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Fronteira Palace – an Architectural Heritage Metamorphosis

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Abstract

When the Lisbon Peace Treaty was finally signed on Feb. 13, 1668, between the kingdoms of Portugal and Spain, peace finally arrived to this Iberian region after twenty-eight years of battles between both countries. In these wars, known as the Restoration of the National Independence, the Count *da Torre - Dom João de Mascarenhas* (1633-1681) played a major leading role in the different battlefields.

Two years later, the 37-year old Count experienced a mental metamorphosis process deciding to enjoy life and forget the hardships of the battlefields. In this *joie de vivre* action, he decided to improve his humble hunting lodge in the Benfica countryside, at the Lisbon outskirts, into a magnificent architectural masterpiece. Here the enthusiastic Count could host cultural events and hunting parties for his noble friends.

In 1670, the Count ordered a Palace to be built inspired in the Italian Mannerist Architect Sebastiano Serlio treatises in his Benfica estate. The architectural enthusiasm experienced by this Art Patron during the extensive construction nearly brought him into financial exhaustion. A grandiose ensemble - Palace, gardens and surrounding constructions constitutes a Portuguese architectural unique example of a 350 years continuously inhabited private space.

The iconic Room of the Battles located in the *piano nobile* well deserves a visit. The existing glazed tiles wall panels – *azulejos*, vividly memorize and depict major battle events that occurred between both armies. This highly decorative material, is used both indoors and also in the outdoor spaces. This study main purpose is to present a transitional moment from a war time period to a sublime cultural achievement made by the investment of a remarkable Patron of the Arts.

Keywords: architecture, *azulejos*, metamorphosis, Palace, battles