

A panel discussion on famed Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa's influence on contemporary architecture

For Immediate Release

"Too much architecture between me and the view" – Geoffrey Bawa

Throughout time, architecture has persisted as one of the most profoundly important reflections of culture and lifestyle. Today, looking at the skylines of most of our urban areas, it's easy to view buildings as the antithesis of their natural surroundings. Yet, in the early twentieth century, visionary architect Frank Lloyd Wright envisaged an architecture that was not a shield, but rather a bridge to nature. In more recent times, one of the major proponents of infusing a similar sense of aesthetic into designs was the celebrated Sri Lankan architect, **Geoffrey Bawa**. Known as 'The Grand Old Man of Sri Lankan Architecture', Bawa's creations are renowned for their often blurred boundaries between the indoors and the outdoors, resulting in a delightful interplay between space and light. His body of work has influenced some of the most notable contemporary architects from around the world. It could be argued that Bawa's influence on modern Sri Lankan and Southeast Asian architecture is perhaps even greater than that of Frank Lloyd Wright on twentieth century American architecture.

University of Edinburgh and **Avid Learning** present: **Beyond Bawa: Tropical Modernism in Architecture Today**, a panel discussion which traces the 40 year long architectural career of renowned Sri Lankan Architect, Geoffrey Bawa and examines his influences on contemporary architectural styles.

The description of the discussion is as below:

Join *Architect, Writer and Professor, University of Edinburgh* **Ed Hollis**, *Architect and Co-Founder, Architecture BRIO* **Robert Verrijt** and *Architect, Photographer and Joint Principal at Abraham John Architects* **Alan Abraham** in conversation with *Managing Editor at Beautifulhomes.com* **Sanhita Sinha Chowdhury**.

This discussion will examine Bawa's architectural legacy, the styles, materials and design elements he incorporated into his projects, his four decade long architectural journey, his regional significance and influence on modern architectural styles. What were his qualities as an architect and designer? Well versed in Modernist theory, Bawa was one of the original proponents of Tropical Modernism, a design movement in which sensitivity for local context combines with the form-making principles of modernism.

Bawa's architecture led to the formation of a new architectural identity and aesthetic for many tropical environments, one which factored in the various aspects and realities of living in tropical climates across the world.

Our panellists, who have each been influenced by and are familiar with Bawa's work, will decode his architectural journey and profound influence in the context of their own practice.

They will address questions like: How did he adapt and tweak existing architectural styles according to his own vision and use local materials and methods in his projects? What were some of the unique features of his designs? How was he able to find a balance and harmony between the external elements and interiors? How was he instrumental in presenting innovative ways to use light, space and materials to create dynamic designs that worked with, not against, challenging environments? How did he find a balance between function and aesthetic? What are some the finest examples of Tropical Modernist structures designed by him? How did he draw upon his Asian and European cultural heritage with respect to his practice?

Bawa was also very much a pioneer of the concept of sustainable architecture. His work reconciled interior and landscape design and his masterpieces usually include patios, gardens and soothing outdoor spaces. With sustainable architecture increasingly becoming popular and preferred in contemporary design, how are today's architects managing to construct such sustainable structures which interact with their surrounding environment?

Join us for a fascinating glimpse into the prolific architect's work and legacy in contemporary times.

WHERE: Essar House - Podium, [11 KK Marg, Mahalaxmi, Mumbai 400034](#)

WHEN: Monday, 25th March, 2019 | 6:00 PM – 6:30 PM - Registrations and Refreshments | 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM – Discussion

RSVP: www.avidlearning.in/ ; prior registration required

PRESS EMAIL / CALL: Ayesah Dadachanji on ayeshah.avid@gmail.com / +91 9820155297

About the Speakers

Professor Ed Hollis is Personal Chair, Interior Design, University of Edinburgh. He studied Architecture at Cambridge and Edinburgh Universities; and practiced as an architect for six years, first in Sri Lanka, in the practice of Geoffrey Bawa, at that time the 'grand old man' of Sri Lankan Architecture, famous for his garden of follies and ruins at Lunuganga; and then in the practice of Richard Murphy, well known for his radical alterations to ancient and historic buildings in and around Edinburgh. In 1999, Edward Hollis began lecturing in Interior Architecture at Napier University, Edinburgh, working with students both in the design studio, and in more theoretical disciplines. In 2004, he moved to Edinburgh College of Art, where until 2012, he ran undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Interior Design. In 2012, Hollis became Deputy Director of Research across Edinburgh College of Art, co-ordinating our submission to the Research Excellence Framework 2014 in Art, Design and History of Art. He is now Director of Research ECA, working across the school assisting staff in developing research interests and projects of their own.

Robert Verrijt is from the Netherlands where he received his Masters in Architecture from the TUDelft. His Master's thesis was awarded the second prize in the Dutch Archiprix 2004. After working briefly in the Netherlands, he moved to Sri Lanka, where he joined the office of Channa Daswatte where he had an opportunity to get an insider's perspective on the work of Geoffrey Bawa. In 2006 he moved to Mumbai to start Architecture BRIO. The practice actively engages with research and seeks out collaborations with institutes and organisations. With Billionbricks, an NGO committed to eradicate homelessness, they set up a dedicated studio called Bb-Studio. The innovation design studio consults with communities, NGOs and governments to provide scalable high-quality buildings and infrastructure solutions. As part of the Bandra Collective, the firm is involved with research and design of public space in the city.

Alan Abraham is the Joint Principal Architect of Abraham John ARCHITECTS.

Alan is both an Architect and a Photographer. Abraham John ARCHITECTS is an architecture, interior design, landscaping and urban planning firm based in Bombay. The work portfolio is diverse and varies from luxury villas, high end residences and unique offices, as well as hospitality & institutional projects. They are currently designing several luxury villas in Goa, Hyderabad, Jodhpur, Pavana, Pune, Khandala & Kochi. Their portfolio also comprises several institutional projects across India - earthquake and cyclone proof structures in Karaikal, Vijayawada, Latur and Rajkot. The design approach of the studio is to re-connect architecture with nature, make optimum use of space, natural materials and customised furniture, lighting & landscape to reinvent & transform spaces. The studio strives to create design that inspires, and approaches each project, regardless of size & scale, with an understanding that architecture has a unique power to influence lifestyle and society. Alan has also been working on urban design solutions to improve Mumbai and make it a more liveable, green, eco-friendly city through proactive initiatives such as THE BOMBAY GREENWAY PROJECT, Winner of the International Urban Planning & Design Competition, Velo-city 2013, Austria. Alan was also felicitated in 2012 as one of Architect & Interiors India's iGEN Top 50. Alan is also one of the founding members of Bandra Collective, a group of architects involved with the design of public spaces in Mumbai.

With close to eight years of experience in the publishing industry, **Sanhita Sinha Chowdhury** is currently working as the managing editor at *BeautifulHomes.com* and until recently was the managing editor at *Architectural Digest India*.

About Partners

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has been linked with India for nearly 250 years with the first Indian graduate in 1876 and the UK's first Indian Student Association. The South Asia Office in Mumbai (2010) and Edinburgh India Institute (2014) seek to extend the University's relationship with India. The University's partnerships span family medicine, conservation medicine, animal welfare, renewable energy; digital communications; structural engineering, gender issues, technology and society. The Edinburgh College of Art is a leading international art college which traces its history to the 1760's. As the University of Edinburgh's cultural and creative hub, offers architecture and landscape architecture; art; history of art; design; and music.

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