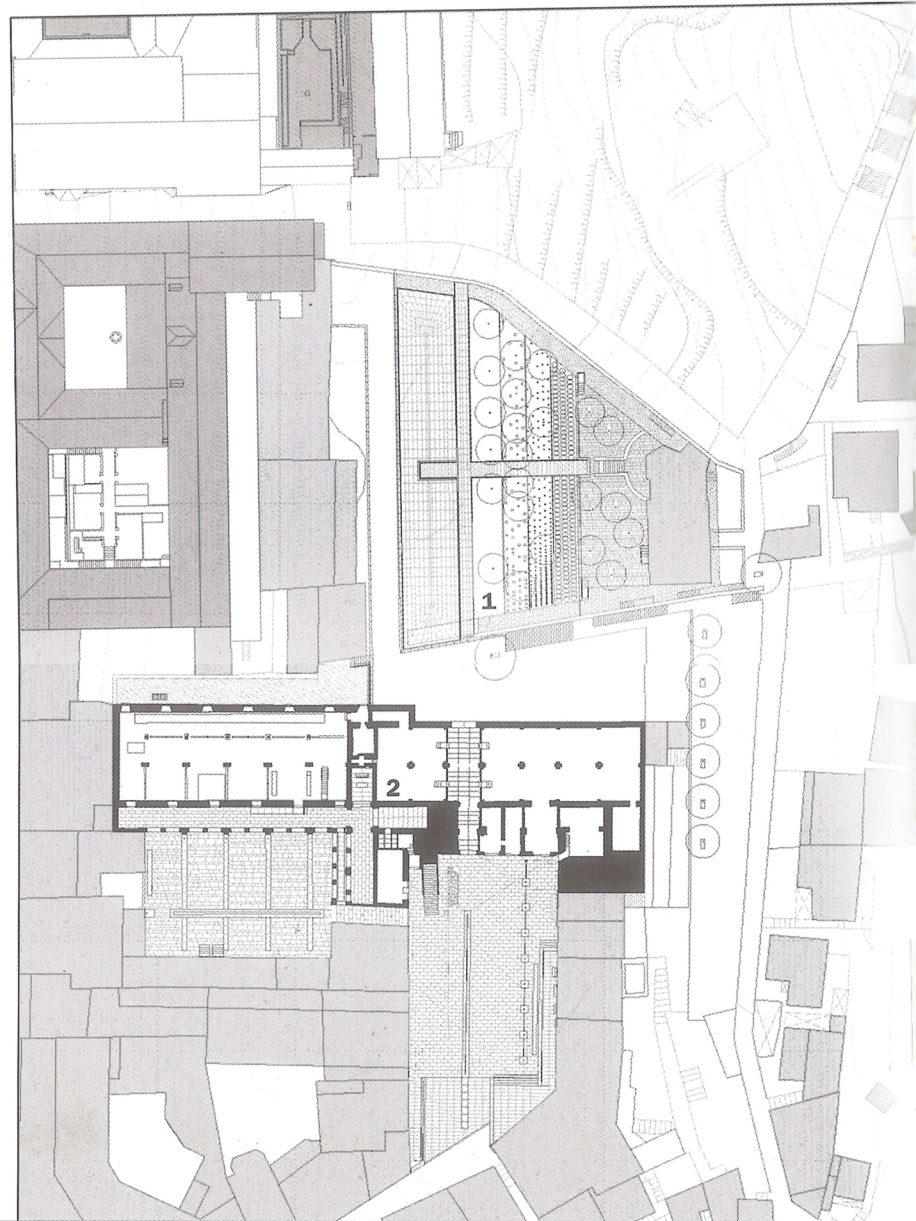
**Area** 2,750 m<sup>2</sup>

**Design period** 1999-2000

**Implementation period**

2001-2003

**Cost** € 300,000



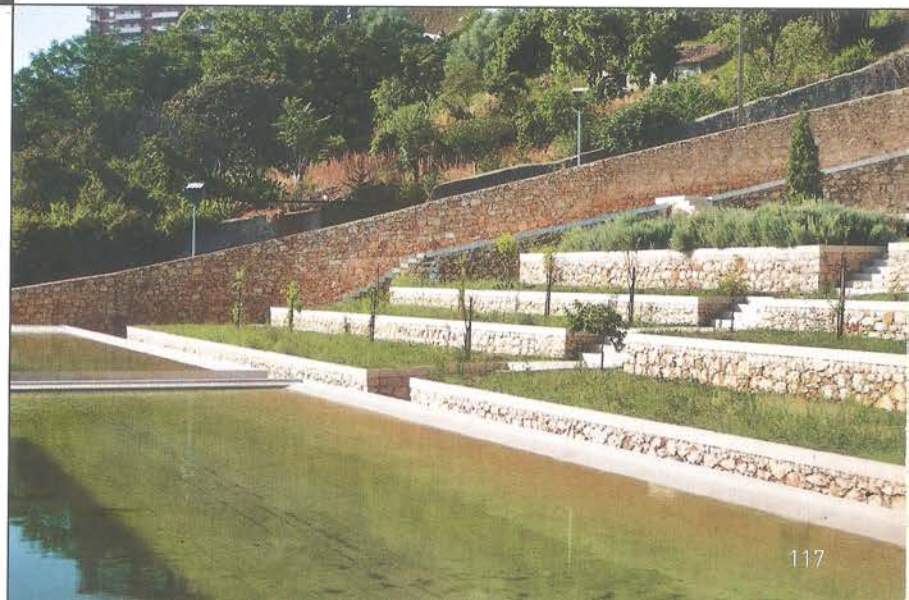


São Bernardo was built as a new university building after the University of Coimbra returned to the city in 1537. The building became the seat of the Court of the Inquisition in Coimbra and this continued until the suppression of the Inquisition in 1821. In 1999 the decision was made to house the Centre for Visual Arts here.

The gardens were originally used as a vegetable garden and for citrus orchards and are arranged in terraces which have been conserved, with the terrace walls refaced in local light buff and white limestone. The top terrace has been completely repaved in limestone and planted with columnar oak trees (*Quercus robur fastigiata*), the four terraces below have been planted with bitter orange trees (*Citrus aurantium*) and with lavender (*Lavandula dentata*), and the blue fescue grass (*Festuca ovina glauca*). At the bottom is a great pool, which crosses the whole garden. There are three routes through the garden, a stepped central axis and two perimeter sequences of steps under the high masonry walls which enclose the whole garden. The central axis descends by steps down through the four terraces and then is ramped under the water basin and will lead out to a proposed tea house. The eastern steps lead down to a metal pier over the basin while the western steps lead out of the gardens.

