

Its "Central Body" consists of:

The customs agent's room
a large area approximately
500m² and around 9m high



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Auditorium

wide and multi-purpose area,
equipped with audiovisual aids,
around 200m² and 9m high

Shop and Museum Reception Area

area measuring around 300m² and
9m high. It houses a "container"
type structure of Eduardo Souto
de Moura. This area was initially
occupied by the Association for the
Museum of Transport and
Communications then adapted to
a shop and Museum reception area



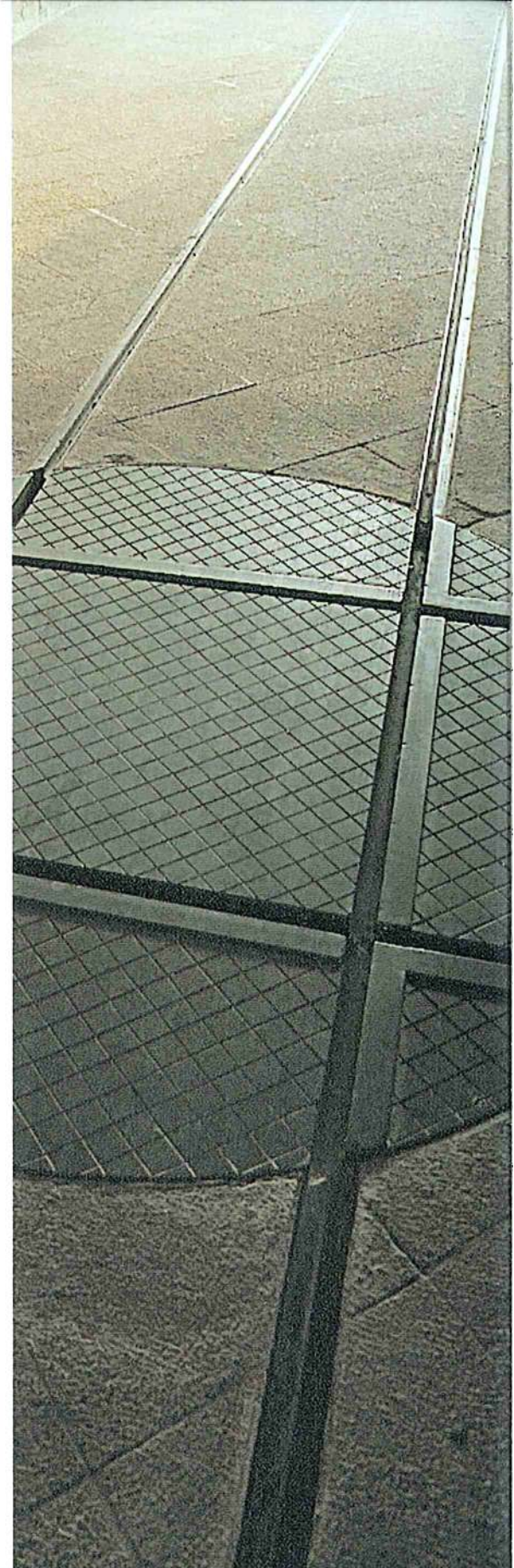
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Archive

large area of around 1 200 m² with
a ceiling supported by a Riga wood
structure less than 6m in height



THE SPACES

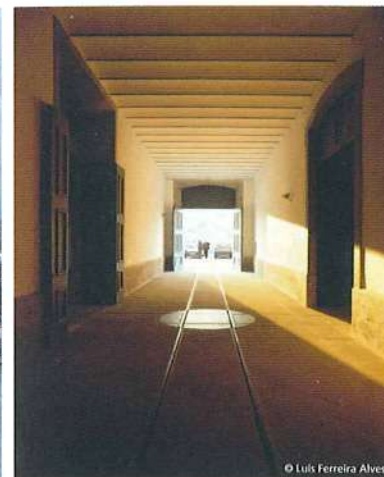
Museu da Rede Portuguesa de Museus

MUSEU DOS
TRANSPORTES E
COMUNICAÇÕES
ALFÂNDEGA PORTO

THE BUILDING
THE RENOVATION
THE SPACES



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In appearance, the construction is suitable for its nature and use as a warehouse. Its appearance is also one of its greatest singularities since it blends three types of material - stone, wood and iron - and several types of structures: masonry pillars and stone arches on the underground floors; iron columns and arched ceilings on the intermediate floors; a metal structure, built by the company responsible for the Luís I Bridge (T. Seyrig), on the second floor of the lateral wings. In the central body, the top floor is covered by a unique roof made from Riga oak.

"Only the Customs House dominates the space that once belonged to the noble city entrance. Overlooking the river, it observes the comings and goings of the rabelos (Port Wine boats), it allows the docking of ships from a thousand nations that come up the bar, and validates the business that is legitimised by the imposition of stamp duty."

