



presents

FRÉDÉRIC COUSTOLS

in

THE MENTOR

No! This is the starting point...
Take it from here, and go wherever you want, but...
We have a starting point.
My position is very simple. As SFPPIC.
Alcácer do Sal, 1000 meters.
So, we are almost there.

There are no ruins in Torrão.
No... there's the Convent.
It's not a ruin.
What is it?
You can't consider it a ruin.
Ah no? Then what is it?
No. It's not a ruin? Really?
No, because you have a facade, you have interior walls. We arrive at a village that is, let's say, in ruin at the human level, but there are no material ruins.
Look, there, Torrão. Torrão!

Once it [the convent] was acquired, it was absolutely ridiculous to stop there. It was necessary to understand the village, the small urban area, and to know if we could do other things.

To move from a selfish activity, for oneself, for one's own pleasure, etc. and to have a... let's say more communal activity.

Torrão.

I'm in the forest of Alentejo.

It was the initial impression I had of Alentejo.

A forest, a tunnel of flowers, of trees.

Arriving in Torrão, in a small, white, gentle, silent town... it was a pleasure.

I came here because a friend of mine told me to come.

I didn't know this place.

I didn't know the road from Alcácer to Torrão.

And he told me: — 'You have to visit this building, the Convent of Nossa Senhora da Graça'

And I just... went in.

And I thought it was a ruin.

And I loved this ruin.

So I said: — 'Let's do it. Let's restore it.

Let's bring life to this place.'

And... the next week, I was thinking:

– This is ridiculous. Why should we restore a convent in this state?

It has no meaning.

The meaning is somewhere else. That means you go and restore and do this huge work on the convent,

but you have to be inside the community.

And then we started thinking of this 'villa',

2000 inhabitants, people living, old people, but a very...

a very... 'suave' community.

Then I talked to you, Mário Caeiro.

And I wanted to ask you if you would join

in such a concept of working on the city,

and trying to add some life to it.

And that was it.

Well, the dream, you know, when you do something, you either do it for business, for money,
or you do it because you think it's part of you.
It has nothing to do with rentability... and things like that.
I really don't know. We have to let it live, to let it develop, with the right people, with the right partners. It's a game. It's a play. It's a theatre.

I think the technical term is... 'minimum', but the social links in the project are of a must, and they are difficult to define right away.
We have to get into the villa first, live there, mix with the people, and not to interfere too much.

When we looked at Torrão,
in some detail,
appears one factor.
This little villa is outside the world,
outside the parameters that are defined
by the European Union, that are defined and used
by the Portuguese Government.
And it's a... it's a small size, it's a living size.
And we thought that we could develop on that project through this
Convent and the different properties we are going to develop, a post-
growth program. Meaning something where... very near the people,
today... they don't consume, they consume for their own daily life.
They don't have big cars, they don't have two TV's, they don't have...
you know, they don't spend their time
on holidays going far away. No, they live on the land, and they have
pleasure to live on the land.
They don't need anything else. And they are pushed away because it's
not the way they should live.
And this is a very interesting case to study, and to try to implement.
And we'll do it through Art, Culture, Sociology... as a laboratory.

There is nothing to add.
It's a hell of a work, but, you know, I'm 80 years old,
and I have nothing else to do, so... Ready to go!
And we have a big team around us, big team.

There is an Association which has been created, which is very active, and many people are joining and we hope to have many more. Not only from Torrão, but mainly from Torrão. But from outside too and from the villas around.

I don't want to get into the different issues we have, they are so many. But we have to go step by step and try.

I think the trial is a necessity, and very few politicians are doing that. They do it along the processes

that are imposed by the EU and this is completely different. So, we have to try. It won't be easy, because it's against the philosophy and the political decision of the EU... it's not easy...

But for the welfare of the people here, and the maintenance of their culture, of their land, of their landscape, it's a trial we should do. Maybe I'm too optimist.

You like it? Can you imagine, ten cigars a day? 80 years old.

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