

# From Bauhaus to beach house Faro island

An architectural walk along Faro beach with artist Richard Walker





# Beach-town architecture



Faro beach is a popular destination for both locals and tourists, offering a 5km stretch of golden sand facing the Atlantic Ocean. On one side is the ocean, while the other faces the Ria Formosa Natural Park, a protected lagoon system. This unique location provides stunning views and opportunities for wildlife spotting. Faro Island's architecture is characterized by a blend of traditional Portuguese styles and adaptations to its coastal setting.



The island features low-rise buildings, typically no more than two or three stories tall, which help maintain a harmonious relationship with the surrounding natural landscape. Many structures on the island showcase traditional Algarvian architectural elements, including whitewashed walls that reflect the intense sunlight and help keep interiors cool. These buildings often feature distinctive chimneys, known as "chaminés algarvias," which are ornately decorated and serve as both functional and decorative elements.

# Modernist influences

In the 50s, The beach houses on Faro Island embody this modernist spirit, ranging from updated traditional styles to futuristic designs reminiscent of Palm Springs architecture. Faro beach has a concentration of Modernist gems, some of them designed by Portuguese architect Manuel Gomes Da Costa.

#### **Modernist Beachcombing**

The walk offers a unique perspective on how modernist principles have been adapted to a coastal setting:

- · Cubist themes with Moorish influences
- Flat roofs with minarets
- Emphasis on space and light
- Designs reminiscent of Cape Cod or the Florida Keys



# Case study: Aeromar hotel 1950-architect Manuel Gomes Da Costa





The Aeromar Hotel, one of the few designed by visionary architect Manuel Gomes da Costa, stands as a testament to mid-20th century modernism.

#### **Historical Context**

Built in the 1970s, the Aeromar Hotel remains a well-preserved example of that era's modernist architecture. Its design reflects the adaptation of modernist principles to the local context of the Algarve, showcasing how international architectural trends were interpreted in this region of Portugal.

#### **Design Elements**

- The Aeromar Hotel showcases key features of modernist architecture: Two floors, creating a low beach-friendly profile
- Interesting facade with alternating surfaces for visual appeal
- Protruding beams adding texture to the exterior
- Perforated walls (cobogós) for natural airflow and light filtering
- Distinctive butterfly-shaped roof canopy
- Sloping tiled roofs at the front, hiding a flat roof terrace behind

These elements combine to create a classic example of 1970s modernist design adapted to the Algarve's coastal setting.

## Case study: Casa da Praia 1963 - architect Manuel Gomes Da Costa



Casa Aníbal de Brito, built in 1963, is a significant architectural work located in Praia de Faro, Portugal.

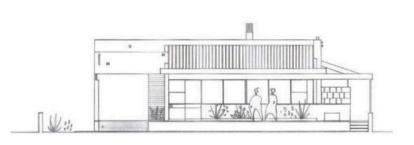
This single-story house was a collaboration between architect Manuel Gomes da Costa (MGC) and prominent builder Aníbal de Brito.

#### **Key Features**

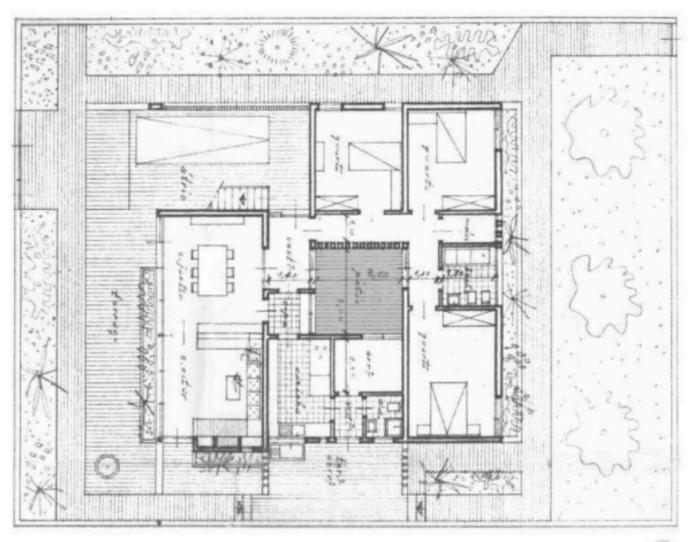
- Clever interior layout separating private, common, and service areas
- Climate-adaptive elements: marble flooring, cobogos, strategic window placement
- Unique materials: Brazilian ash tree wood windows, black and white rock art depicting ocean life
- Blend of modernist and traditional Portuguese elements