M. Tereza Siza

in "Alfândega Nova: O Sítio e o Signo"

The continuous growth in port activity, justified by the urban settlement close to the mouth of the River Douro, played a key role in the development of the city of Oporto, while its limited customs installations were a constant problem.

From the beginning of the 19th century, and after the changes brought about by the liberal revolution of 1820, the city and the government sought urban and financial solutions to enable the construction of a new, permanent Customs House that would be worthy of the city's commerce.

The New Customs House of Oporto was designed by Jean F. G. Colson, a French engineer hired in Paris in 1856 by the Ministry of Public Works, under Fontes Pereira de Melo. It was begun in 1860 and was concluded twenty years later, with the collaboration of Portuguese architects and engineers including Francisco Mourão Pinheiro, Faustino José de Vitória and João Joaquim de Matos.

The building is located on the north bank of the River Douro, with its main facade overlooking the river, where a goods entrance can be found. It consists of a central body for administration, and two symmetrical lateral bodies for storage. Its construction takes into consideration factors of safety, insulation, airing and easy circulation of goods, a fact that explains the uncovered patios that separate the lateral bodies from the central one, the regular openings and the rail track inside and outside the building.

The economic growth sparked off by the liberal victory and by the intensification of the Port wine trade finally provided the right conditions in which to build a new customs building. This would be perfectly suited to the city's commercial needs, with elegant but unique architecture, robust in structure and built from non-combustible materials. It would be sealed against the rain and the Douro floods, be as close to the city as possible and have sufficient capacity, health conditions and lighting to store the cargo of 30 to 40 ships.

On the main facade, the triangular, neoclassic fronton crowning the central module with the royal arms was the only architectonic embellishment on the front of the building.

The New Customs House, whose granite walls are so representative of the ideas of power, solidity, resistance and durability, required great transformations to be made to the surrounding area.



© Luis Ferreira Alves



CPPI/AFP - Porto, panorama em 5 partes. Casa Alvão (1901-)

The beach of Miragaia disappeared to make way for the quay that supports the building and the edifications on the river bank lost their ancestral link with the river due to the opening of the street known as Rua Nova da Alfândega (1871). The final urban transformation was concluded in 1888 with the construction of the railway branch integrating the new port complex into the national rail network through a direct connection by tunnel to Campanhã Station.

THE BUILDING

... with elegant but unique architecture, robust in structure and built from non-combustible materials. It would be sealed against the rain and the Douro floods...

THE BUILDING

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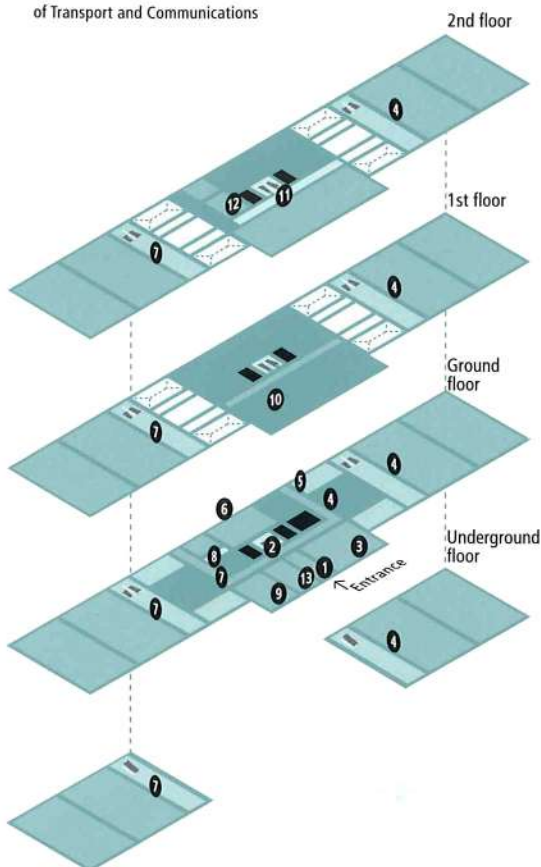


© Pedro Canto Brum

"The house is the key to the bourgeois power of the people that formed the clientele of the regeneration. The reordering of the city is that of the power of money; the customs house is located in the continuation of the wide street that has replaced the alleyways and hidden the degrading stain of the Rio da Vila and its low stone bridges. The customs house is built on two utopias that time will destroy: the economic centre that generates around the stock exchange in the Rua Nova dos Ingleses, substituted by D. Pedro Square; the importance of the river port with its new customs house, shortly before the construction of the artificial port of Leixões. A hidden despondency seeps through these stones placed with glory and determination and aged in a brief and inconclusive destiny, within a routine that left its marks on the memory of men and the surroundings."

