

Architecture Project Management

Architecture, Urbanism, Design, Project Management, Property Valuation, Real Estate Appraisal, Construction and more...

António Rosa da Silva, Architect - Portugal

Tell us a little of your background.

I was born in Setúbal, Portugal in 1974 and graduated in architecture in 2002, attending in previous years several learning periods in many different areas, including applied mathematics. I started working in a teacher's office when I was studying, doing all kind of office and architecture work. Later, I finished the internship in that office and stayed there for 8 years, being the last 4 years as a project manager. In 2007 I was ready to open my own office and started 'Rosa da Silva Arquitectos', since then I've been doing all types of architectural work and competitions, collaborating regularly in multi-disciplinary teams. In-between I had a two year teaching experience in an architecture school in Portugal. In recent years I also initiated collaboration with the Portuguese architectural association in the professional deontology and ethics department.

What made you want to be an architect?

When in high school I didn't know what really was and what an architect did, but I knew my future profession would be something related with materials and the way they assembled. I tried several courses and finally discovered architecture.

It was a kind of enlightenment for me at the time, because architecture condensed everything that I loved and imagined doing, photography, moving image, design, drawing and materials assembly. I knew then I had to be an architect.

What kind of an Architecture student were you? How was your educational experience?

When I started my architectural studies, I had already 4 years of higher education in other areas, I couldn't lose any time, so I was a very focused and self-taught student.

I graduated from a small architecture school, in my hometown, teachers were very committed with the school and it was frequent having students sharing work experiences with the teachers as I did. The teaching had a good mixture between the theoretical and practical and annually we did 2-3 field trips inside Europe to discover architecture 'on site'. Globally it was a very intense and gratifying experience.

What have been the rewards of practicing architecture? What are your tasks and responsibilities?

The obvious reward is doing what I love to do; people and communities are the most important, if they are happy with the result, I'm satisfied.

I have my own office, so I am responsible for the general office organization and the distribution of tasks and projects among my collaborators; I also do all the initial design/ conceptual work and the first drawings. In my projects I like to be involved in the process from start to finish, so I usually do some intermediate process stages always in close working relationship with clients.

Recently I've been setting-up temporary teams for competition purposes with fellow architects for strategic reasons, in these teams I assume the same responsibilities as in my office, initial conceptual design and organize the team.

Describe your greatest achievement.

Earlier this year, I won the young architect award in Portugal, and for me this prize is the result of the previous year's work and effort and the strategies I've been implementing in the office. Although I think this prize is important it is a reminder that my greatest achievement is yet to come.

What are your favorite buildings?

During my work day I see a lot of buildings whether in magazines or internet blogs, but my favorites still are the early projects by Alvaro Siza and Fernando Távora in Oporto, a town in the north of Portugal. Architecture nowadays is getting too homogenous and it's hard to remember any building. Siza Buildings like 'Casa de chá da Boa Nova' appeals to the senses and as an inseparable relation with the site.

And, in your own opinion, the best Architect of your country? And worldwide?

The best architect in Portugal is without a doubt Alvaro Siza Vieira, not only he has designed beautiful buildings all over the world but he influenced several generations of architects. In this context I would have to refer Eduardo Souto de Moura who won the Pritzker award this year as Siza did in 1992. Today there are many good architects worldwide, but for me, Peter Zumthor stands out because of its refusal of the architectural establishment and conceptual thinking.

What are the key influences in your work today? Where is architecture today?

Energy conservation and the rehabilitation of old buildings play a most influence in my work today, I guess this is the sign of the times. I read a lot of books about sustainability although I don't like the word and I guess a lot of people have a hard time trying to explain what it is, basically I'm always looking for ways to give my designs an overall good environmental performance. Architecture today plays an important part in every aspect of human habitats, but has a secondary role when called to respond to the big questions that we are faced with today, like reducing emissions, waste, water usage, new ways of mobility, social responses, etc. Architecture is still living too much around the value of image; we live in an era of render glamour that has yet to be overcome.

What do you think about the future of Architecture and its professionals?

I think architecture is becoming more and more specialized, as an example in Portugal there are offices exclusively specialized in health or education areas. When you specialize you lose control of the big picture, imagination and creativity get reduced to a cluster of specialization. In the future architects have to return to the role of problem solvers, architecture is transversal to all human activities and we need to be in the frontline of human development as we did in the past.

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