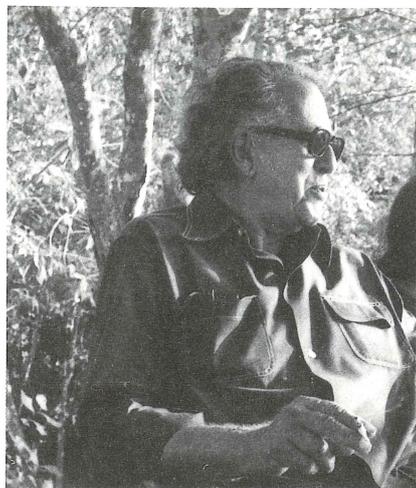


# G E O F F R E Y B A W A

Geoffrey Bawa, architect in Sri Lanka is the focus of this issue of MIMAR. Having come to the profession only when in his late 30's, Bawa has built an astonishing number of works, primarily in his home country but also in the South Asia region. Although well-known and highly respected by Sri Lankans, and a rather limited number of Westerners adepts (works were published occasionally in European and Japanese journals), he is finally receiving the attention that his unique architectural contributions so genuinely deserve. A monograph in the series Mimar Books (Concept Media, Singapore) appeared in early 1986 and its publication coincided with an exhibition at the R.I.B.A. Gallery in London.

Born in Ceylon in 1919, Bawa first trained as a barrister at Cambridge in England and



then returned to practise in his own country. He felt his real calling after he purchased an old rubber plantation on the coast south of Colombo in 1950 and began to transform the landscape into a miraculous garden, and to restore and extend the old house. Subsequently, he returned to the U.K. to obtain an architectural degree at the Architectural Association School, whereupon he joined the

offices of Edwards, Reid and Begg in Colombo. He is now principal partner in the firm, in collaboration with Dr. K. Poologasundram.

Presented here is a representative selection of Bawa's recent work, with two essays: one by a long-time friend and admirer of his buildings, English critic Sir James Richards; the other by Ms. Shanti Jayawardene, a young Sri Lankan architect who wrote her thesis on Bawa at the Bartlett School, University of London, where she now teaches. Their personal points of view are indeed a reflection of their own, very different cultural backgrounds and the perceptions of their particular generation. Further reading on Bawa is cited in the monograph study mentioned above.

— Editors

## Text by J. M. Richards

**G**eoffrey Bawa is the kind of architect of which we need many more, especially in the Third World: one who is fully aware and appreciative of international developments and of what modern technology has to offer, but has such firm roots in his country's traditions that he has no urge to build in ways alien to them such as have confused the architectural scene, and the judgement of those who influence taste, in most of the developing countries. Bawa's Sri Lanka buildings could be nowhere else, and one of his achievements is to have created a style related to the surviving peasant vernacular but suited to the larger scale of contemporary building programmes. For example he uses with evident naturalness the half-round clay roofing-tile that became part of the local

vernacular after being introduced into Sri Lanka by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. In his domestic work he has often used the native *cadjan* thatch. On the other hand he builds confidently in reinforced concrete (seldom in steel, which is too expensive to import) with no sense of moving into a different world. His personal style draws on old traditions and new technology alike.

Although Bawa has travelled widely and learnt much from his travels, apart from a handful of buildings in India (which include one of his best) and in South-East Asia, he has worked exclusively in his native Sri Lanka, developing his skills in isolation. He has not therefore been confused by the stylistic controversies and the repeated self-examinations that the profession elsewhere compels its members to suffer.

Within Sri Lanka however he is a

considerable figure in his own right and almost single-handed, through his influence and example, he has endowed contemporary architecture in his country with standards of quality and sophistication that had not been seen there since the official buildings of first the Dutch and then the British colonial regimes — and even these, except for a few of the Dutch, were seldom of the very first quality. Apart from a small number of private houses built by Western-educated architects, and apart from the early work, also mostly domestic, that he himself produced while he was in partnership with the Danish architect Ulrik Plesner between 1958 and 1967, Bawa's is almost the only contemporary architecture in Sri Lanka that combines respect for the local landscape and traditions with the realistic fulfilment of present-day needs. The large-scale urban and commercial build-

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ing of other architects is, with few exceptions, as irrelevant culturally and ill-conceived climatically as in most Third World countries.

Bawa's contribution, when he began to practise independently in the 1960s was unusually positive, and soon grew more so, because he was more mature than most architects so early in their careers. Indeed many of his ideas and ideals were formed before he took up architecture professionally. As a young man he went to Cambridge but, in accordance with a family tradition, to study law. He qualified as a barrister and practised for some years in Sri Lanka, gradually realising however that the law was not where he wanted to spend his life. He decided to change to architecture of which he had long been an amateur. He therefore returned to England and enrolled at the Architectural Association school in London, where he gained his diploma. He was then already nearly forty. To his familiarity with the history and traditions of his own country was thus added a sense of architectural values derived from years of study and travel elsewhere.

The local vernacular, even if only in the form of peasant village houses, has not only given Bawa a live architectural tradition to build on (how well he can do so is illustrated by one of the best of his early projects, the farm school at Hanwella), but has kept alive a tradition of inherited craftsmanship which he has always done his best to foster. This has influenced his very personal relationship with the building process. Given experienced craftsmen who know their materials, the furnishing to the builder of detailed drawings at every scale can be superfluous, and Bawa prefers when possible to take decisions and modify details on the site in the manner of the master builders of some centuries ago. From this no doubt derives to some extent the sensitive relationship he always manages to establish between nature and architecture. His buildings sit easily on the ground, and the trees which mingle with them have most often been located by him on the spot rather than indicated on a planting plan. Bawa, in addition, has been fortunate that in the case of nearly all his major buildings he has been able himself to select the site and thus exploit his eye for landscape from the beginning.

What are the other characteristics of Bawa's work? One undoubtedly is his emphasis on roofs, which because of the climate have always been the essence of

Sri Lanka architecture. His frequent use of the traditional roof-tile has already been noted, and in his Bentota Beach Hotel, the first and perhaps still the best of the series of large tourist hotels through which, since the 1970s, he has made such a strong impact on Sri Lanka (and the first of his buildings to attract the attention of the outside world), he manipulates areas of tiled roofscape with notable success. Roofs like these, and his stepped roofs at Piliyandala and the consistent roofing style of the buildings spread over hills and valleys at his newest project, Ruhunu University near Matara in southern Sri Lanka, are all of course related to vernacular roofing traditions; yet Bawa's one powerfully monumental building, his Parliamentary Complex outside Colombo, is dominated also by its vast two-pitch copper-covered roofs which are almost all the visitor sees as he approaches the island site across the causeway.

Another Bawa characteristic is the transparency of his buildings; there is always a sense — usually an actual glimpse — of what lies beyond the immediate facade, and this is related to Bawa's skill in the manipulation of interior space, a quality dramatically exemplified in his own house in Colombo. Vistas close and open out again, maintaining a continuity of interest as the eye comes to rest in turn on a stretch of white walling, a change of texture, a sculptured object; also on one planted garden after another on to which the light and even the tropical rain stream downwards, for his interiors are seldom wholly under cover for long.

Bawa is an outstanding architect by any standard. He appears to be guided not by theories but by his eye, and by his feeling for plants and for the landscape — including water, which in Sri Lanka is an essential component of the landscape. His buildings in fact are themselves in the nature of landscapes, not only because they incorporate planting and water and subtly contrived changes of form and level, but because incident follows incident after the manner of a well-composed landscape which is never without an element of surprise. Indeed they reflect the continually varying texture of the Sri Lanka landscape itself.

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*J.M. Richards is a British architect and historian who was editor of Architectural Review magazine from 1937 to 1971. He has written many books, including the classic Introduction to Modern Architecture. He now lives in London.*

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# Bawa: A Contribution to Cultural Regeneration

*Text by Shanti Jayawardene*

**G**eoffrey Bawa was born in 1919 and is probably Sri Lanka's best known living architect. He trained as a lawyer at Cambridge, and later as an architect at the Architectural Association in London. He returned to Sri Lanka in 1957 and commenced his architectural practice with Edwards, Reid and Begg, a practice he now runs in partnership with an engineer. The architecture of Geoffrey Bawa has kindled some interest in the West, if only to be judged by his 1983 nomination for honorary membership of the AIA, and the appearance of two feature articles in the 1970 and 1983 issues of the AR book. He was awarded the gold medal of the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects in 1982 and the RIBA is to host an exhibition of his work in 1986. Despite this budding overseas curiosity and the reasons for it (of which there are several) it would be true to say that the highest compliment which may be paid to his work lies in an exploration of its historical contribution to the progress of Sri Lankan architecture and that of the Asian region. Any alternate framework employed for assessing his work which does not take primary account of this factor may be accused of trivialising his contribution by stripping it of its historical dimension. European and American writing on Bawa have so far failed to seriously assess the historical dimension in his work. This omission may of course be attributed to the popular character of such writings or to an unfamiliarity with the subject. Whatever the case may be, if we are to make any advance on the limited scope of such appraisals, it is important to maintain a methodological self-consciousness that will guard against any reinforcement of those tendencies which have mystified Bawa's work by

restricting their exploration only to the purview of the conceptually barren, and hermeneutically-sealed, category of the 'individual genius'.

The historical significance of Bawa's work for Asia and Sri Lanka lies in its reflection of the economic, political and cultural climate of emerging nationalism and independence from colonial rule as it occurred in Asia during the fifties and sixties. The formal architectural language expressed in his work sought inspiration in the traditional building forms and techniques peculiar to the Sri Lankan and Asian regions.

