

SLEEPER

GLOBAL HOTEL DESIGN

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Memmo Príncipe Real

L I S B O N

The third property from hotelier Rodrigo Machaz opens its doors, bringing a new sense of luxury to Lisbon's hippest neighbourhood.

Words: Catherine Martin | Photography: Courtesy of Design Hotels

Tucked between the imposing façades of Rua Dom Pedro V, a narrow passageway leads down a steep bank to a small, nondescript square. From the street, it could easily be mistaken for a dead end, yet it is here that hotelier Rodrigo Machaz has opened the third in his collection of Memmo Hotels.

"On this site there was an old, dilapidated warehouse with difficult access through a tunnel," Machaz explains. "But we fell in love with the view, and believed we could do something special here."

And what a view it is. As the square opens up to the wider cityscape, a sea of terracotta rooftops cascade down the hillside

towards the Tagus River. The same vista can be enjoyed from the nearby Miradouro de São Pedro de Alcântara, a hilltop viewpoint that marks the southern boundary of Príncipe Real. The emerging neighbourhood – essentially an extension of Bairro Alto – is fast becoming a firm favourite amongst the city's younger generation thanks to an influx of trendy bars, restaurants, cafés and shops. Crumbling mansions and 19th century palaces, once home to the city's elite, are being reclaimed and redeveloped, and it is this combination of classic and contemporary that defines Memmo Príncipe Real.

Both the hotel and the neighbourhood take their name from the



Above: Slatted oak screens are used in cabinetry, headboards, and as sliding doors to separate the bedroom from the all-limestone bathroom

Portuguese for 'royal prince' in honour of Queen Maria II's first born, and Dom Pedro V himself is there to greet guests on arrival in the form of a large-scale portrait. But all is not as it seems, as the painting – by Portuguese artist Carlos Barahona Possolo – is a reinterpretation of the 1854 original with a few cheeky Memmo-style additions.

The new opening builds on the success of the group's debut hotel, Memmo Baleeira, which opened in the Algarvian town of Sagres in 2007. Machaz long had ambitions to come to Lisbon and opened his second hotel in the Alfama district in 2013. Confident the city could take another Memmo, the hotelier set about finding a new site that would once again demonstrate the brand's ability to adapt to its location, much like the chameleon of its logo.

For Memmo Príncipe Real, Machaz turned to Samuel Torres de Carvalho having worked with the architect on his previous ventures – all of which are members of the Design Hotels collective. "The brief was to create a premium offer for Memmo, but without the opulence and formality of grand hotels," Machaz explains. Known for his modernism, Torres de Carvalho has created a sleek, four-storey building with a long, rectangular footprint, designed to maximise the views.

For the interiors, the architect worked with João Corrêa Nunes and Memmo's in-house design team, injecting a mix of modern elements using classic materials and details. "It's a perfect balance of contemporaneity with touches of classic style," describes Machaz. "A boutique hotel with interiors inspired by the ambience of palaces but in a human, comfortable scale."

Guests enter through a glazed atrium where limestone floors pay tribute to traditional Portuguese masonry and lead the way to the lobby, restaurant and bar. Slatted oak walls separate the spaces and neatly conceal facilities and access to back of house, where chef Vasco Lello cooks up his culinary delights. Oxtail croquettes and slow cooked pork cheeks are just some of the inventive dishes on offer in a menu influenced by Portuguese-speaking nations such as Brazil, Mozambique and Macau. Serving as the hotel's main F&B offer, Café Colonial is open throughout the day, making the most of the panorama via the floor-to-ceiling windows that run the length of the space. At sunset, guests spill out onto the terrace to sip artisanal cocktails, and by nightfall, the interiors take on a cosier ambience, with a striking chandelier taking centerstage. Manufactured by Santa & Cole, the installation comprises small porcelain shades arranged



Left: Café Colonial is open throughout the day, making the most of the panorama via the floor-to-ceiling windows that run the length of the space. At nightfall, a Santa & Cole chandelier comprising small porcelain shades arranged in concentric circles takes centerstage



in concentric circles, emitting a glow that is comparable to the warmth of candlelight. Marble tables and deep sofas are designed bespoke by the Memmo team, complemented by Thonet chairs, aged velvet upholstery and vintage area rugs.

Memmo Príncipe Real's 41 guestrooms span both the upper and lower floors, with those below ground commanding higher rates due to the advantage of a private terrace. Ranging in size from 24-50m², each has a palette of taupe and sage green. The slatted oak screens seen in the lobby are repeated here in the cabinetry, headboards, and as sliding doors to separate the bedroom from the all-limestone bathroom. Modern interventions come in the form of Bang & Olufsen TVs and Bose speakers, while a handcrafted quality comes through in the accessories, from the bedside lights of blown glass that were handmade in



Left: A portrait of Dom Pedro V greets guests on arrival. The painting – by Portuguese artist Carlos Barahona Possolo – is a reinterpretation of the 1854 original with a few cheeky Memmo-style additions

the coastal town of Marinha Grande, to the beautifully crafted leather folder containing the hotel directory. Each room also comes with a bowler hat made by Lisbon-based milliner Fábrica dos Chapéaus, while the provision of fresh ingredients for a mix-it-yourself colonial cocktail is a thoughtful touch.

Memmo, which stands for memories, prides itself on creating an unforgettable guest experience, so what's next for the group? Machaz is undoubtedly measured in his approach, ensuring he crafts the right blend of design, cuisine and culture. "We're not building a chain of hotels but a collection of authentic experiences in special locations across Portugal," he concludes. "We always keep our eyes open for new opportunities in different locations and our plan is to have more hotels in the future, but for now, we are focused on Memmo Príncipe Real."

EXPRESS CHECK-OUT: 41 guestrooms | 1 restaurant | 1 bar | www.memmohotels.com

Owner / Operator: Memmo Hotels | Architecture: Samuel Torres de Carvalho | Interior Design: João Corrêa Nunes; Memmo design team