- The house represents a pivotal moment in MGC's career, showcasing:Sloped, tiled roof extending beyond the northern facade
- Small flat roof over the car porch
- Interior garden courtyard for thermal and lighting control

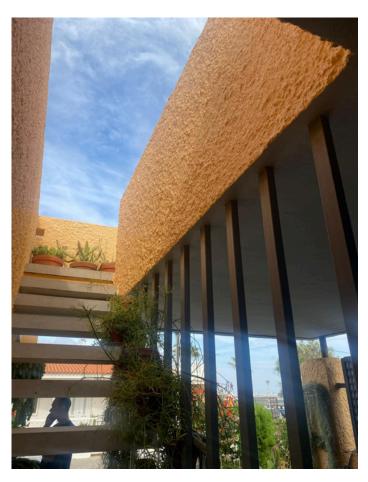


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#### **MGC** and De Brito Partnership

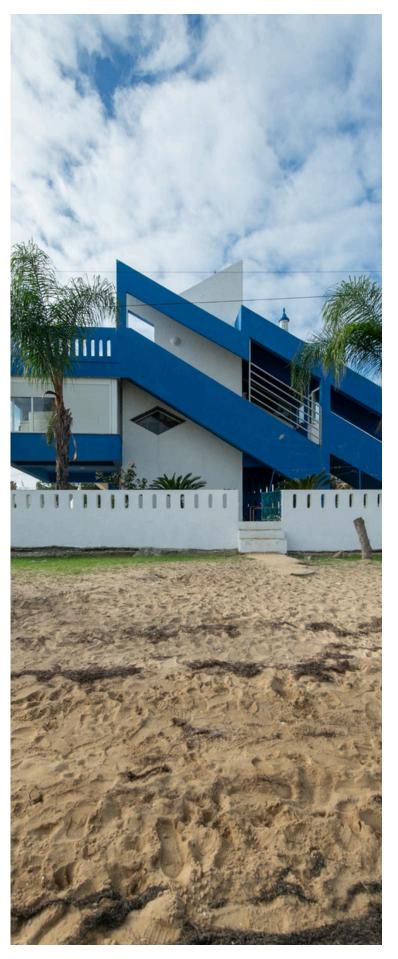
 This project was part of a larger collaboration between MGC and De Brito in the 1960s and 1970s.
De Brito was chosen for his reputation in construction quality and efficiency.

#### **Preservation and Modifications**

- Initially a summer residence, the house later became Arturo de Brito's (Aníbal's son) permanent home. While some modifications were made for year-round living, many original features have been preserved, including:Kitchen furniture and countertop
- Doors and handles
- Stairs and cobogos
- Flooring

Casa Aníbal de Brito stands as one of Manuel Gomes da Costa's most exceptional works, showcasing innovative design solutions that respect both modernist principles and traditional Portuguese architecture.

# Case study: Casa Blue 1974-architect / engineer Rogério Palmeira



Client: Mr. Custódio Mendonça Ruivo, also known as "Sabino"

**Context**: The land was purchased in 1974 by Mr. Custódio Mendonça Ruivo ("Sabino") from a family of fishermen on Faro Island. On this land, there was an abandoned "shack" made of tin and wood. 1974 was the year of the Portuguese revolution, marking Portugal's exit from Salazar's dictatorship and entry into democracy. For Sabino, this house represented the entrance into the future, novelty, and a break from the rigid past towards a smooth, innovative, and different future. With this perspective, Sabino wanted to build an innovative house that would stand out from the rest of Faro Island, as well as from the rest of the city and its past history. Meanwhile, Sabino spoke with Mr. Rogério Palmeira, a visionary architect/engineer who shared his vision and ambition, and who brought this project to life. The construction of the house took about a year, and there were some obstacles during the process.

