

The Convent of the Holy Cross of Bussaco linked to the eremitical practice of the Discalced Carmelites and to the reforming action (1562) of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, compelled the creation of one of the most original 'Deserts' of this Order.

Its story begins in 1628, when the bishop of Coimbra D. João Manuel donates the woods of Bussaco to the Carmelites of the portuguese province in order to build the convent and proceed with the retreat of the religious men of the Order. Constantly appealing to solitude and seclusion from the world, the Convent would then be the setting of a profound contemplation, prayer and penance experience.

From the energetic action of Monk Tomás de S. Cirilo, Monk João Baptista and Alberto da Virgem, the essential building of the complex convent structure took place until 1639, time when the church was consecrated to the Holy Cross. Here, the symbolic sense of the centralized configuration in associatin with the uncommon practice of placing the temple in the middle of circulation spaces resulting from the cloistered structures, established the approach to the archetype of Solomon's Temple, the first truly sacred place in the Holy City . In the Convent of Buçaco, the iconographic language of space, shapes, materials and techniques will meet a spirituality built upon faith and poverty. The use of cork and imbricates, the contents of the tiles or the strength of the religious imagery reinforces the sense of an exemplary Christian life in isolation.

The Convent of the Holy Cross of Bussaco presented a necessary dimension to meet the needs of convent life but, despite the rigors of daily observance of the vows of silence and penitence, it played a key role as well in accommodating the Battle of Bussaco (1810) war scenario, or it attracted a constant flow of religious men who chose Bussaco on a temporary or perpetual basis.

Sought and benefited by some of the most prestigious ecclesiastical entities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as D. Manuel de Saldanha, Rector of the University of Coimbra , or D. João de Melo, bishop of Coimbra, the Convent of the Holy Cross prospered until 1834, when the extinction of the religious orders dictated its abandonment. From 1888 on, however, a new constructive impetus was to bring to Bussaco the Palace-Hotel which, if on the one hand meant the destruction of convent structures attached to the church, corridor and patios that today bear testimony to the existence of the Convent, on the other allowed its inclusion in a romantic Bussaco which remains to this day one of the most valuable heritage sites, rich in its compositive diversity.



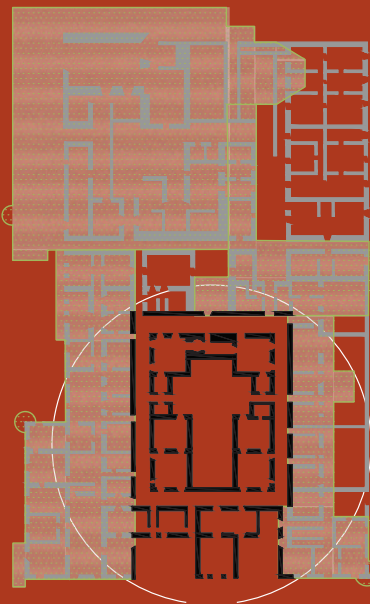
# Convent of the holy Cross of Bussaco

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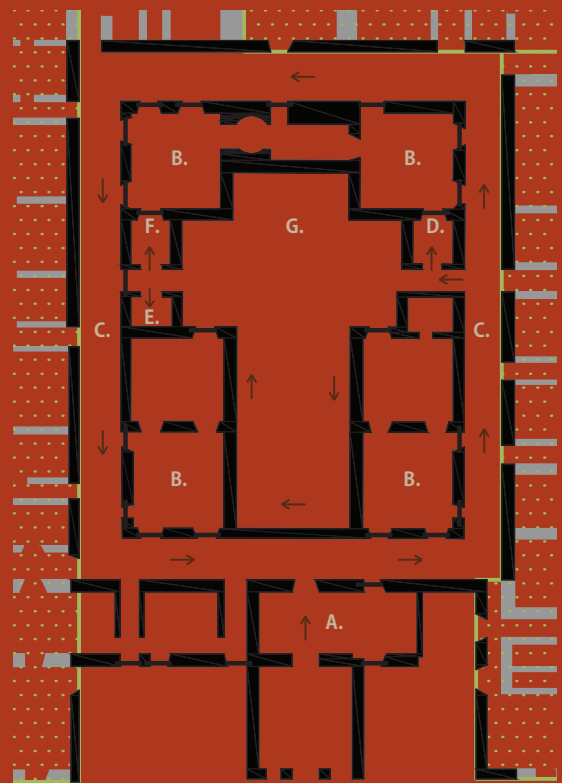
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- A – Ecce Homo Chapel
- B – Inner courtyards
- C – Cloister
- D – Three King's Chapel
- E – Saint Amaro Chapel
- F – Holy Family Chapel
- G – Holy Cross Church

- Convent (present)
- Palace Hotel
- Convent (sec. XVII, XVIII, XIX)



**The Holy Family. 1664. Josefa de Óbidos.**

This canvas, signed and dated, depicts the Earthly Trinity. The Child refuses the virginal milk and his body draws a movement toward the cross which is held by St. Joseph in true catechetical exaltation. The faces, in sculptural contours and vibrant luminance effects mark the humanity of the scene where the glimpse of a curtain defines the foreground, backed by another plane populated by cherubs. The warm tones, the chiaroscuro effects, the refinement and texture of the fabrics or the mastery of Josefa de Obidos as a colorist heighten her to painter of the senses, in a call for a pictorial view of the worldly. The Holy Family painted for the Discalced Carmelites of Bussaco is a theme emerging from the experience and artistic maturity of Josefa de Obidos, which would later be resumed, in 1672, on the retablo which was part of a series for the extinct Convent of Discalced Carmelites in Cascais. Distancing one from the other is the intimate treatment of a controlled piety in Bussaco and a greater sense of theatricality in Cascais. Josefa de Ayala y Cabrera was born in Seville in 1630. In 1644 she was staying at the Augustinian Hermits Convent of Santa Ana in Coimbra, while her father, Baltazar Gomes Figueira, was painting the great altarpiece for the church of the Grace College of Coimbra. She would spend most of her life in the bucolic village of Obidos, where she worked and deceased in 1684.



**Adoration of the Kings. 18th century.**



**Jerusalem city. 18th century.**



**Mystical marriage of Saint Teresa de Ávila. 18th century.**



**Transverberation of Saint Teresa de Ávila. c. 1770.**



**Ecce Homo. 18th century.**



**Reliquary bust of Saint Christina, martyr virgin. 18th century.**



**Our lady of Sorrows. (Mater Dolorosa). 17th century?**



**Saint Teresa de Ávila. 18th century**



**Saint Joseph and Christ Child. 18th century.**