The timing of this phenomenon is of particular importance on two counts. Firstly, taking such a decision at professional level implied a sharp ideological break with the then dominant modes of the 'International Style' which were reaching a high point in neo-colonial fluency best displayed perhaps in the arrogant extravagance of Brasilia and Chandigarh.

European technology, history and modern architecture — and not indigenous Asian architecture — informed the architectural education received by those of Bawa's generation who trained in Europe and returned to practise in a national milieu, bringing with them the ideology and technology of 'Modern Tropical Architecture' (MTA) as part of their European cultural baggage.

Secondly it may be recalled that certain ideologues of the 'International Style' school were responsible for streamlining 'Colonial Tropical Architecture' (CTA) by assembling for it a twentieth century modern stylistic disguise corresponding to the material needs of global capitalism. Renowned exponents of the 'International Style', Gropius, May, Corbusier, Fry and Drew among others, ideologically legitimised and globally

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disseminated the rationalisation characteristic of monopoly capital, while the multinationals controlling the international building industry disseminated the means for its organisation and production; a process manifested in the built form around the 1930s when the Turkish and Brazilian governments promoted modern architecture as part of national policy. CIAM, itself founded exclusively by Europeans in 1928, made the deliberate imperial mistake of equating the 'international' with 'Europe', an understandable mistake, perhaps, when it is realised that a part of its function was precisely nothing short of the ideological production of 'Modern Tropical Architecture' and its global export to the colonies and neo-colonies. CIAM members saw rationalisation and standardisation as generating the most efficient methods of industrial production. This was believed to act directly on working methods both in architecture and the building industry. The linking of methods in modern architecture with the interests of the building industry and the export of this comprehensive package to the neo-colonies was the process which determined and regulated the transformation of CTA to MTA. If the export of industrialised building was not the direct and immediate concern of CIAM, the export of its rational ideology surely was.

The only basic difference between CTA of the nineteenth century and MTA of the twentieth century appears to be that one was created by Europeans in the colonies and the other was created by Europeans for "natives" of the neo-colonies. Both were alien implants validated by the superior power of the imposing authority; in one instance obvious and in the other insidious. But in essence both systems ruthlessly functioned upon the false assumption that the indigenous architecture of the subject or newly independent people was (in classic orientalist prose) 'decadent', 'moribund' and happily, of course, devoid of a living history.

MTA was exported to the neo-colonies through a system of unequal global connections which were to characterise the post Second World War economic, political and cultural dialogue between the Third World and the rest. European cultural ideology dominated local schools of architecture while transnationals organised the building industry via a wider network of economic control. Such were the obtaining power re-

lationships which led to the building of Brasilia and Chandigarh and, on a less triumphant scale, the work of Cubitt, May, Fry and Drew in Asia, Africa and South America, not to mention the MTA that was and still is profusely produced by most Third World architects.

In order to understand the totality of what Bawa's work has tried to reject and combat there is one more aspect of the above process which requires discussion. The European drive to standardise and rationalise the building industry, and its desire to capture overseas markets and spheres of control promoted pseudo-scientific research into 'tropical' building materials and design techniques undertaken by the new breed of technocrats in architecture working for state institutions like the colonial liaison office of the Building Research Station established in 1948 and by private multi-nationals Pilkington, Taylor Woodrow, Wimpeys, Crittall who (to name but a few) mass produced 'tropical building components' and systems and the new 'tropical experts'. This new scientific posture adopted by the old guard British colonialists was, however, short lived, due to their being rapidly out-manoeuvred by the more sophisticated developments of their American social science counterparts.

American social science jargon displaced the anachronistic misnomer 'tropical architecture' with a new range of terminology. By the late sixties had emerged the now familiar 'regional specialists', the 'planners', the 'geographers', the 'climatologists', the 'housing specialists', etc., typifying the atomisation and specialist division of labour marking the metamorphosis of 'Colonial Tropical Architecture' into its almost unrecognisable modern format. All the obvious discrepancies and colonial associations of the early term were absorbed, refined and reformulated by the new brand of social science scholarship. 'Tropical architecture' born as an imperial tool, denied by definition the dynamism and vitality of indigenous architecture in the 'Tropics' (to be read as in the Colonies). Today it is a tool of the 'international expert' and the pseudo-scientist who happily disgorge the masses of facts, figures, statistics, tables, catalogues and trivia comprising the sterile knowledge systems which presumably will assist us in the production of more 'efficient' buildings for the 'Tropics', once more denying the fundamental im-

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portance of the scientific appraisal of traditional building systems, a process which has to begin with the people who produce those systems and cannot ever really get off the ground under foreign auspices, however well meaning they may be.

For various historical reasons, Bawa's work escaped the more *overtly* mutilating and crippling impact of this architectural neo-colonialism. Though, of course, a complete escape is not possible as defined by the limits of global capitalism, at least in his buildings one perceives a protracted exploration and interpretation of indigenous building traditions in a contemporary context deriving, perhaps, not so much from a scientific appraisal of those traditions, but more from a personal visual apprehension of their aesthetic and technical content. Sri Lankan building practices of the 1950s operated non-uniformly in several tiers of which only one deployed the services of the 'architect'. The profession, as such, was formally constituted in 1957 with the inception of the Ceylon Institute of Architects.

Peasants who constituted 85% of the population continued to build as they had always done in popular indigenous modes, while the bulk of state building was carried out by engineers and a few architects. Bawa's clientele was thus circumscribed to less than 5% of the population and comprised the urban upper middle classes. His architecture, it may therefore be deduced, took little or no account of the building needs of the remaining 95% of the Sri Lankan people.

What is critical in his work is not its indigenous content *per se*, which in its popular form represents the building mode of the majority. Its significance lies in the act of raising both the formal and the popular indigenous traditions from the degraded status assigned to them in the colonial era, and in the creation from them of a formal architectural language which could once more receive national patronage. Regarding this venture, it should be remarked that though the odds in architectural ideology were weighted against him, the collective strength of the anti-imperialist struggle made his early breakthrough historically possible in Sri Lanka, even though MTA was favoured by the State and gaining in popularity with the urban middle classes. It is today no secret that the architectural impoverishment apparent in the colonies was due to the colonial policy of favouring European building forms and techniques on

the one hand while depriving local forms of official patronage on the other, and as a corollary the active suppression of indigenous building traditions which resulted in the deskilling of craftsmen and a poverty of knowledge.

Though Bawa was not the first Sri Lankan architect to adopt revivalist trends in his work, he was the first to sustain such a course in the building world.

His work is seminal not only on account of his according indigenous architecture its rightful place in national culture, but also on account of his assessment of Sri Lankan architectural history. He either consciously or unconsciously jettisoned the inhibitory weight and retrograde orientalist taxonomy of Sri Lankan architectural history by choosing to view the continuities and discontinuities in the tradition as part of a wider historical continuum. He drew inspiration from building in all historical periods, classical and colonial, and did not hesitate to draw upon those living traditions of the recent past, which the orientalists disparagingly describe as 'decaying', 'domestic' and 'popular', posited against some superior classical period lodged in the distant past thereby justifying the colonial mission of 'civilising' and 'modernising' the subject peoples.

Despite all that has been said, Bawa's work may yet be accused of being 'revivalist' and 'eclectic', an accusation which is perhaps not so easily dismissed on the grounds that his appreciation of traditional building was not sufficiently sustained or scientific and may, therefore, prove to be of limited value for the future. Above all the most severe reservations regarding his work rest in the awareness that he chose the urban middle classes as his chief client at a historical juncture in which rural planning and resettlement, urbanisation and mass shelter are the most urgent of human concerns, as indeed they are of national policy.

However one may choose to assess this neglect, it should not deter us from acknowledging his singular contribution to the broader processes of national cultural regeneration in Sri Lanka; nor should it hinder our perception and explication of the potential future trends incipient in his work.

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*Shanti Jayawardene is a Sri Lankan architect who obtained a Master's degree from the Bartlett School of Architecture in London, where she now teaches. Her thesis dealt with Geoffrey Bawa's work in the historical context of Sri Lanka, and contains much valuable material on the colonial and immediate post-colonial building situation as well.*