M. Tereza Siza in "Alfândega Nova: O Sítio e o Signo"

- 1 Entrance
- 2 Goods transportation
- 3 The Customs Agent's room
- 4 West Wing warehouses | Congress and Exhibition Centre
- 5 Goods Entrance
- 6 Quay
- 7 East Wing warehouses | Museum of Transport and Communications
- 8 Reception Hall and Treasury
- 9 Auction Room | Shop and Museum Reception Area
- 10 Central Body Corridor
- 11 Records Room
- 12 Customs House Library
- 13 Auditorium



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"The architect assumes that a museum of these dimensions – 36,800 m² – will always be a sum of spaces designed over time and depending on the circumstances."

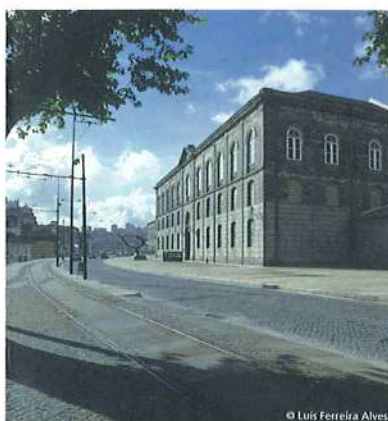
Architect Eduardo Souto de Moura
in "Alfândega Nova: O Sítio e o Signo"

The building consists of large areas, organised symmetrically into two wings – east and west – flanking the Central Body. In its "West Wing" and "East Wing" there are extensive areas fitted with lighting, dehumidifying, sound, telecommunications, fire detection and fire-fighting systems.

The New Customs House that accommodates the Museum of Transport and Communications has adapted to the force of modernity and the requirements of a present-day cultural area.

The Architect Eduardo Souto de Moura, responsible for the renovation project, says that his work fits into the mould of the architectonic philosophy of Aldo Rossi: *"Architecture, born of necessity, is autonomous at present; in its most elevated form it creates museum pieces to which the experts refer, so as to transform them and adapt them to the multiple functions and demands to which they must be applied"*

The basic line of architectonic recovery is to make the most of the site and the signs with which the building is imbued: by respecting the spaces and pre-existing constructive languages, a contemporary look can then be added.



© Luís Ferreira Alves

The vast corridors of silence and darkness have made way for places filled with light and human life and it seems that the tree-lined, public area around the Customs House and the power of seduction it has always held over the city's inhabitants have been definitively recovered for the people of Oporto.

THE BUILDING

With the construction of the Port of Leixões, new road links and the intensification of air transport, the River Douro lost its role as the city's almost exclusive gateway.

THE RENOVATION

The basic line of architectonic recovery is to make the most of the site and the signs with which the building is imbued: by respecting the spaces and pre-existing constructive languages, a contemporary look can then be added.

The renovated New Customs House of Oporto, site of the Museum of Transport and Communications can be visited in the following way:

- guided tour run by the Education and Entertainment Service, which includes access to areas not normally accessible to the public. This visit must be booked in advance and is aimed at groups of more than 10 people.
The visit lasts approximately 1hr30min.

OPENING HOURS

Tuesday to Friday 10.00-12.00 and 14.00-18.00
Saturdays, Sundays and Public holidays 15.00-19.00

GENERAL PRICE LIST

Individual ticket – 3.00 euros
Students, youth card and pensioners – 1.50 euros
Children up to age 6 on visits without
an educational service guide – free
Teachers accompanying groups – free
Temporary exhibitions – price fixed for each case

GROUP VISIT TYPES AND PRICES

Type 1 - guided tour of one of the exhibitions or to the building – 2.00 euros (p/person)
Type 2 - participation in a workshop of the "Communication of Knowledge and Imagination" exhibition – 2.00 euros (p/person)
Type 3 - guided tour of two exhibitions or participation in two workshops of the "Communication of Knowledge and Imagination" exhibition – 3.00 euros (p/person)
Educational workshops in the garage of "Mr. Teixeira" – 4.50 euros
Family programme (visit and snack) – 3.75 euros

VISITOR SUPPORT SERVICES

Cafeteria, Shop and Reception Area

HOW TO GET TO THE MUSEUM

Tram – line 18 (Infante-Massarelos)
Buses – 1, 23, 49 and 88

CONTACTS

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Instituto Português de Museus
Rede Portuguesa de Museus

Cover Photography: Luis Ferreira Alves

Underground floor
this has an approximate area of
2 400m² and is arched with
72 strong stone pillars



© Pedro Canto Brum



© Luis Ferreira Alves

Ground floor
this has an area of approximately 2 400m²
and has cast-iron columns supporting arching
around 4.80m high



© Rui Pinheiro

1st floor
this has an area of approximately
2 400m² and has cast-metal
columns supporting an arched
ceiling around 4m high



© Ivo Canelas

2nd floor
an extensive area of around 2 400m²,
with an average height of around 9m
and metal structure supporting the roof

THE SPACES

INFORMATION