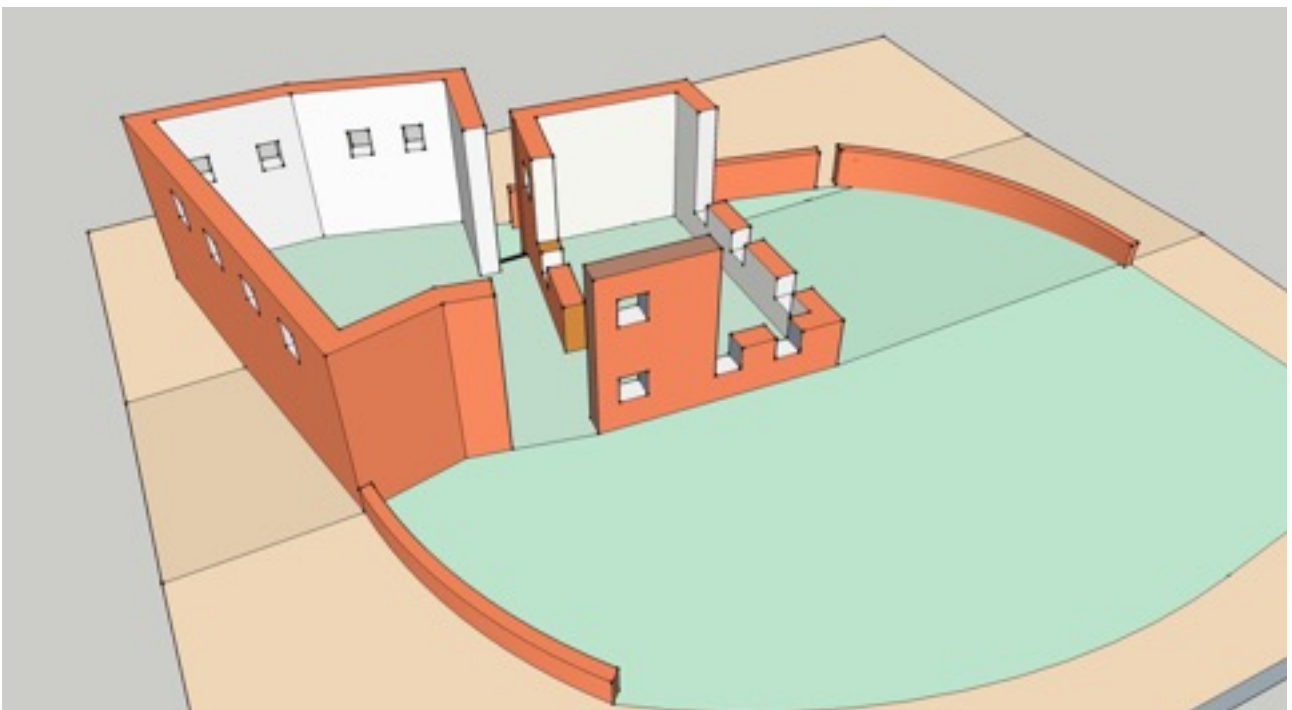


## INHABITING WHAT IS THERE

A two-system interactive play  
n.j.habraken

This play is inspired by the Casa Alenquer where the architect Aires Mateus designed a house in the space formed by the ruin of an old Portuguese farmhouse. The new house does not touch any of the walls of the ruin. It is a two story sculptural form standing freely within the largest space formed by the ruin. The only adaptation of the ruin is that the walls have been carefully plastered and whitewashed on the inside, responding in color and smoothness to the new building they surround.



The Alenquer house is shown in the Workbook for Students of Architecture titled “Conversations with Form” where it is part of a chapter about the ways in which old buildings have been altered over time and have been combined with new construction. (page 224-225)

That chapter follows the seventh and last DesignPlay in the book, a play which is about working with two architectural systems stacked one on top of the other. Adding new construction to old buildings is another way of combining two different systems, not necessarily by stacking but in various other ways as well.