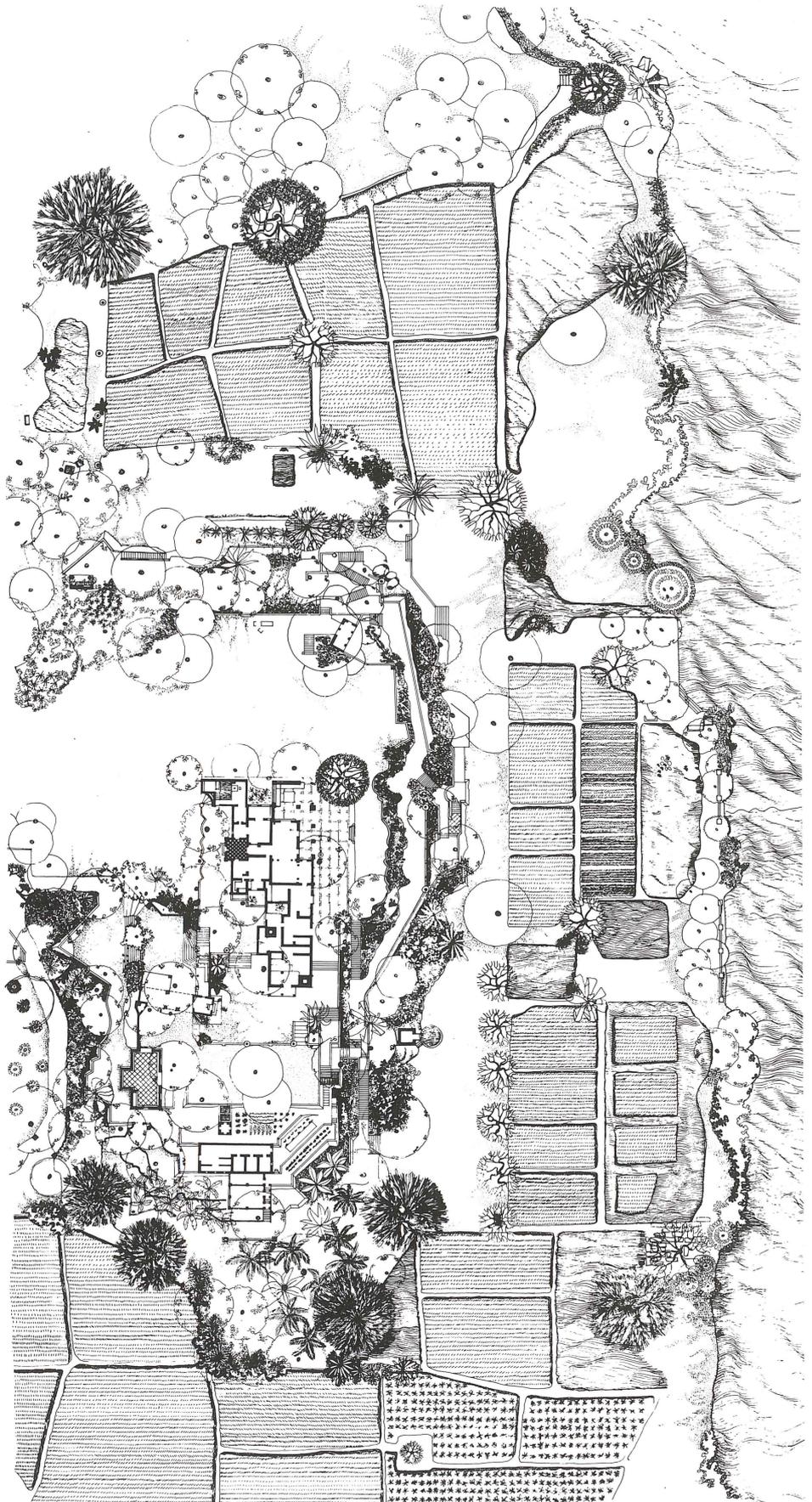
# The Garden, Lunuganga

## Project Data

Lunuganga Estate, House and Garden  
Site: 25 acres on Dedduwa Lake, Sri Lanka  
Client: The architect  
Date: Begun in 1920 and ongoing

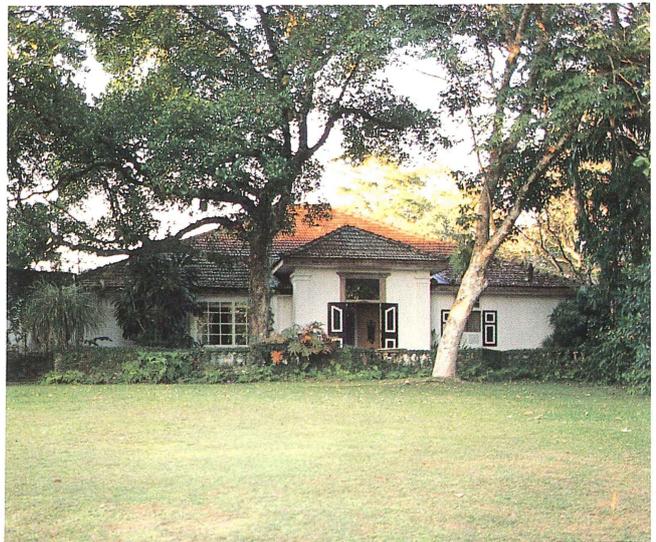
The site of this idyllic retreat is a former rubber plantation, with an existing house, purchased in 1949 — before Geoffrey Bawa had actually decided to become an architect. It may even have been the catalyst that determined him to return to England and to take a degree in design. Located on a backwater of the Bentota river, south of Colombo, the garden and the house have been a constant focus of the architect's energies: making incremental additions to the abode, often with materials recovered from demolished old structures; shaping and reshaping the garden as the spirit moved him through cutting of the wildly luxurious vegetation and selective planting. The garden is for all intents and purposes an extension of the rooms of the dwelling, containing objects, tiny pavilions, pavements and vantage points for observing a succession of spaces in continual transformation.

Entrance steps and colonnaded portico. Photograph: Hasan-Uddin Khan.

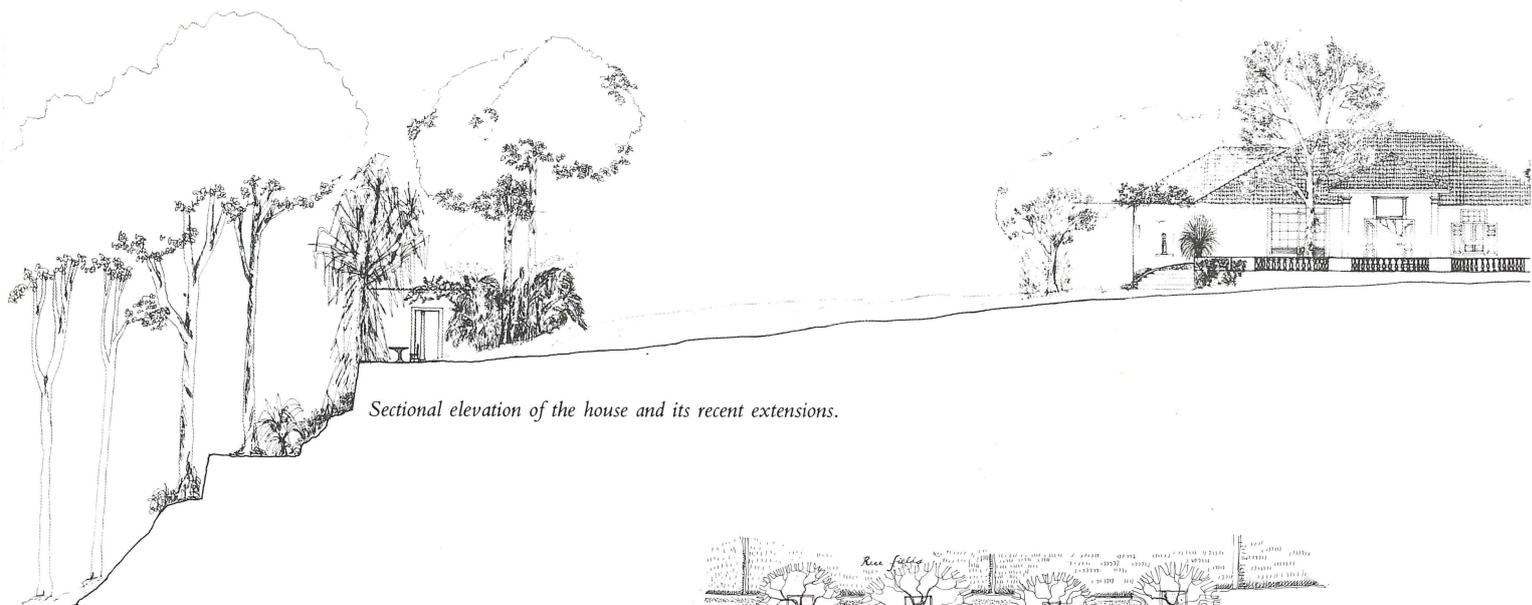


Drawings and photographs courtesy of the architect unless where otherwise indicated.

