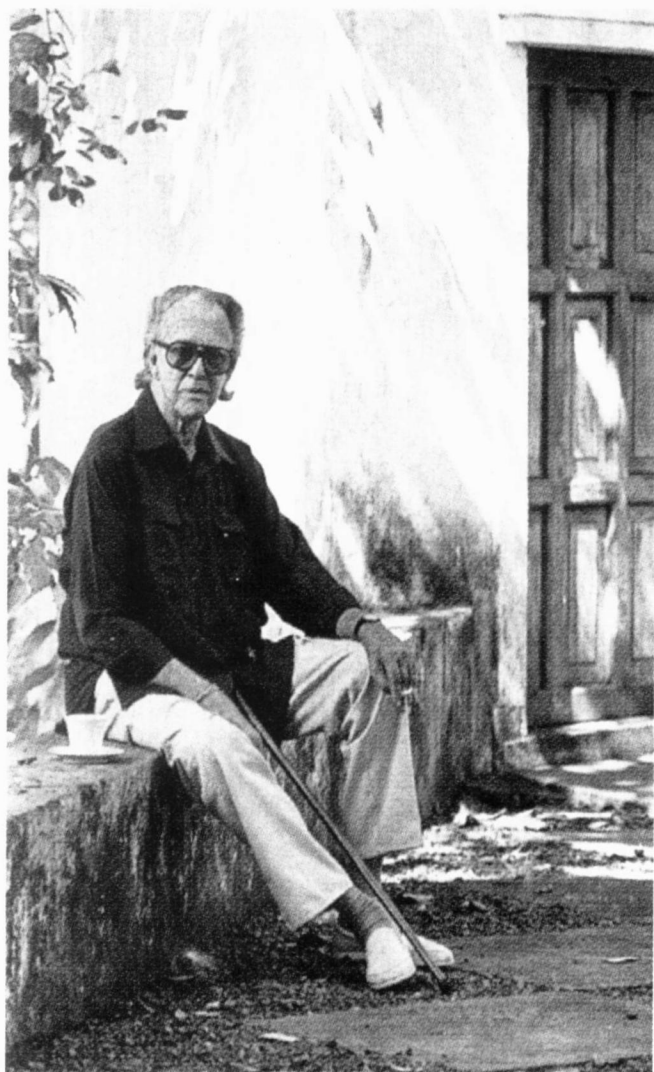


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Bawa - Genius of the place An Architect of Sri Lanka

**Exhibition at
Deutsches Architektur Museum,
Frankfurt 23.07. — 16.10.2004**

The Sri Lankan Architect Geoffrey Bawa is now regarded as having been one of the most important and influential Asian architects of the twentieth century. Kenneth Yeang, a leading Malaysian architect has said: "For us, Asian architects, Geoffrey was our first hero and guru." Bawa's significance was confirmed in 2001 when he received the special chairman's award in the eighth cycle of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, becoming only the third architect and the first non-Moslem to be so honoured since the award's inception.

Bawa came late to architecture, only qualifying at the age of thirty-eight in 1957, but he soon established himself as Sri Lanka's most prolific and inventive architect, establishing a whole canon of prototypes for buildings in a tropical Asian context. Although best known for his private houses and hotels, his portfolio also included schools and universities, factories and offices, public buildings and social buildings as well as the new Sri Lanka Parliament.

Bawa's work is characterised by a sensitivity to site and context. He produced sustainable architecture' long before the term was coined, and had developed his own 'regional modernist' position well in advance of the theoreticians. His designs break down the barriers between inside and outside, between building and landscape, and he characteristically links a complex series of spaces -rooms, courtyards, loggias, verandahs - with distant vistas in a single scenographic composition.

One of Bawa's most impressive achievements has been the garden at Lunuganga which he has slowly fashioned for himself from an abandoned rubber estate over a period of fifty years. The result is a series of outdoor rooms conceived with an exquisite sense of theatre as a civilised wilderness set within the greater garden of Sri Lanka. Sadly, Bawa suffered a serious stroke in 1998 which left him paralysed and unable to speak, and he spent much of his time in this magical landscape, until his demise in 2003.

The German Architecture Museum Proposes to celebrate the life and work of Geoffrey Bawa in a major exhibition. A catalogue for the exhibition already exists in the form of a detailed monograph on the architect by the exhibition's curator, Professor David Robson ("Bawa: the complete works", Thames & Hudson, 2002) and the exhibition will seek, not to reproduce the book, but rather to amplify it. Indeed the existence of the book removes the need to fill the exhibition with unnecessary detail, and the aim will be to help visitors at least to come close to experiencing Bawa's architecture for themselves.

The exhibition will fill the ground floor and two upper floors of the Deutsches Architektur Museum to cover a floor area of about 1,000 square meters. It will use a variety of media to describe the enormous range of Bawa's work and demonstrate his inventiveness and versatility. A total of thirty projects, including Bawa's own home in Colombo and the garden at Lunuganga, will be described and analysed using original development sketches and drawings, as well as models and photographs. A twenty minute video film shot in 2001 provides a more dynamic account of his architecture and includes interviews with Bawa's friends and collaborators while a rare audio recording will be used to simulate part of a lecture given by Bawa in 1982.

Bawa's unbuilt projects, many of them hitherto unpublished, will be illustrated in a special cabinet of drawings which will also trace the evolution of the inimitable drafting style of his office. Examples of furniture and lighting fittings designed by the office and made by local craftsmen will be integrated into the display along with works of art commissioned by Bawa for his clients and examples of fabrics and batiks made by his friends Barbara Sansoni and Ena de Silva. Although conceived in part for an informed lay audience, the exhibition will contain much to interest the professional and the academic and will appeal to those who have an interest in Sri Lanka and the Indian sub-continent.



Light House Hotel - Galle



House at Mirissa

The exhibition is being produced with the full help and encouragement of the Lunuganga Trust which administers Bawa's affairs and has the support of the Government of Sri Lanka, the accountants Ernst & Young and the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. It is financed by the City of Frankfurt and the accountants Ernst & Young.

Architect/Partner of Geoffrey Bawa and exhibition architect:

Channa Daswatte

Curator:

Prof. David Robson, University of Brighton

Director of DAM:

Prof. Dr. Ingeborg Flagge

Press release distributed by GOETHE - INSTITUTE COLOMBO