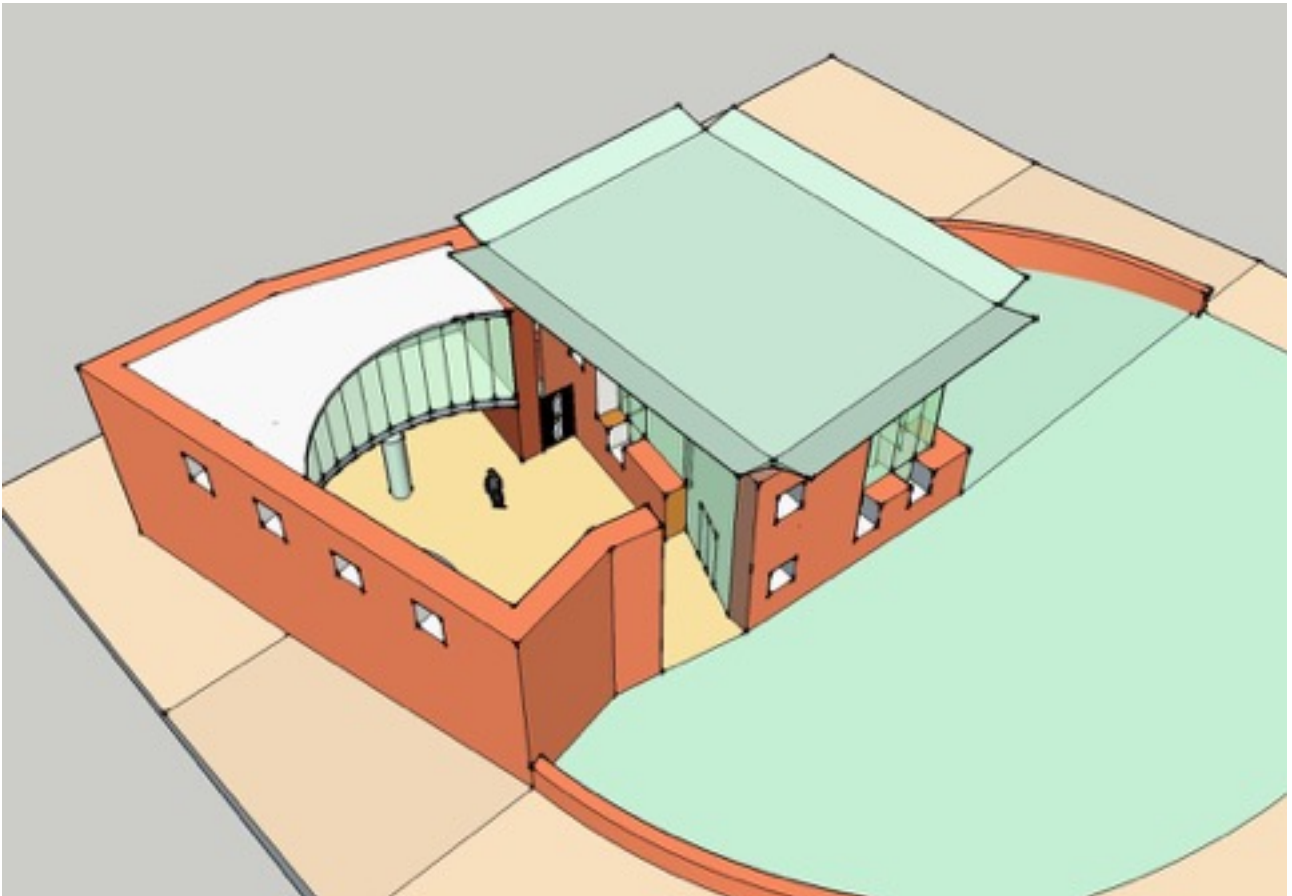
When we add to an older building we have an interactive play in which two designers separated in time combine their work and where the last one to act must respect and enhance what is already there while making something new.

(See also the post in this site named “Interactive Stacking Play” where two designers similarly follow one another to make a coherent whole.)

In the “Inhabiting What is There” play discussed here, we seek not to alter the ruin as such but want to explore how it can be added to.

As a play we will not follow a given ‘program’ but seek to make a coherent whole that can only be what it is because the ruin made it possible. The example given here wants to encourage you to do your own play in that spirit.