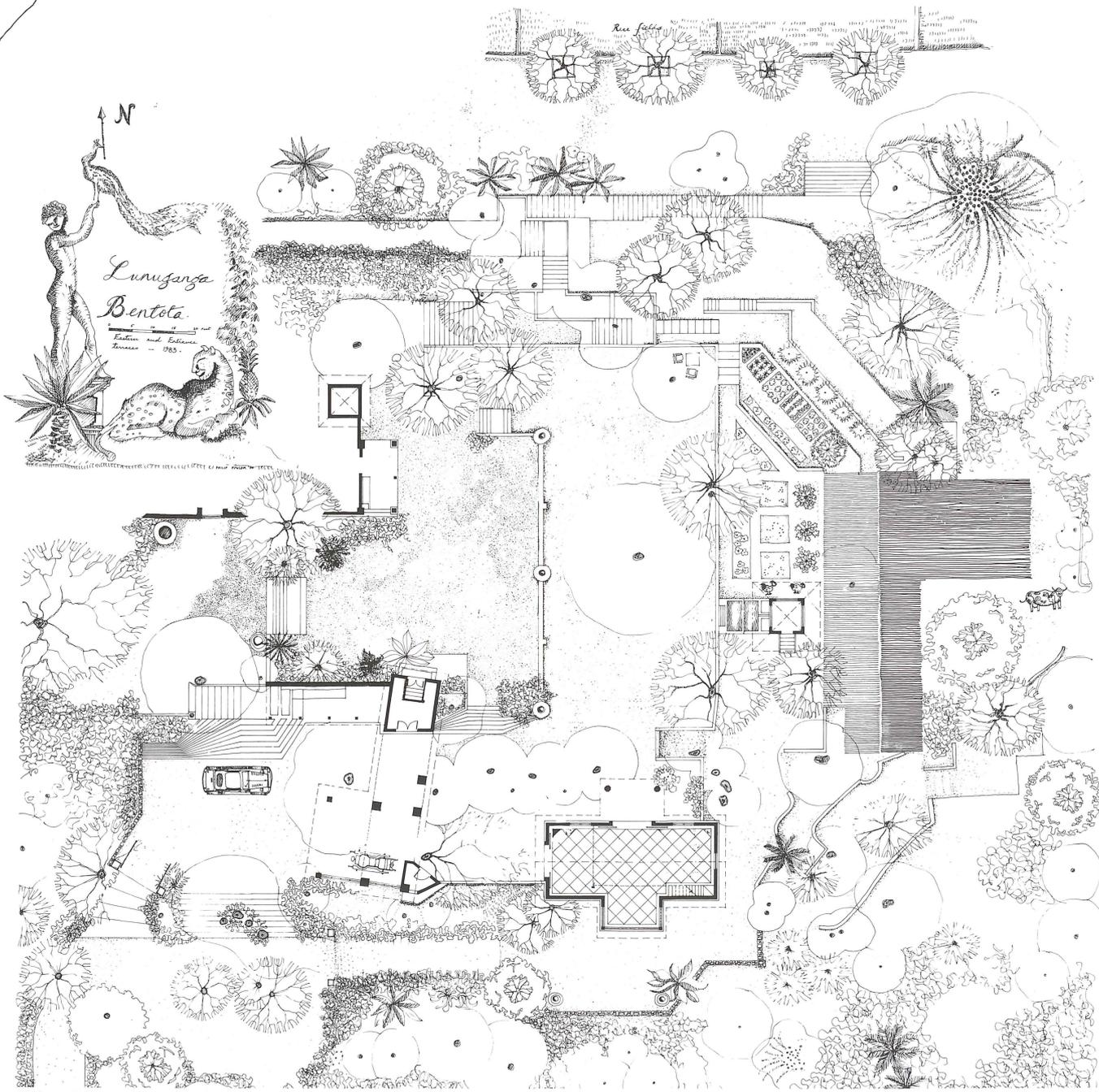
Portion of the garden in proximity to the lagoon: promenades, paddies and terracing North and West of the house.



*Top: Looking northward across the watergate. Photograph: Milroy Perera.  
Above: Mask of a Hindu Pan in the Lunuganga garden.  
Right: South facade of the house with main entrance.  
Photographs: Brian Taylor.*



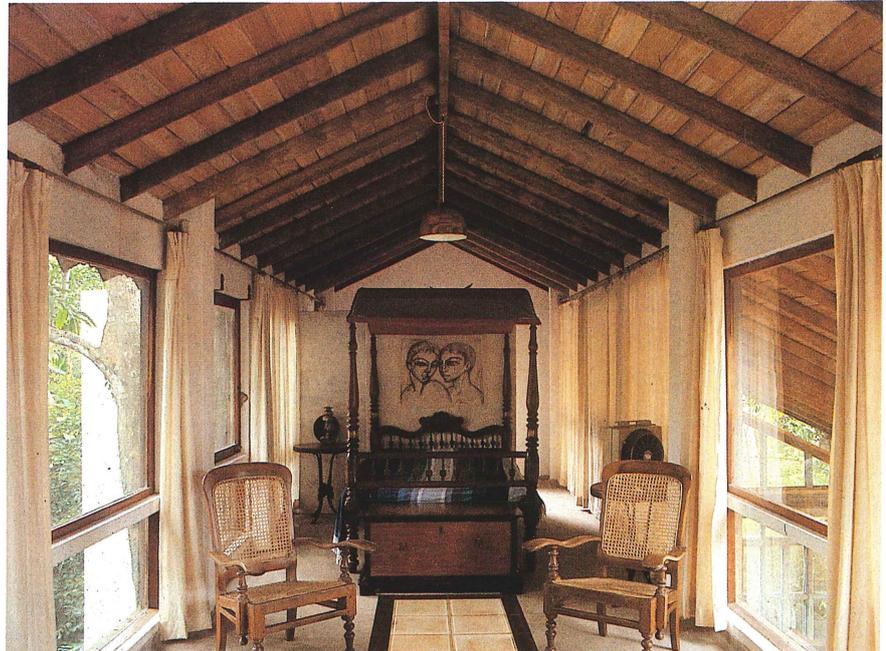
Sectional elevation of the house and its recent extensions.



Plan of the pavilion, hen house, and adjacent landscaping, in 1983.



Above: Guest room, a recent extension to the old house. Photograph: Brian Taylor.  
 Right: Interior of guest room.  
 Right, below: Interior of pavilion, part of the new extension.  
 Photographs: Hasan-Uddin Khan.



# Ruhunu University, Matara

## Project Data

Science Faculties, Staff residences, Ruhunu University

Site: Matara, Sri Lanka

Client: Ruhunu University

Date: 1984 (Phase I completed)

Architect: Edwards, Reid & Begg, Geoffrey Bawa, principal designer

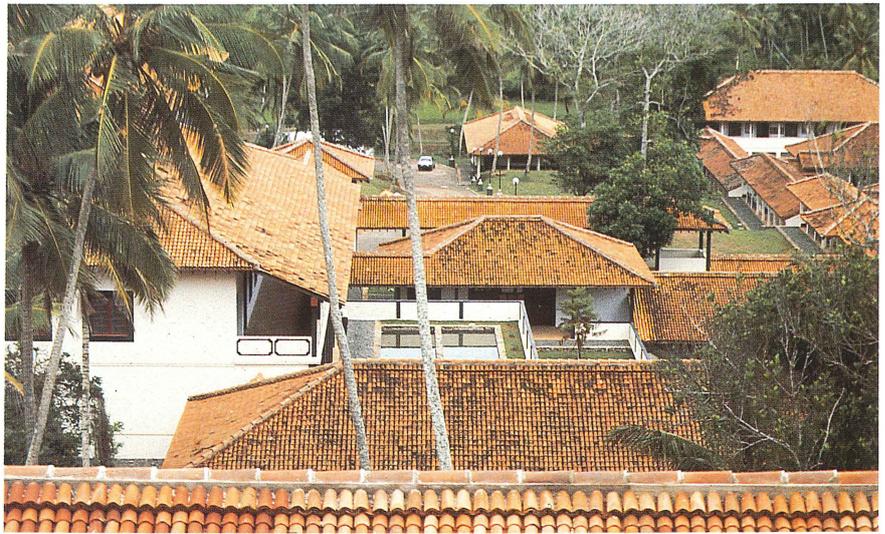
Contractor: Ballast Nedan

Number of students: Approximately 4,000

A new campus for 4000–5000 students was conceived by the architect and is now partially completed on a magnificent site overlooking the sea. Buildings for the Arts and Science Faculties, a library, an open-air theatre, a social centre and residences occupy three hills that rise 120 feet from sea level and the valleys in between, affording superb views onto the landscape. Much attention has been devoted to creating agreeable, outdoor, protected spaces (e.g. covered galleries, meeting

points with benches) interspersed among the classrooms, laboratories, and offices.

The structural system utilised in the university's construction is reinforced concrete, with the traditional materials of wood and clay tiles for the roofs — and certain finishes. Careful planning and the successful resolution of structural details permitted the integration of buildings with a difficult natural topography while preserving the qualities of both site and architectural conception.



Right: Partial view of the faculty buildings.

Below: Exterior view of Chemistry buildings.

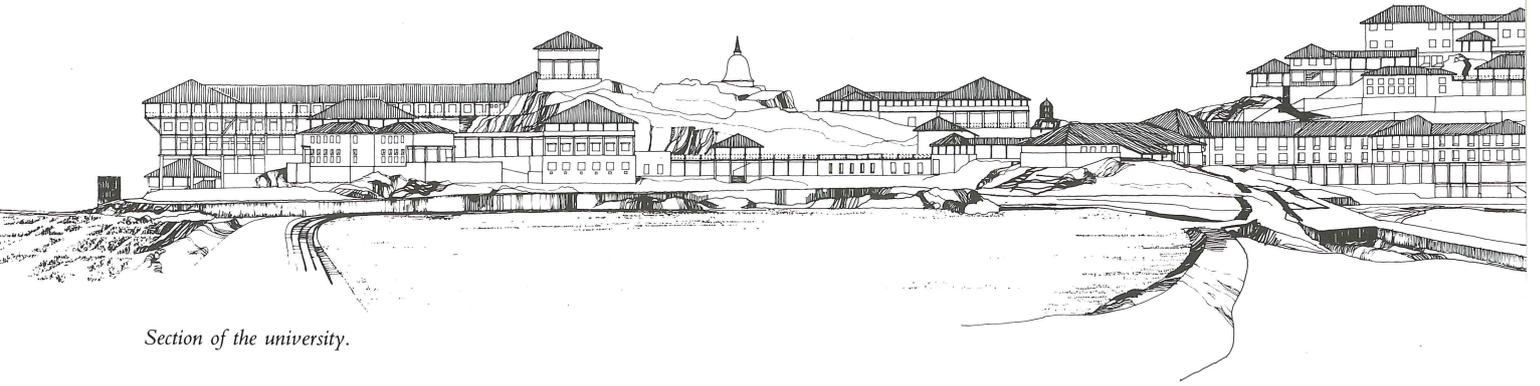
Far right: Close-up view of the faculty buildings.

