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MAD Architects' design for the new Harbin Opera House sees a transfusion of local identity, art and culture into a building deeply inspired by the city's untamed wilderness

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On engaging the community
and challenges facing
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HKS48
US\$18
€15



The wine, the whale, the ship & the volcano

At Pico Island, vineyards, whales, shipbuilding and a volcanic mountain come together at Cella Bar, a stunning dining destination that looks as if it sprang forth from the land

TEXT:
Michele Koh Morollo
PHOTOGRAPHY:
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One of the most underrated of Portugal's Azorean islands, Pico, with its majestic volcanic mountain, legacy of wooden shipbuilding, vineyards, aquamarine beaches and waters populated by whales and dolphins is indeed a mythical place, where nature still reigns supreme. It is here that Portuguese architects FCC Arquitectura, in partnership with Paulo Lobo interior design studio, built Cella Bar, a beachfront tapas restaurant and bar where food and nature together create a feast for both body and soul.

Using mainly materials from the island such as volcanic basalt rock and local timber, FCC Arquitectura principal architect Fernando Coelho and his team combined elements from the things that make Pico Island so unique – the formation of waves in the surrounding seas, the shape of whales, the textures of wine casks, and materials like volcanic rocks and indigenous wood – to create an iconic dining destination that represents the character of the island.

A regenerative transformation project that resulted from the expansion of a pre-existing barn which had lain abandoned for many years, the walls, roof and door frames of the old barn were restored, and its essential features were adapted to suit its new functions. "In the original building, the walls, roof and door frames all needed to be repaired or replaced. The walls are basalt stone, typical of buildings in the region, and the roof is covered in traditional clay tiles," says Coelho.

Cella was created from the regenerative transformation and expansion of an abandoned barn, to which a curvy wooden sculptural extension was added



After reinventing the existing barn structure, the architects added a curvy wooden sculptural extension, which follows an entirely new language. Both FCC Arquitectura and Paulo Lobo are fascinated by a similar aesthetic approach, in which unique textures and plasticity of forms drive the concept.

Thus, according to Coelho, the new volume is “an organic, dynamic construction that contrasts with the orthogonal, classical language of the building where it is embedded. The design is defined by great plasticity, both in terms of forms and materials, and is markedly inspired by the natural environment around the site. Several features of that environment are present in the architecture of the building, including the outline of the island, rocks, whales and wine casks. The new volume acts like a giant sculpture, tailored for its location.”

Four separate spaces were created within the old barn and the new wooden extension. The main restaurant is located in the ground floor of the

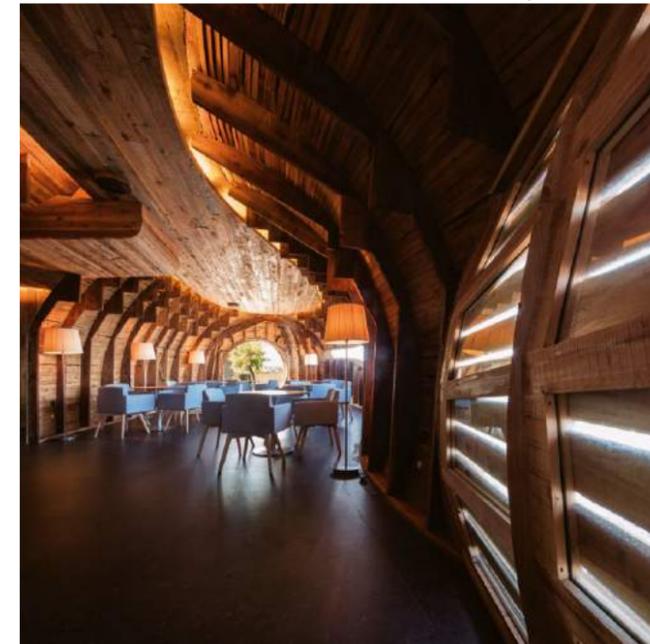
In the main dining room, wooden beams and wall struts recall the skeleton of a whale

“Several features of that environment are present in the architecture of the building, including the outline of the island, rocks, whales and wine casks. The new volume acts like a giant sculpture”

A large round window at one end of the curving new extension suggests the mouth of a whale



Timber is the signature material of the extension, with wood cladding on the interiors an echo of the exterior of the new, whale-shaped structure



barn, while the lower level of the extension houses the more intimate dining area. On the second level of the barn is a wooden bar with additional seating areas, and a glazed door which leads out to an open-terrace situated on the top of the extension, and framed by a slender metal railing. These four spaces complement each other by serving different functions during different times of the day, and the disparate uses, landscapes, furniture and lighting in each of these areas offers guests a variety of atmospheres and sensations.

Curved timber planks are positioned and stepped to create the gentle curves of the giant sculptural extension, and its frame is clad with lengths of a species of cypress wood known as Cryptomeria. All the windows are either round or have curved edges to complement the building's wavy form; their rounded shapes offer good contrast to the rectilinear shape of the old barn. The largest of these windows is a round aperture at

one end of the structure, and with a little imagination, one might see what looks like the mouth of a whale.

Coelho sees Cella Bar as a dialogue between building and land, the pre-existing traditional architecture of the barn and the new organic volume. “The execution of a project was complex due to its organic forms, its need for millimetric precision, and the great detail required in the drawing and selection of materials. There were times when it was difficult to see how the final results would look when implemented, but team spirit and hard work helped us surmount all these obstacles,” he says.

“What one feels when one is here is an ongoing dialogue with the outdoor landscape, the relationship of the exterior with the interior. The windows are living pictures of the landscape that look out to scenes that contribute to a serene and sophisticated atmosphere.”

An open-terrace on the top of the new extension, framed by a slender metal railing, is one of four distinct spaces which have been created by the architects