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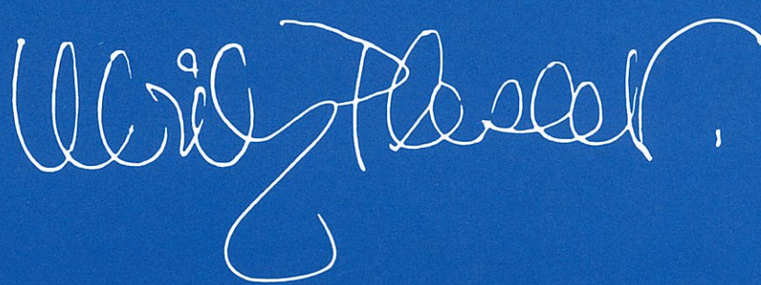

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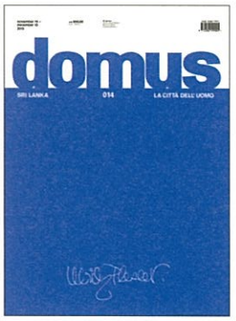

For this special issue dedicated Ulrik Plesner, the cover bears the signature (right) of the Danish architect.

ULRIK PLESNER – RECOGNITION FOR AN ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER

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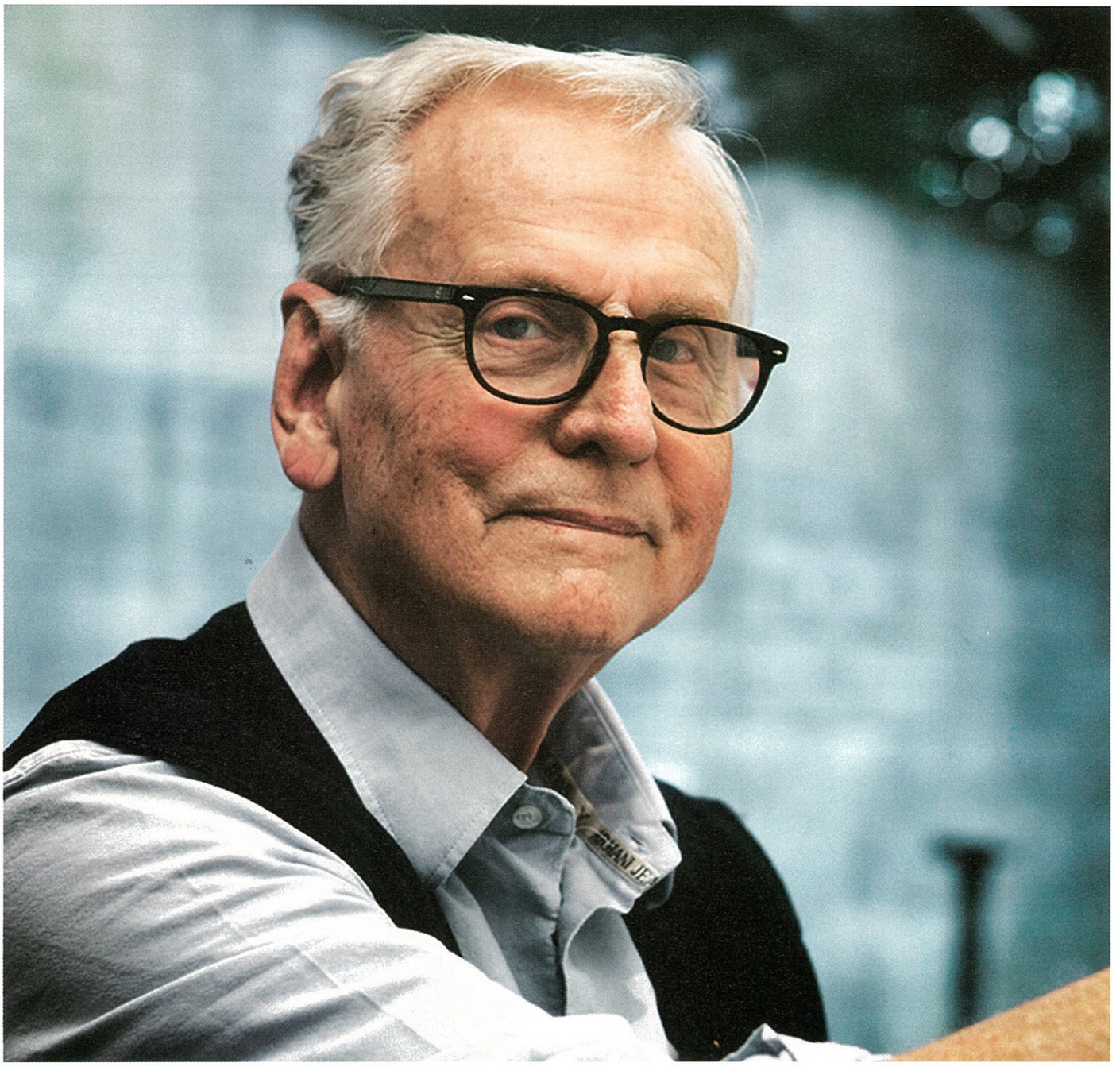


Ulrik Plesner (2015)

This is our second issue dedicated to a single architect. The following pages encompass Danish architect Ulrik Plesner's life as an architect and his most important work and influence. His name is irrevocably intertwined with many landmark projects that lay the foundation of Sri Lankan architecture.
From private houses to industrial and public buildings his career in Sri Lanka and Israel articulates a local building tradition, and an architectural etho that is sensitive to the local climate and sensibilities.