Far right, below: Covered walkway linking the faculty buildings.

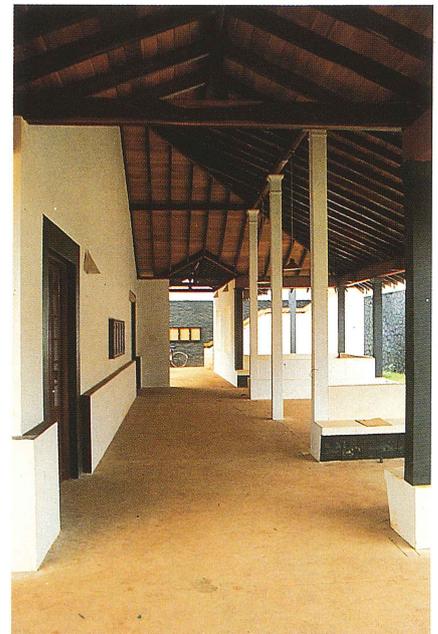
Photographs: Hasan-Uddin Khan.



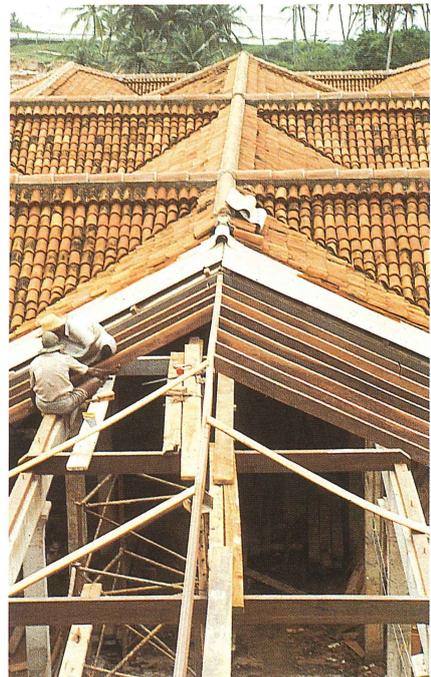
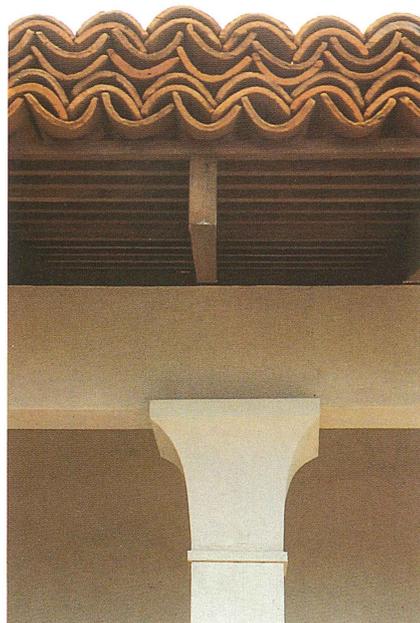
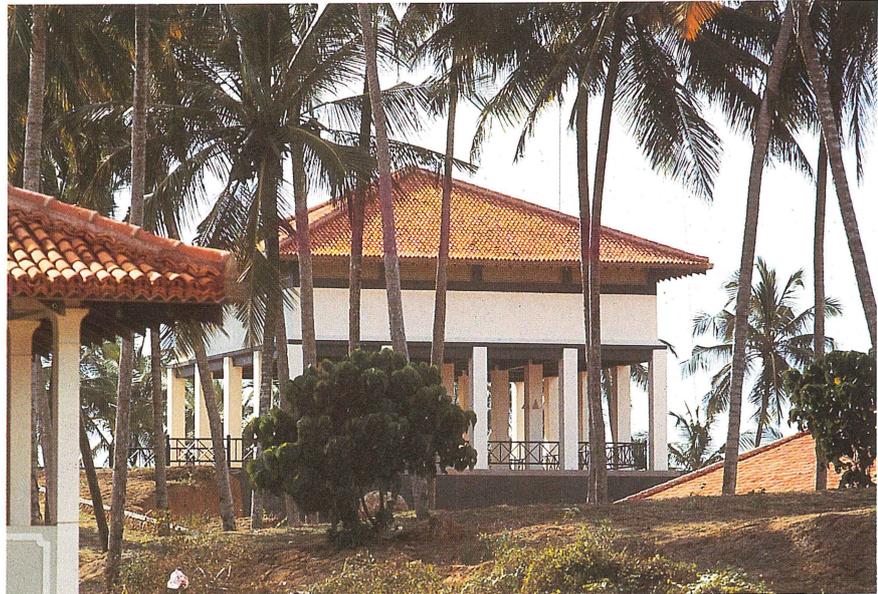
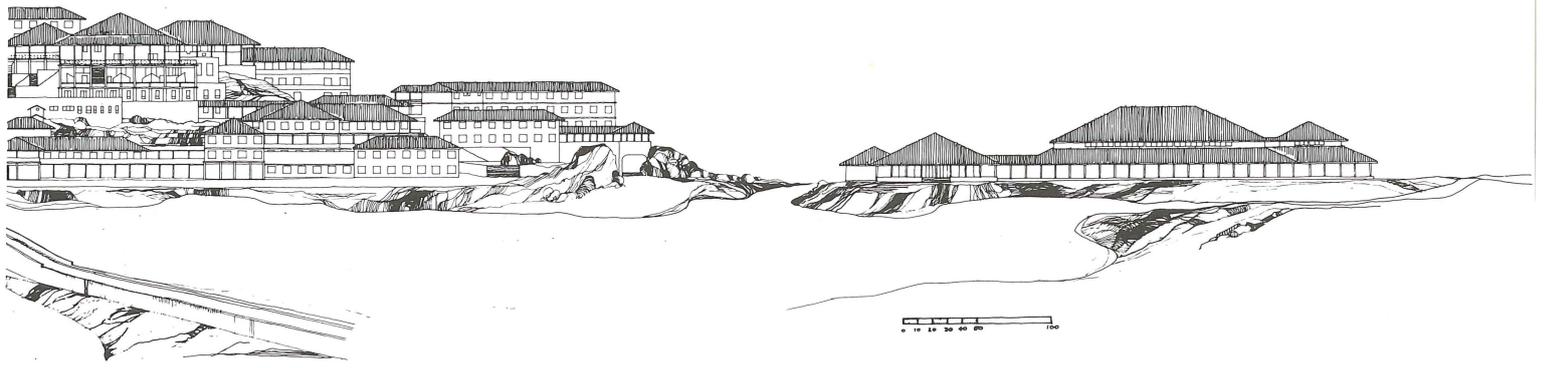




*Section of the university.*



*Above: Typical corridor with outdoor seating. Photograph: Hasan-Uddin Khan.  
Left: Physics building. Photograph: Brian Taylor.*



*Right, above: Water tank pavilion. Photograph: Brian Taylor.*  
*Far right: Typical roof under construction.*  
*Right: Detail of roof tiling.*  
*Photographs: Hasan-Uddin Khan.*

# St. Bridget's Montessori School, Colombo

## Project Data

St. Bridget's Montessori School, Colombo

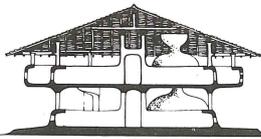
Date: 1964

Client: St. Bridget's Catholic Convent

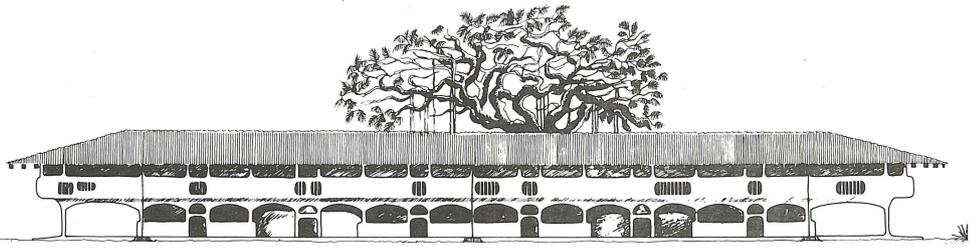
Architect: Edwards, Reid & Begg, Geoffrey Bawa, designer

This early educational building by Geoffrey Bawa reflects a turning point in Lira development as an architect. Although of reinforced concrete, it nevertheless has greater affinities with traditional buildings in Sri Lanka than other previous works by Bawa: it is essentially open on both the ground and first floors, which are protected by a large overhanging roof; three-foot-high cupboards and balustrades ensure safety from falling

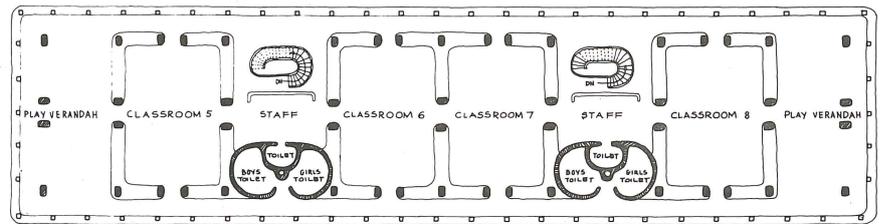
and create intimate spaces within the overall volume; wall murals by Barbara Sansoni originally decorated the school. Mother Good Council of the local Catholic church, the client for this building, was an especially influential and encouraging patron of Mr Bawa's at this moment in his career. The dialogue was fruitful, as this and other institutional structures for the church reveal.



