

## In Porto, An Unconventional Office Fosters Connection

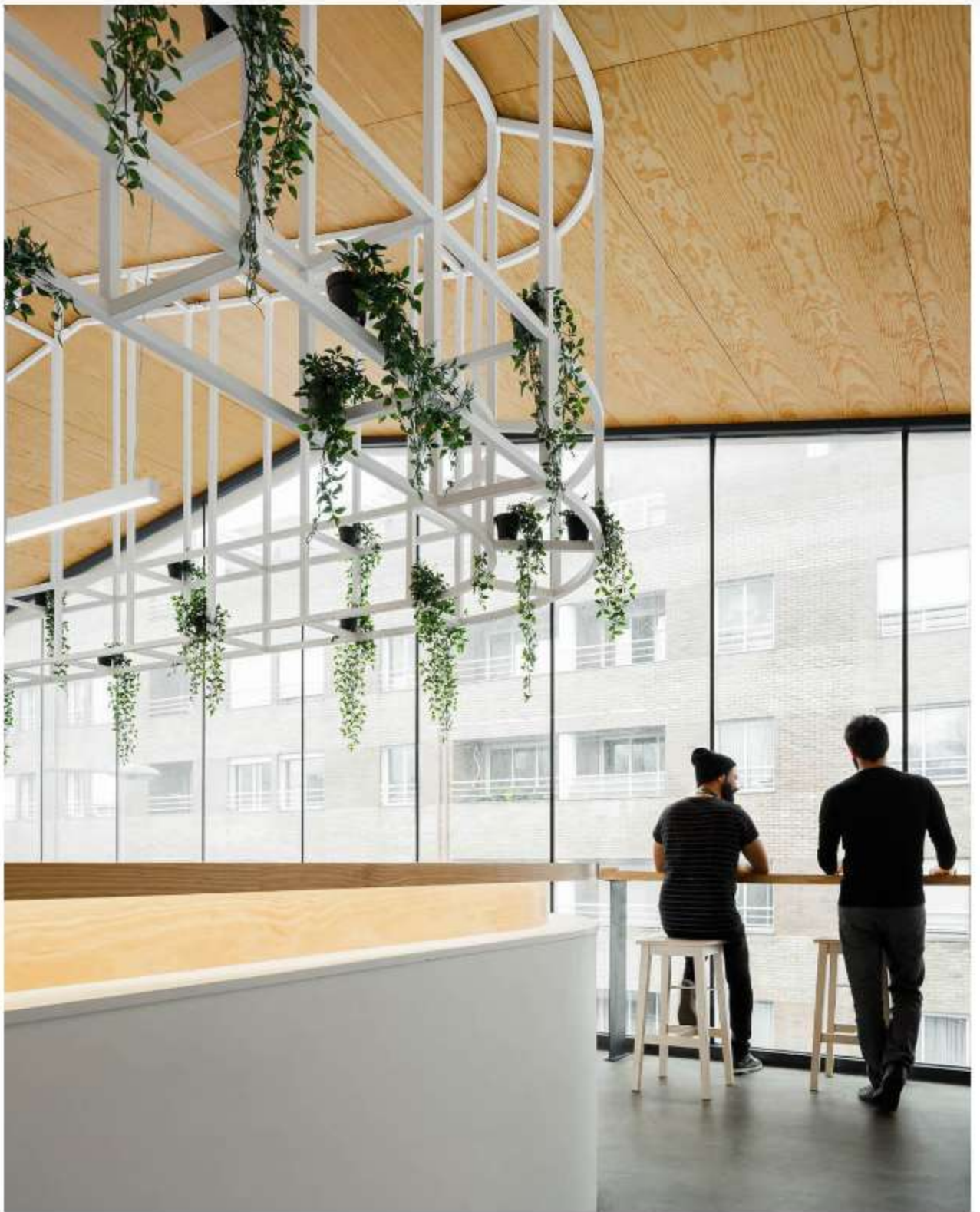
The workspace designed by Paulo Merlino Architects unites two local businesses with a striking spiral staircase.



**In recent years**, a company's office has become an extension of its brand identity. A thoughtfully designed workspace not only allows a business to function more efficiently, it can serve as a physical manifestation of an organization's culture and values. How, then, can two seemingly disparate businesses come together in one unified space? This was the driving question behind a new Porto office designed by local firm [Paulo Merlini Architects](#).



The architects have successfully joined E-goï, a digital marketing firm, and Clavel's Kitchen, a culinary content creation agency and cooking school. Through the renovation of two adjacent warehouses, Merlini's design revives a formerly industrial stretch, offering a new office flexible enough to adapt with the growing companies' ongoing expansion. The businesses — and their spatial needs — are distinct, but they now exist in harmony in a building that facilitates natural interaction between the two companies.



Despite their differences, E-goi and Clavel's Kitchen share a casual yet professional workplace atmosphere that lends itself to Merlini's unpretentious design aesthetic — where natural materials, neutral colours and the incorporation of greenery make for a relaxed space.



Upon entering a serene (and almost sterile) lobby, visitors are guided up a sculptural spiral staircase into the office above. The ramp's support bars — both a structural necessity and a prominent design feature — enhance the sense of verticality, drawing the eye up to an oculus that illuminates the building's core.



The open office plan is subdivided with rows of wooden boxes that provide much needed privacy for meetings and video calls, with washrooms housed in the same wood volumes. Vibrant blue accents and a floating swing bring a hint of playfulness that speaks to a laid back culture.



Throughout, vignettes of lounge seating, bean bag chairs and barstools offer places for an impromptu meeting, a cup of coffee or a quiet moment of respite. The dispersion of programs renders the office with a lively energy the architects describe as “organized chaos.” Designed for optimal flexibility, there is plenty of space for the company to grow, with versatility to accommodate a number of uses as their needs change.



Upstairs, a spacious kitchen in crisp white is offset by open wooden shelving which houses a colourful assortment of cookware. Visible through the kitchen's glass doors, the staircase imbues the office with a dynamic sense of movement that feels appropriate for the home of two up-and-coming businesses. A warm and inviting dining area offers seating for 100 people, providing a gathering space that cultivates connection.



The need for natural light was also a major priority, which drove the building's fully glazed facade. Clever space planning ensured lighting was maximized in the spaces that mattered most. The second floor photo studio faces north for consistent, low-contrast lighting, while the building's west-facing rear windows provide natural light throughout the workday — and connect to a series of terraces.





The glazing is equally vital to the building's street presence. With the restaurant, photo studio and staircase on full display, all that vibrant energy radiates out into the city.

