

**A BEAUTIFUL HOUSE FULL OF VOIDS**

**About Fernando Hipólito's lofts in Alcacer do Sal**

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Having become my own boss, I begged Architecture to take off her marble dress at once, wash off her make-up and show herself as she is, naked, like a young and graceful goddess and as befits true beauty, renounce being pleasing and complacent.

It would seem that these beautiful and strong words of Konstantin Melnikov speaking about his own house would have been written exprofeso for these so sober and beautiful loft-houses of Fernando Hipólito. I, who would have loved to live in Melnikov's house, would like much more to live in these houses in Alcacer do Sal. Not only to live in them but also to have signed them. They are so good.

The spatial operation that Fernando Hipólito has done there is so accurate that it seems almost obvious: a container, a box, a drawer, which used to be a warehouse, is emptied and small boxes are placed in it, well arranged with spaces full of air and color. And almost nothing else. One could say that he has filled a large box with empty spaces.

The little white boxes, the lofts, follow the order dictated by the constructive memory of the old rice warehouse. They are refined with windows and small nuclei of bathrooms and kitchens are placed in the right places.

The spaces are tight, but not small, because these lofts are just living spaces. Perhaps for young, young-minded people. And because they have a very good scale, they seem spacious and large.

It is clear that the architect has worked with freedom. With freedom and radicality and strength capable of summoning beauty. Because these houses are very beautiful.

And I repeat that I would not only like to live in them, but I would also like to have signed them. And I will give reasons for this: these houses are well conceived, well agreed, well composed, well built, well laid out, well ordered and very well spaced.

Well conceived: the central idea of filling an old warehouse with new boxes, a big box with small boxes is an accurate idea: a beautiful house full of voids.

Well agreed: the parts among themselves and their relationship with the overall container, are very well stitched. With an impeccable architectural logic. The small, large black and white boxes articulate very well with the brightly colored aisles.

Well composed: these simple, exquisite, almost "sotian" houses made with almost nothing, are of a manifest sobriety and elegance.

Well built: with low-cost materials, but very rich in results. The floors made with recycled formwork boards could have been commissioned from Rothko himself. The result is dazzling.

Well laid out: the plants are impeccable. The change of the entrance and some subtle gestures, make everything work like a Swiss watch, to perfection. Well-planned means well planted.

Well ordered: the Cartesian structure with which they are resolved not only responds to the passage of gravity but, most importantly, establishes the order of space in an exemplary manner.

Well spaced: the spaces have been very well proportioned. The lofts with mezzanine are particularly interesting. In all of them the spatial success is unquestionable.

With all this, besides living here and wanting to sign them, if I had to qualify them as a professor of projects, I would give them the highest rating. And in this project by Fernando Hipólito, the conjunction between the Firmitas and the Utilitas vitrubianas are fulfilled in such a way that we reach the beauty, the Venustas, by the hand of Vitruvius. So good is this work and so good is the architect.