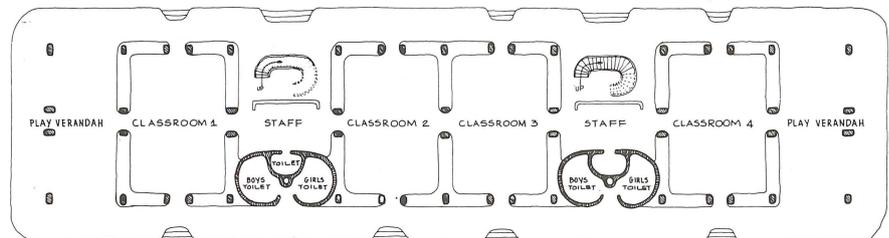
Sections



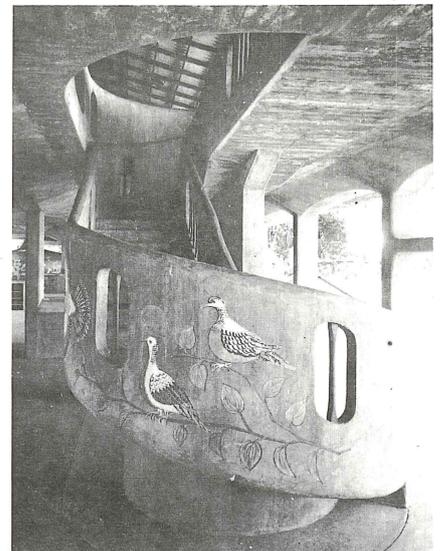
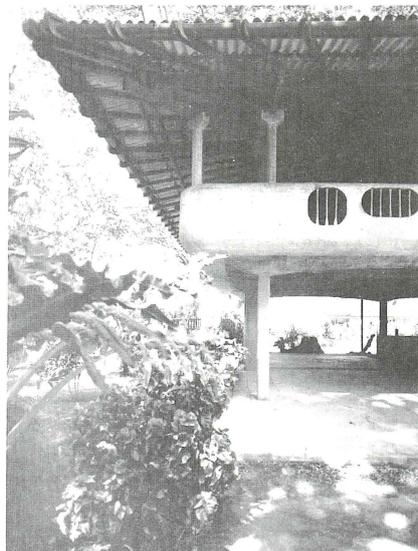
Elevation.



First floor plan.



Ground floor plan.



Right: Detail view of a corner of a building.  
Far right: Interior Staircase.  
Photographs: Geoffrey Bawa.

# Parliament, Kotte, Colombo

## Project Data

*New Parliamentary Complex, Sri Jayawardenepura*

*Site: 12 acres at Kotte, near Colombo*

*Client: Government of Sri Lanka*

*Architect: Edwards, Reid & Begg, Geoffrey Bawa, architect-in-charge*

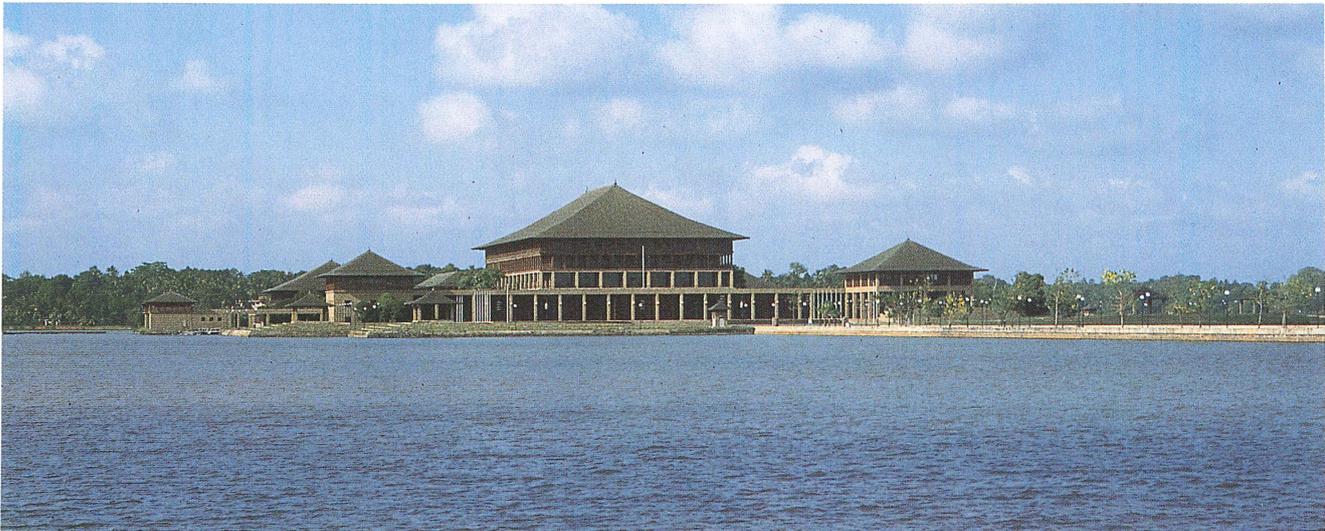
*Date: 1980 designed*

*1982 completed*

*Contractor: Mitsui Construction (Japan)*

The old parliament building in downtown Colombo was grossly inadequate when a new government came to power in 1977. Plans were initiated for a new capital complex in the suburbs of the city, at Kotte, an important city in the pre-colonial era. Marshes were drained and an artificial island created to receive the new buildings, for which Geoffrey Bawa obtained the design commission. Achievement of the whole complex took the extremely short time of roughly 3 years from conception to inauguration. A parliament chamber, which can seat 200

law-makers and numerous observers in the galleries around it, forms the central focus of the composition; a strong symmetry is developed by the lower pavilions which flank the assembly on either side, one of which has an open-air hall on the ground level for receiving foreign dignitaries. Traditional craft techniques were involved in the intricate timberwork of the roofs and exterior galleries, for example, but the basic structure is reinforced concrete with a coating of crushed stone mixed with epoxy for outer surfaces.



*Top: View of the complex.*

*Left: Water steps and bell.*

*Above: Interior of one of the lateral pavilions.*

*Photographs: Brian Taylor.*

# Bawa Residence, Colombo

## Project Data

*The Architect's House, restructuring and rehabilitation.*

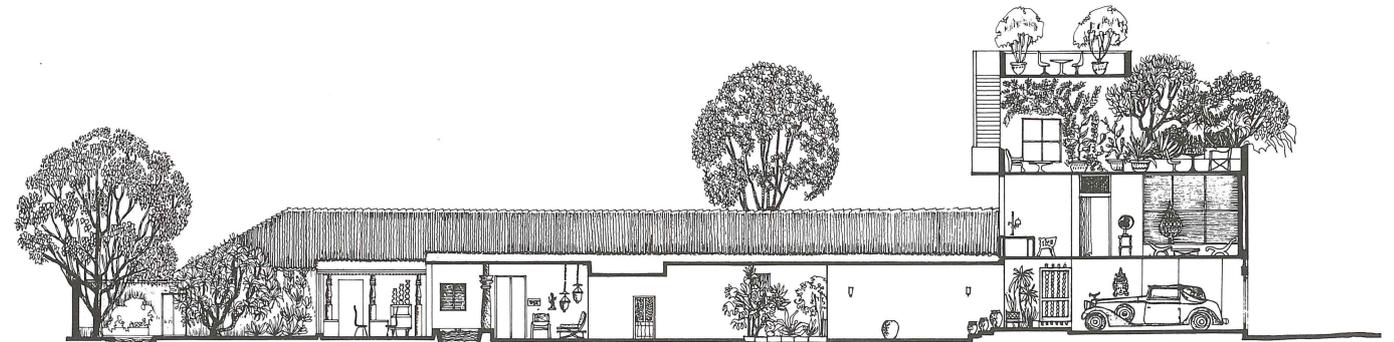
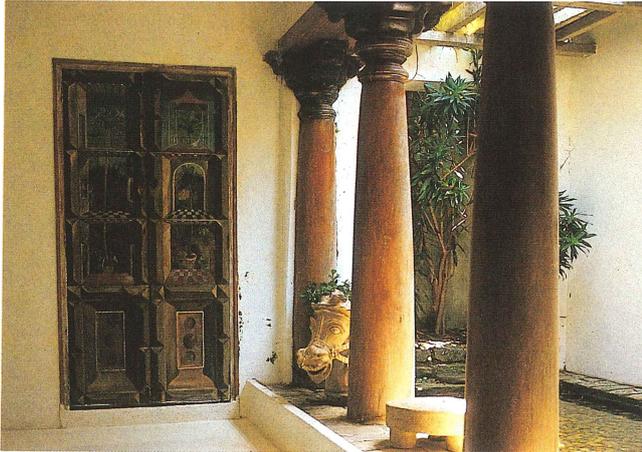
Site: Bagatelle Road, Colombo  
Acquisition of initial portion: 1958  
Second acquisitions: 1968

This truly remarkable dwelling is in constant evolution, having originally been not one, but four, adjacent houses. The architect was able to acquire them starting in 1958 and has unified them into a series of living spaces with numerous courtyards, lightwells and views onto the out of doors. Columns from ancient buildings now demolished find their place among other artifacts which the architect has incorporated into his residence. Partly