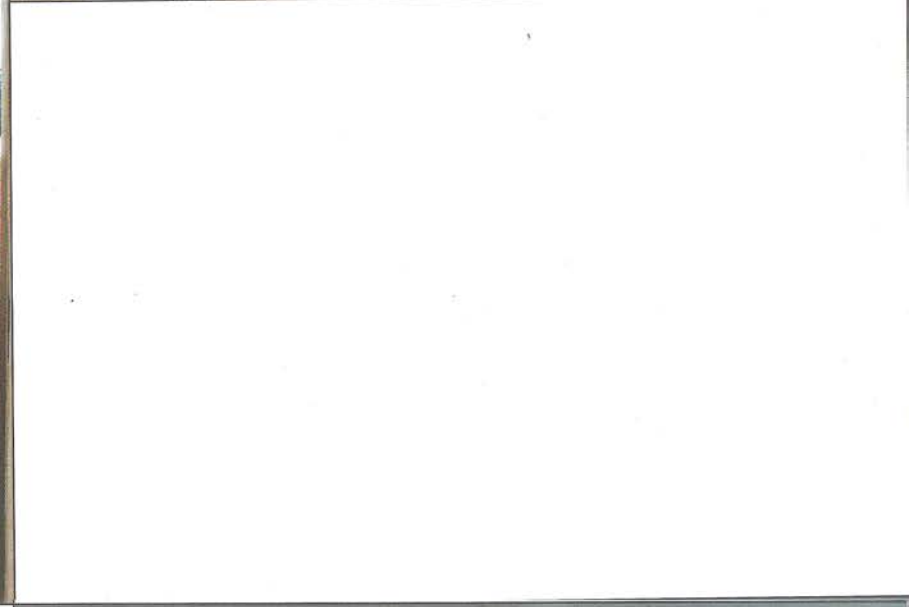
The jury was attracted by the scheme's subtlety and the way that "when you descend your eye is at water level" and found the detail beautiful. The scheme is strong in its main design and becomes more and more interesting. In short it is "apparently traditional, but with something new added".

- ◀ ▶ Ground plan for the garden of the Cerca [1] and the Center for Visual Arts [2].
- ◀ ▶ Elevation with it fastigiated oak on the top terrace and citrus on the lower terraces.
- ▶ ▶ Rubble stone terraces rise to the College building.
- ▶ ▶ The pool at the bottom which forms the focus of the terraced garden.





- ▲ The central axis of steps sets up a symmetry, which leads down to the future tea house and crosses this "green box" in the city.
- ⚡ Sectional view through the terraces.
- ✦ Crisp limestone detailing.



- The ramped path through the pool.
- The central path descends below the pool and leads outside.
- The stone details are simple and beautiful.
- View of the terraces descending to the stone-lined pool at the bottom.



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