European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra 2018 Awards

Botanical Garden of the National Palace of Queluz picks up the Public Choice Award

- The first Portuguese winner of the Public Choice Award in the European Union Prizes for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra 2018 Awards
- The award was received at the European Cultural Heritage Prize Ceremony held this year in Berlin
- Project had already conquered the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra 2018 Award in the Conservation category
- Award reflects international recognition of notable achievements in the field of conservation and heritage

Berlin, 23 June 2018 - Parques de Sintra has won the Public Choice Award, of the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra 2018 Awards for the rehabilitation project for the Botanical Garden of the National Palace of Queluz and thus registering the first ever such distinction awarded to a Portuguese institution.

The award was made on 22 June at the European Cultural Heritage Prize Ceremony, which took place in the Berlin Congress Centre under the auspices of the European Summit on Cultural Heritage and counted upon the participation of the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor Navracsics, the Europa Nostra President, Plácido Domingo, and the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, in his capacity as patron of the European Year of Cultural Heritage in Germany.

“For us, to be distinguished by Europa Nostra in the conservation category is an honour and a privilege. However, this is above all a stimulus to all of those dedicated to restoring the memories of an empty space”, emphasised the President of the Parques de Sintra
Board of Directors, Manuel Baptista, before then also thanking “all the members of the public who recognised the merit of this project through their votes”.

The ceremony saw the handing out of awards to the 29 winners of the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra 2018 Awards from 17 countries, announced on 15 May, for the categories of conservation, research, dedicated service and education, training and awareness. These awards were made by a jury of independent specialists and thus represent the highest level of international recognition of notable achievements within the field of conservation and heritage.

The rehabilitation project of the Botanical Garden of the National Palace of Queluz thus combined the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra 2018 Award for the Conservation category with the Public Choice Award and achieving an unprecedented level of recognition for a Portuguese project.

In total, there were 160 candidates from public and private organisations from some 31 European countries. The awards this year attributed particular emphasis to the added value generated by projects in the heritage field within the framework of their contribution to the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

Rehabilitation of the Botanical Garden

The Botanical Garden of the National Palace of Queluz was laid out between 1769 and 1780, thus a contemporary of the great 18th century Baroque-Rococo style projects. Small in scale when compared to the other botanical gardens built in this period, Queluz very much took on an entertainment and recreational dimension.

Successively damaged by natural causes and abandonment, the space gradually lost its original function and was converted into a rose garden in 1940. In 1984, in the wake of serious flooding in the year before that particularly hit this area, the garden was dismantled and turned into the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art Riding Ring.
In 2012, Parques de Sintra became responsible for the management of the Gardens and National Palace of Queluz and embarked on a historical research process with archaeological soundings providing the foundations for the restoration of this site.

The project gained in momentum following the discovery and identification of various pieces of stone masonry – the foundations of the greenhouses, the central lake and the statues – which had been removed in 1984 and subsequently integrated or left forgotten in other parts of these Gardens.

"This project was highly successful in the rediscovery and restoration of a garden previously thought lost. This made recourse to archaeological research, analysis of both the remaining fragments of the garden and the existing documentation", explained the Europa Nostra Award jury.

The restoration of the Botanical Garden involved the replacement of the four greenhouses in keeping with the interpretation of the historical designs and extended to the restoration of pre-existing features, especially the balustrades, the raised flower beds and the respective benches and tile panels, the stone masonry around the central lake and the statues within the framework of restoring the 18th century design of the Garden.

This included the laying of granite gravel pathways that define the 24 flower beds, which, in turn, represent the areas necessary for planting in accordance with the 24 orders of plants identified by Carl Linnaeus (the Swedish botanist, zoologist and physician who hierarchically classified the species of living beings). In the borders of the flower beds, approximately 10,000 myrtles were planted.

The 1789 Index by Manuel Moraes Soares, which listed the species then existing in the Botanical Garden of Queluz, provided the foundation for building up the botanical collection. Based on this list, contacts extended to institutions worldwide in order to source the plants and seeds for this location.
Inside the greenhouses, and in accordance with the historical records found in the meanwhile, pineapples have been planted as were once produced for the banquets held in Queluz.

"The project is an excellent example of interdisciplinary collaboration that also involved the local community. The dissemination of the results was strong and enabled the conclusion of the project. This shall create awareness around the results and guarantee their sustainability", added the Europa Nostra jury.

The Botanical Garden was inaugurated in June 2017 with its rehabilitation reflecting investment in the region of 815,000 euros.

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About Parques de Sintra - Monte da Lua
Parques de Sintra - Monte da Lua, S.A. (PSML) is an entirely state owned company founded in 2000 in order to meet the challenges arising out of the UNESCO classification of the Sintra Cultural Landscape as a World Heritage site. The entity does not resort to the State Budget and the restoration and maintenance of the heritage in its care are ensured by the revenues resulting from sales at its ticket offices, stores, cafeterias and the rental of facilities for the hosting of events. In 2017, the sites managed by PSML (the Park and National Palace of Pena, the National Palaces of Sintra and Queluz, the Chalet of the Countess of Edla, the Moorish Castle, the Palace and Gardens of Monserrate, the Convent of the Capuchos and the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art) welcomed around 3.2 million visits, around 80% of whom were international in origin. In 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, PSML was distinguished with the World Travel Award for the “World’s Leading Conservation Company”.

The PSML shareholders are the General Directorate of the Treasury and Finance (representing the Portuguese state), the Portuguese Institute of Nature and Forestry Conservation, the Portuguese Tourism Board and Sintra Municipal Council.

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