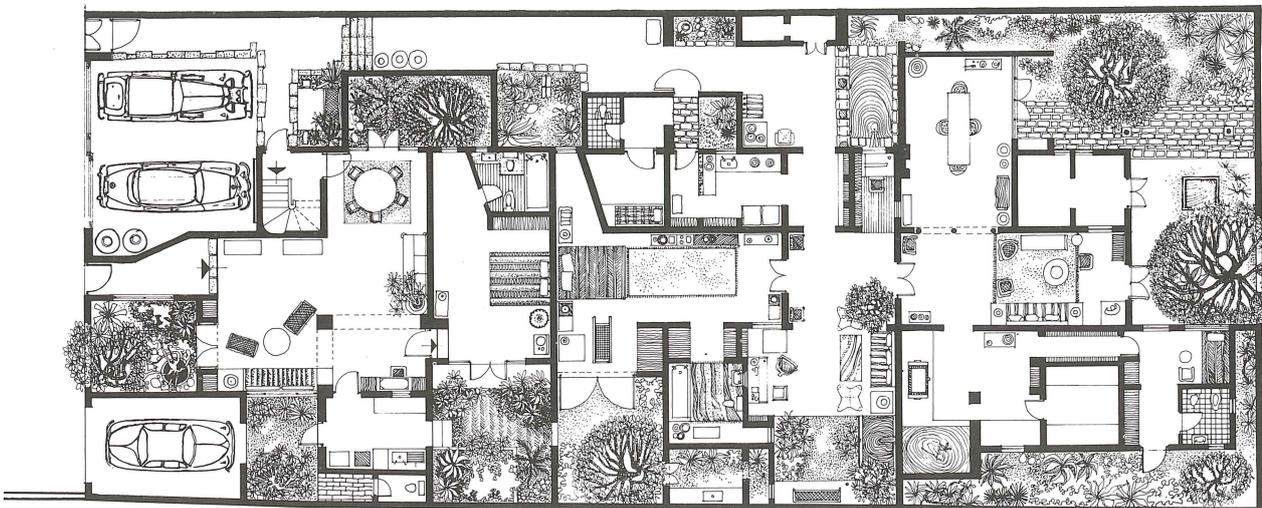
because of the owner's particular tastes and personality, but also due to the fact that several units have been combined into one, the spaces must be experienced sequentially; each possesses a unique character and atmosphere.

*Below, left: Entrance corridor with columns and pool.*

*Below: Second floor library and sitting room. Photographs: Brian Taylor.*



*Longitudinal section.*



*Ground floor plan.*

# Peter White House, Mauritius

## Project Data

House, Mauritius

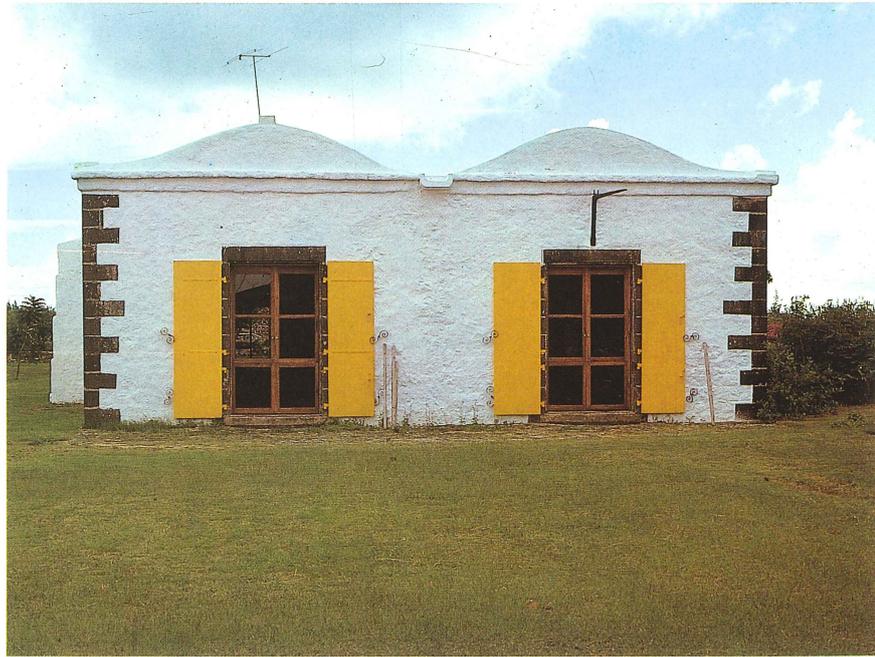
Programme: Transformation of an existing sugar cane warehouse

Client: Mr. Peter White

Architect: Edwards, Reid & Begg, Geoffrey Bawa

Date: 1974

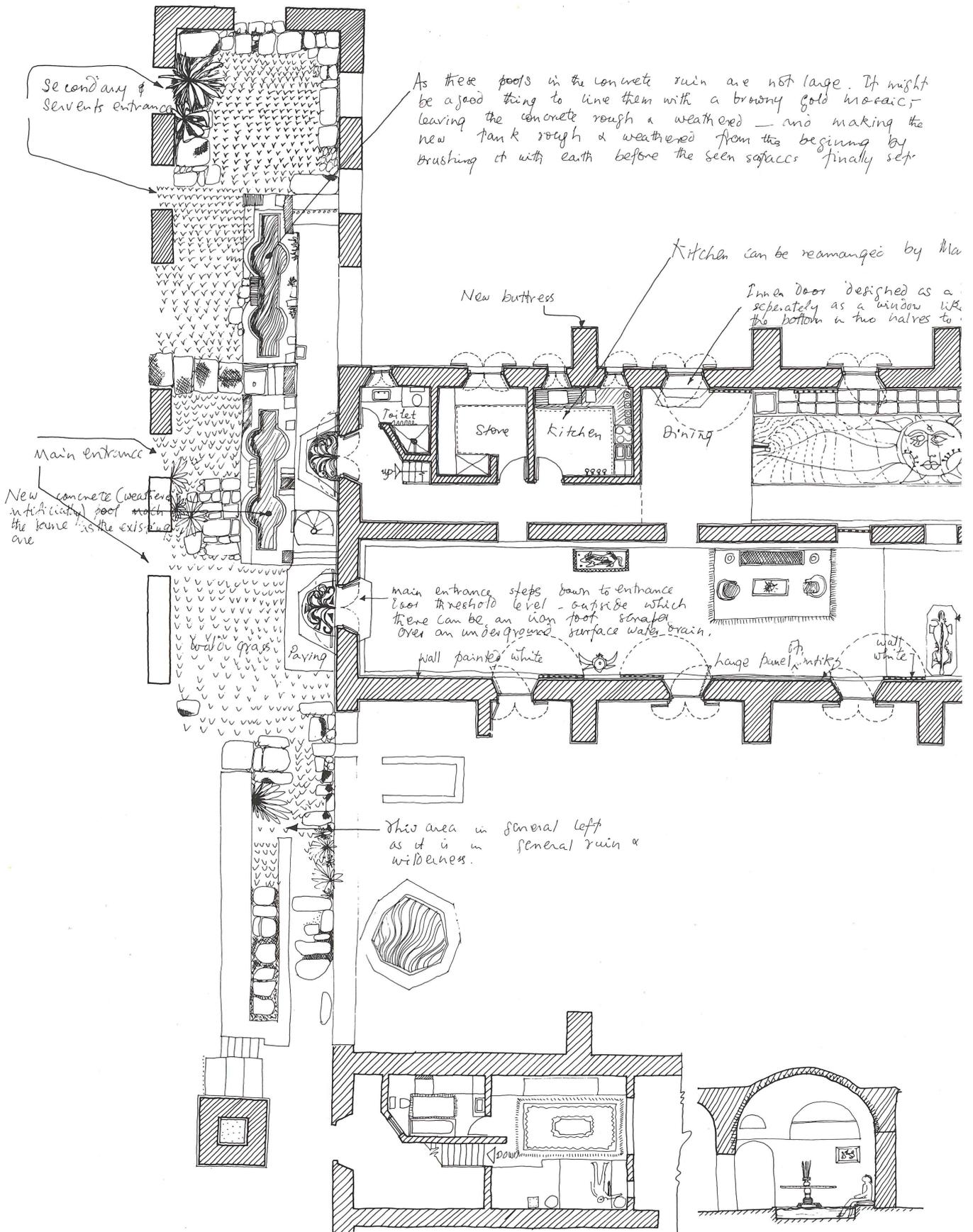
Originally, these two long, barrel-vaulted spaces were built and used as warehouses for sugar cane. They were purchased and Mr Bawa was commissioned by the client to transform them into a weekend house. The programme involved only a bedroom, a bathroom and a small kitchen, while the rest of the space could be utilised in a variety of ways. Outbuildings nearby were converted into guest bedrooms. The sketch drawings by the architect for this project contain numerous annotations as to potential arrangements for spaces and their use, but the two basic criteria expressed by the client were the desire for quiet solitude and the possibility for inviting large groups of people.



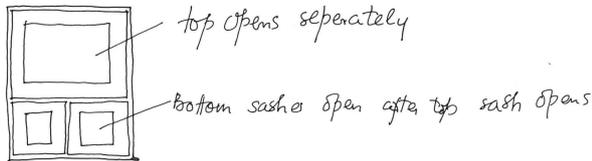
Above: Exterior view of east facade.

Below: Interior view of the vaulted dining room.  
Photographs: Peter White.