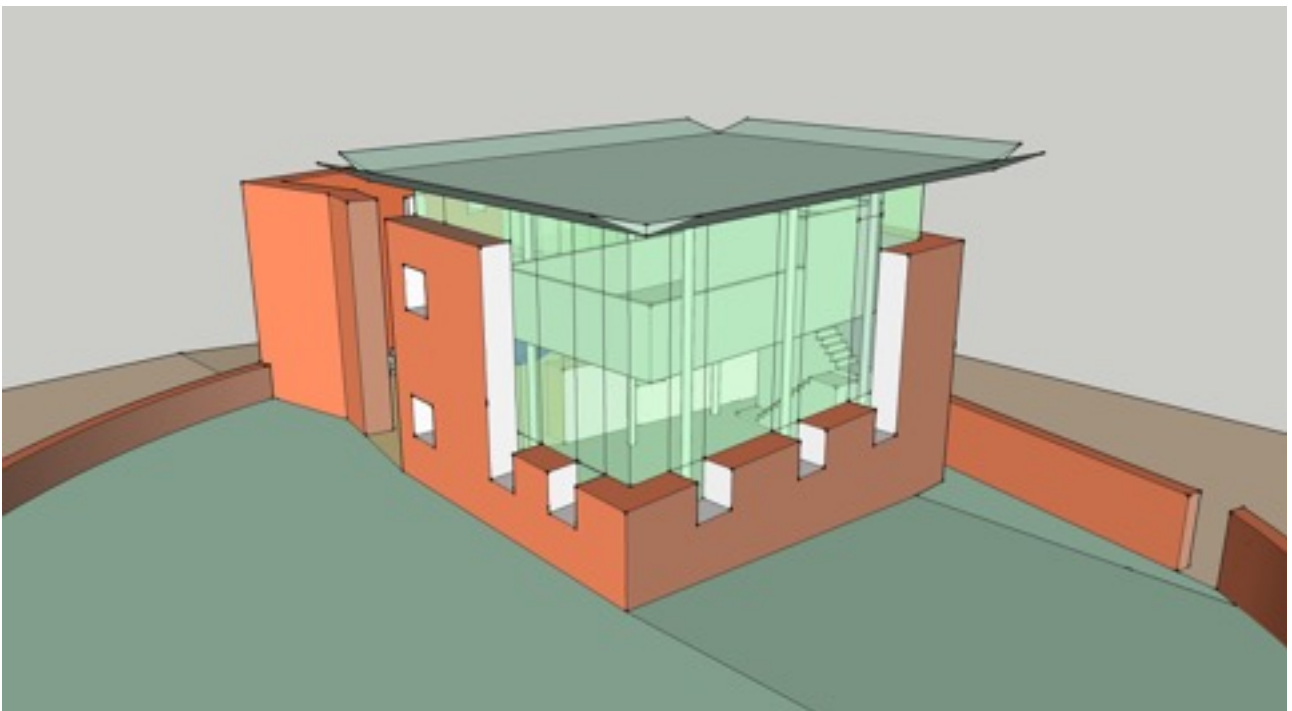
A SketchUp model of the ruin is available on the <[thematicdesign.org](http://thematicdesign.org)> site under the category “baseforms”.



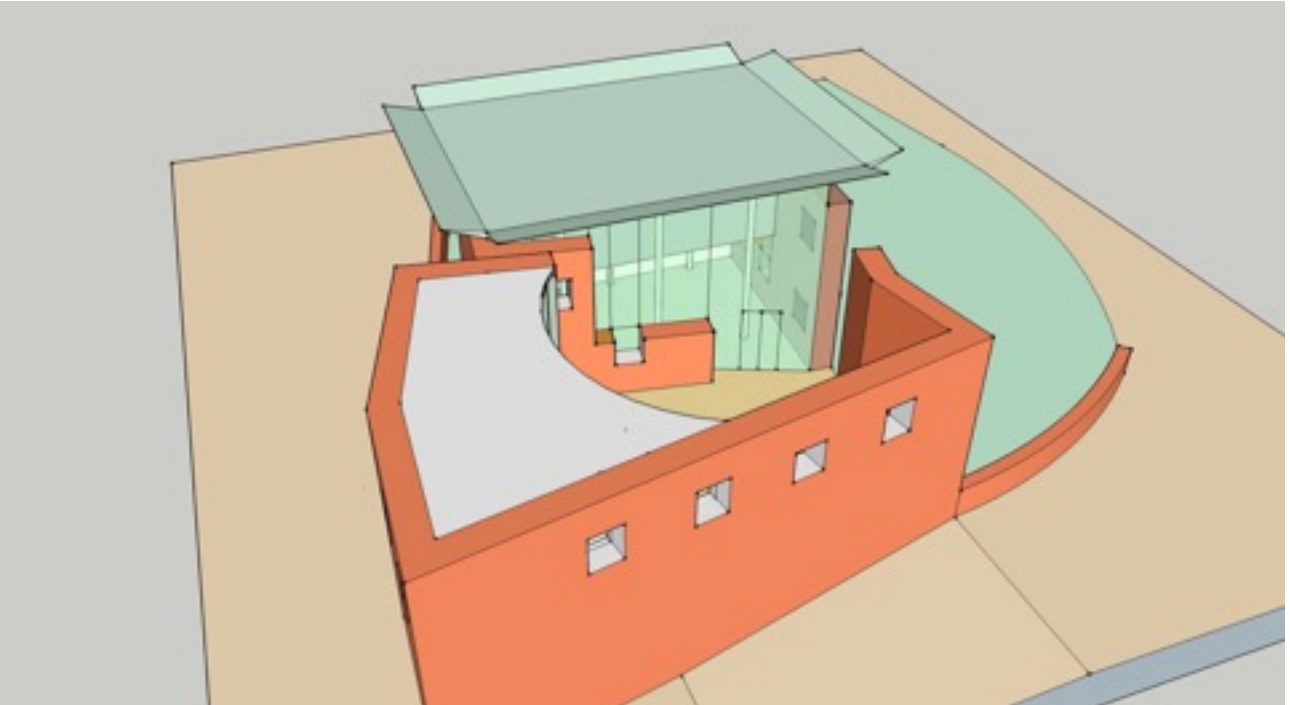
The approach followed in the example shown here goes in the opposite direction that Mateus followed with the Alenquer house. Where his autonomous construction posits a counterpoint to the ruin’s walls, the example’s new construction basically follows the spaces given by the ruin. This is not done to argue a better way but to provide two opposite alternatives between which an entire ranch of solutions remains possible that the reader is invited to explore.