One of these obstacles was that to bring sand and construction materials, they had to come by truck, which could only cross the bridge at night to avoid being caught, as the bridge was off-limits to heavy vehicles.

# Case study: Casa Blue 1974-architect / engineer Rogério Palmeira





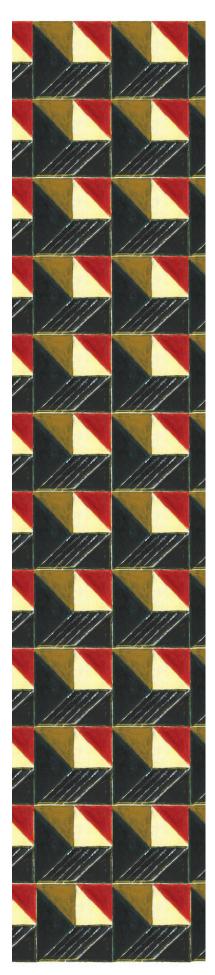
During one of these crossings, the bridge broke, and they had to place "planks" to be able to cross from the mainland to the island. Therefore, both the construction of the house and its architecture were, in a way, rebellious and daring.

#### **House Architecture:**

The house emphasizes functionality and comfort, allowing inhabitants to enjoy the outdoors without excessive light and heat. It features two terraces: one for shaded lunches facing the sunset and another for dinners facing the sunrise. The spacious living room is oriented north for protection from the sun while offering panoramic lagoon views. The layout includes a suite, three bedrooms, and bathrooms designed for summer living.

The choice of blue and white colors reflects traditional Portuguese aesthetics.

Overall, the house has undergone very few alterations and remains close to its original condition.



### EXPLORING RICHARDS WALKER'S SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Through his art, Walker not only captures the visual essence of Faro's modernist architecture but also contributes to the ongoing dialogue about the significance and preservation of this architectural heritage.

#### FROM LONDON TO FARO

1-How has living between London and Faro influenced your artistic perspective, especially when it comes to modernist architecture?

Working between the 2 cities, the contrast is quite stark. Mainly the light levels. These dictate 2 different colour palettes. London, with muted shades of grey and green. Faro has a whole spectrum of saturated colour. The shapes and forms in my work take on different identities in the 2 places. I have become interested in these contrasting aspects and think a lot more about place and location.

2-The Bauhaus movement emphasized the unity of form and function. How do you balance these concepts in your paintings inspired by modernist architecture?

The Bauhaus has been around over 100 years and still heavily influences artists and designers. Simple forms and strong colours are key to the appeal, but working in this way can be complex. Living and working in Faro, I am surrounded by this pure visual language. The boldness and freedom of expression is my main inspiration. On my beach walk, I will communicate the island landscape: the geometry of the architecture and the horizontals and juxtapositions of nature.. the sky, the beach, the ocean

3-Your work has been exhibited internationally. How do you think the modernist architecture in Faro compares to other cities you've encountered, and how does this influence your artistic approach?

In many of the countries where I have exhibited my work, I have been influenced by the location. I once hosted an architectural week in Miami, where there is a plethora of modernism from all periods.

This fed into my work. Places like New York, LA, London and Paris are all significant. However Faro brings many of these elements together in a fresh and playful way. There is a fearless approach to their heritage and an air of relaxed confidence about their built environment. I think my recent work has definitely benefited from this new energy and sense of freedom.



### EXPLORING RICHARDS WALKER'S SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

'Modernism, as an active movement in architecture, painting, design, fashion and music, pretty much ended in the late 70s. I think there is still a Modernist sensibility and attitude, which still needs exploring, as it has been overtaken by corporate consumerism. The balance needs restoring. This is what I'm doing in Faro'

**Richard Walker** 









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