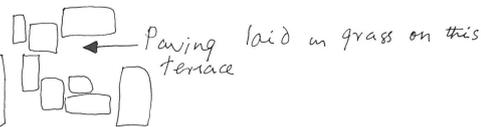
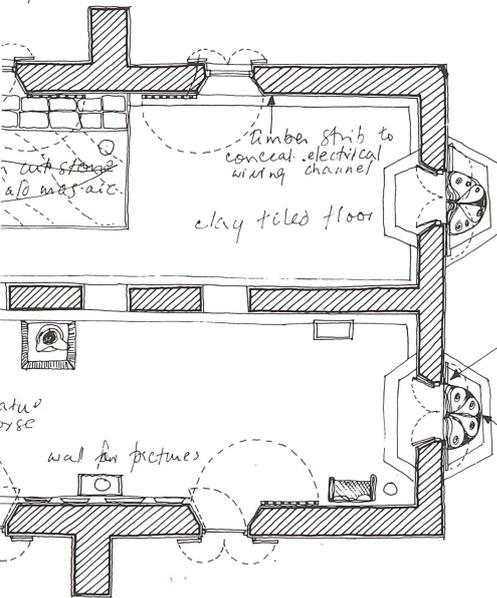




Annotated plans of the ground floor and mezzanine bedroom, section through dining area with pool.

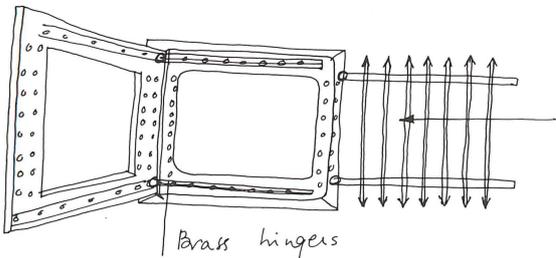


is the top opens large windows, or steps which are needed here.

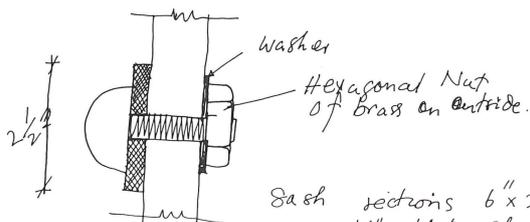


The insides of the hurricane shutters can be painted to suit the over door icons as they will be seen through the glass when doors when they are shut & you & Margaret are shut inside yourself.

These foot scrapers can be designed by Laki Senanayaka here or made at Britania - The level of the inside floor is about the same as the paving outside so that on this side of the wall, the lines of paving will stimulate the steps on the other entrance side.



This wire grill won't look as heavy as it's been drawn. Nor will the window sash have knobs - only the hinge, but it's drawn on here for you to get me a rough pricing to see whether they can be done or not.



Sash sections 6" x 2" timber  
 1/4" plate glass  
 Brass hinges 1/2" x 2"



# Triton Hotel, Ahungalla

## Project Data

*Triton Hotel*

*Site: Ahungalla, Sri Lanka*

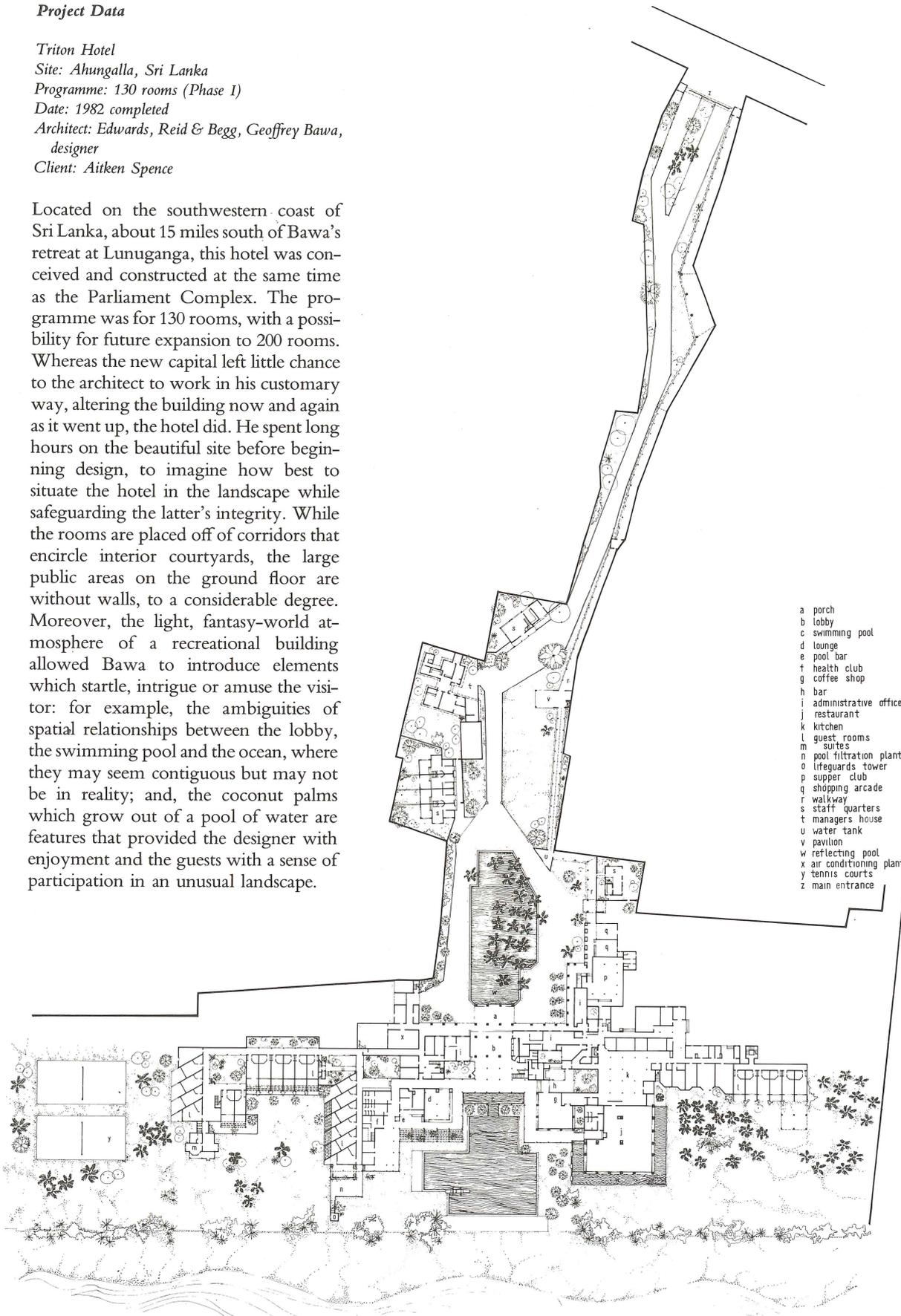
*Programme: 130 rooms (Phase 1)*

*Date: 1982 completed*

*Architect: Edwards, Reid & Begg, Geoffrey Bawa, designer*

*Client: Aitken Spence*

Located on the southwestern coast of Sri Lanka, about 15 miles south of Bawa's retreat at Lunuganga, this hotel was conceived and constructed at the same time as the Parliament Complex. The programme was for 130 rooms, with a possibility for future expansion to 200 rooms. Whereas the new capital left little chance to the architect to work in his customary way, altering the building now and again as it went up, the hotel did. He spent long hours on the beautiful site before beginning design, to imagine how best to situate the hotel in the landscape while safeguarding the latter's integrity. While the rooms are placed off of corridors that encircle interior courtyards, the large public areas on the ground floor are without walls, to a considerable degree. Moreover, the light, fantasy-world atmosphere of a recreational building allowed Bawa to introduce elements which startle, intrigue or amuse the visitor: for example, the ambiguities of spatial relationships between the lobby, the swimming pool and the ocean, where they may seem contiguous but may not be in reality; and, the coconut palms which grow out of a pool of water are features that provided the designer with enjoyment and the guests with a sense of participation in an unusual landscape.



Site plan with ground floor.

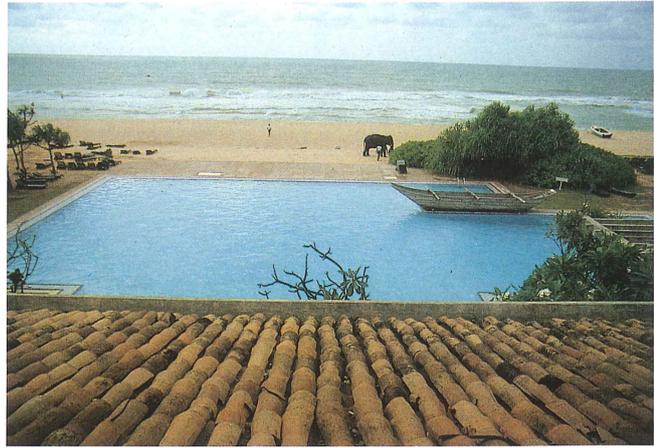


*Left: View from the lobby towards coconut pool at the entrance. Photograph: Brian Taylor.*

*Below: View from the first floor towards the pool and beach.*

*Bottom: From the lobby to the pool to the sea.*

*Photographs: Hasan-Uddin Khan.*





*Top: Lobby area around the pool.  
Left: Dining room with painted ceiling.  
Above: Wall mural by Laki Senanyake.  
Photographs: Hasan-Uddin Khan.*



*Right, above: Interior courtyard with upstairs passage way.*

*Right: Garden patio outside the ground floor rooms.*

*Photographs: Hasan-Uddin Khan.*