

Casa da Ínsua – Hotel de Charme



Roteiro Bigaglia [Bigaglia Tour]

The prestigious Italian architect Nicola Bigaglia (Venice 1841-1908) moved to Portugal in the 1880s, where he carried out important work in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. After falling ill, he returned to Venice, where he died in 1908.

Besides being an architect, he was also a designer and a watercolourist and, as such, he carried out a large number of decoration works. From his time in *Casa da Ínsua* there are emblematic works such as the *Pátio do Chafariz* [Fountain courtyard], several Gates of the estate, as well as fireplaces, pedestals, fountains and decorative vases in the gardens.

This architect has other outstanding works in Portugal, such as the Lima Mayer Palace, which was commissioned by Adolfo Lima Mayer on the Avenida da Liberdade - Rua do Salitre, in Lisbon, and was awarded with the first Valmor prize in 1902 (currently this building is the head office of the Spanish consulate and its gardens are part of the *Parque Mayer*); the house of the Countess of Edla in Parede from 1901, the *Palácio Val Flor*, from 1904 and the *Casa dos Cedros* in Bussaco, from 1899, among others.

In Viseu, the project for the asylum of the Viscountess of São Caetano - built by Serafim Lourenço Simões - for the Misericórdia de Viseu it should be noted, which was completed in 1897 although the foundation stone has been laid only a year earlier by Queen Amélia, the royal prince Luis Filipe and the infant Manuel.

This tour suggests some of Nicola Bigaglia's works which can be seen at *Casa da Ínsua*.

Fireplace at the Reception/ Blue Tiles Room from 1902 with the inscription VTILE DVLCI (Useful and pleasant), signed by DFM (Duarte Machado) and NB (Nicola Bigaglia). The fireplace is crowned by a blue tile panel dating back to 1902, created by Leopoldo Luigi Batistini (Ancona, Italy 1865 - Lisbon, 1936), inspired by the *fleur-de-lis* of the Albuquerque family's coat of arms.

Fireplace of the *Salão Nobre* [Noble Room] from 1899, with the inscription VITA HONESTA / FACULTAS CERTA / DOMUS QUIETA / DONA CAELESTIA. (Virtuous Life, Right amount of Abundance, Quiet Home, Heavenly Gifts) - the epitaph of João de Cáceres (1486-1564) originally inscribed in this chapel of Jesus and also reproduced at the entrance of the Casa da Ínsua. This fireplace was the opening image of the film "Viúva Rica Solteira Não Fica" by José Fonseca e Costa, which was shot entirely in Casa da Ínsua in 2006.

The floor of the *Salão Nobre* [Noble Room] signed by Marques and Nicola Bigaglia, 1905, is an extraordinary work made with 14 different types of wood: boxwood; chestnut tree; cedar tree; acacia; sycamore, olive tree; red beech; maclura; loquat tree; walnut tree; bird cherry tree; strawberry tree; morus tree and mimosa.

Fireplace in the *Sala das Camélias* / *Sala de Jantar* [Camelia Room / Dining Room] from 1897 with the following inscription on the upper blue tile panel (*QUER DE INVERNO / QUER DE VERÃO / O LUME FEZ / FEIÇÃO* [whether winter or summer, the fire is always light])

Terrace fountain from 1894, signed by Bigaglia and D.F. Machado. It is the central element of the interior terrace, in line with the main entrance of the House, the Arch and the Chapel. The **original design of the Fountain** (1893) is signed by Nicola Bigaglia and can be seen in the *Corredor das Memórias* [Memory Lane], inside the house.

Another work by Nicola Bigaglia is the stone fountain, on the side wall of the North tower, with an original dragon fish that sprouts water when its tail is pulled. The *fleur-de-lis*, a symbol predominant in all the decoration of the house, is also present in the fountain, where the following inscription can be read. "SI OVIS SITIT VENIAT AD ME ET BIBAT 1902" (If you're thirsty, come to me and drink. 1902)

In the *Jardim Inglês* [English Garden], near *Rua dos Buxos* [Shrub lane], we can admire the **pedestal of the *Fonte dos Meninos*** [Kid's fountain] a posthumous work by Nicola Bigaglia (DM / NB 1910).

In the ***Lago dos Jarros*** [Lake of the vases], the decorative stone vases, from 1898, where plants from Brazil grow, are also signed by Bigaglia.

The **Estate's Gates** were also designed by Nicola Bigaglia. The "Castendo" gate project dates back to 1898 and you can see a photo of this project, where it reads 1905, in the ***Corredor da Memória*** [Memory Lane]. In that same corridor, the technical drawing of the iron gate is also exposed. The other gates signed by Bigaglia are *Portão da Meia Laranja* ("Meia Laranja" Gate), the *Portão da Moita or da Mata* (Forest gate) and *Portão da Sereia* (Mermaid gate), also known as Sangemil.

Until the late 1920s, the Main Entrance Gate to the *Casa da Ínsua*, which overlooks the Terrace (*Terreiro*) was attached to one of the sides of the main façade of the house and the main street of Ínsua passed through it. This street separated the house from the gardens, which at that time were called the ***Jardins de Baixo*** [Lower gardens]. After that date, it was placed in this current position and the passage was closed with an iron gate made in 1931.

Casa do Guarda Mata [The Ranger's House] located on the road to Our Lady of Lourdes is another of Nicola Bigaglia's architecture works. You can see a photo of the first years of this building in the house, in the *Corredor das Memórias* [Memory Lane] of the *Casa da Ínsua*.