

JULY 2025

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APPRECIATING ARCHITECTURE



DUTCHMAN **WILLIAM (WILL) KÖHLEN** FIRST WENT TO LISBON IN 1986 TO LEARN PORTUGUESE BEFORE MOVING TO MOZAMBIQUE TO WORK AS AN ARCHITECT FOR THE CHRISTIAN COUNCIL. TODAY, HE AND HIS WIFE JANINE AND THEIR ADOPTED STREET DOG SAMMY CALL OLHÃO HOME, AND WILL PRODUCES DIGITAL ARCHITECTURE TOURS FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ALIKE. THIS IS ABOUT HIM...

What profession were you in? I studied architecture at the Maastricht Academy of Architecture, but I didn't graduate. That never posed a problem in my professional career, which has included working as an architect and urban planning consultant.

In 1985, my partner and I were invited to participate in the Biennale of Young Dutch Architects, a retrospective exhibition held in Amsterdam. We exhibited alongside nine other firms, including notable architects such as Francine Houben of Mecanoo. We participated in national and international architectural competitions and were successful in the competition for 'Movable Public Spaces' in Rotterdam and the competition 'The Fantasy' in Almere. In the past few years I mostly worked as an urban planning consultant. It's way more fun than architecture because it covers a much wider range.

Over 12 years at TOPOS Architecture Center Maastricht, I contributed to several publications, including Maastricht NEXT, a 400-page architecture guide featuring 250 projects from the past 25 years.

Why Olhão? We tried other places – like Faro, Tavira, and São Brás – but Olhão felt just right. It's a small working-class town, unpretentious, raw and authentic, a place of fishermen and smugglers. It has a unique character that we love.

And at República 14, together with Isabel Macieira, I presented two photo exhibitions about Modernist Architecture in Tavira and Olhão. We also led architectural walking tours there, which were a great success.

And that was the start of your tour business?

I offer digital architecture tours, with a special focus on mid-century architecture. Faro is home to some of the best examples of this and my website offers a wealth of information about architecture in the Algarve, including videos I've created, and updates on contemporary architecture shared via Instagram, Facebook, and blog platforms like Substack. All tours

I'm very connected to Olhão, but when it comes to architecture, Faro is the place to be. There's so much to discover, especially the work of Manuel Gomes da Costa

in the apps are free, but people can donate 'a cup of coffee' as a contribution to the costs.

Who is your biggest audience: Algarve residents or tourists? I created my website specifically for foreign residents in the Algarve. I want to share my knowledge and get people excited about the region's modernism – especially in Faro.

How much research goes into each tour and where do you start? When I come up with a new idea, I invite my photographer friends, John and Hans, to join me and take photos. I ask them if the concept is also appealing to non-architects. Then I create a digital tour – complete with images, drawings, and supporting materials – and ask my wife and other friends to test it out and give feedback. I rely heavily on online resources and also like to create supporting videos.

Your absolute favourite place here – and why? I'm very connected to Olhão, but when it comes to architecture, Faro is the place to be. There's so much to discover, especially the mid-century modernist work of Manuel Gomes da Costa, who was one of the most talented architects of his generation in the Algarve.

Sadly, much of his work is neglected or poorly renovated. More appreciation and preservation are needed. Christopher and Angelique from The Modernist Hotel are leading by example with their annual Modernist Weekend event in Faro.

What's next in your plans? My next tour will focus on Lagos, which has a lot of contemporary modernism. I'll also be covering the SAAL (post-1974 revolution, resident-organised social housing) movement and the work of architect José Veloso.

If anyone is interested in a specific topic or city, I'd be happy to hear about it (email me at architouralgarve@gmail.com). Currently, I offer tours in Olhão (two tours), Faro (two tours), Fuseta, Loulé, Tavira, Vila Real de Santo António, Portimão, and Huelva, Spain. ☺