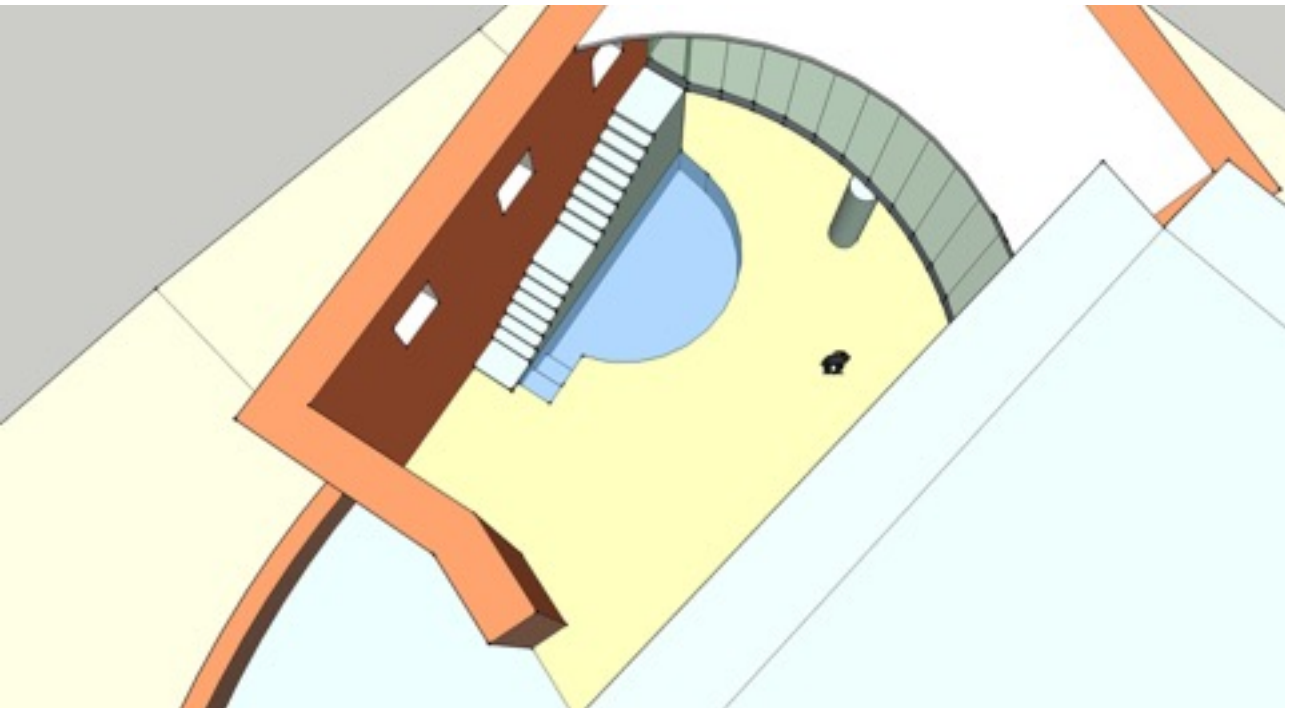
Nevertheless, in this example, the new structural elements do not touch the walls either.



But the glass facade parts connect to the ruin, completing the spaces that its walls used to enclose.



But this way of working is not followed for the floor with the curved facade where the floor and the roof are held up by the ruin walls; an inconsistency which is a weakness in the scheme.



How to keep that part free from the walls?