As an architect of Danish descent with no ties to Sri Lanka, Ulrik Plesner's time in Sri Lanka during the periods between 1958-1967 and 1982-1987 transformed and even set a precedent in the field of architecture in Sri Lanka. Starting with the measured drawings of historical buildings that he spearheaded and leading up to a community centered development project, his work articulates not only his influence but also his versatility as an architect. The latter is more so evident through his work in Israel – an altogether foreign territory that the architect embarked upon.

Plesner can also be attributed for his part in laying the groundwork of an architectural fraternity in Sri Lanka; he was a mentor and a teacher as much as an architect, nurturing a young generation of architects in Sri Lanka during a time when there was only a handful of renaissance architects doing important work. This issue covers all of these aspects that span across the career of the architect. Many of the featured buildings and houses in Sri Lanka have been greatly altered or no longer in existence today. However, they mark the pages in the archives of architectural literature and continue to offer lessons as exemplary architecture that continue to inspire and influence future generations.

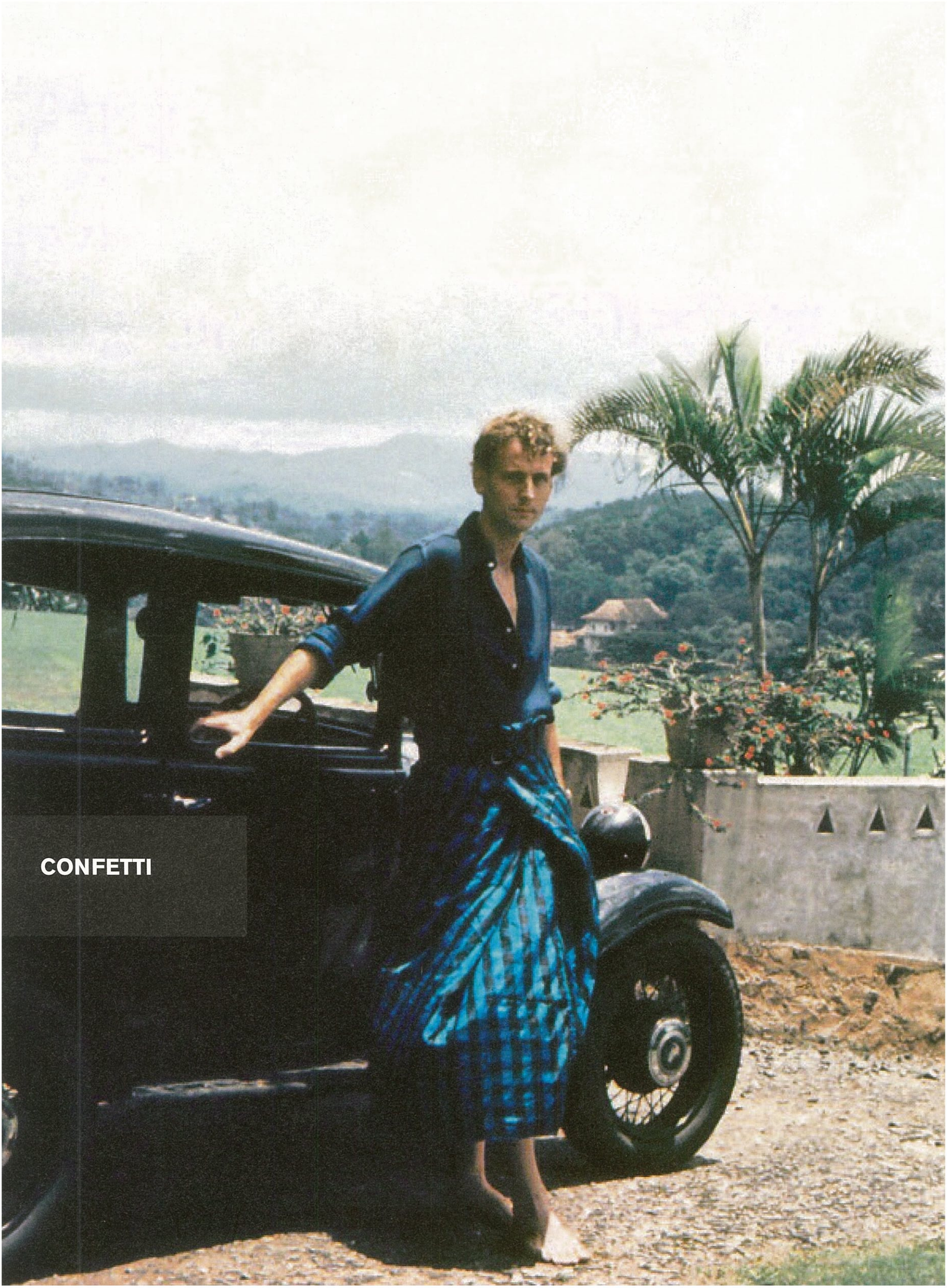
Amongst the featured articles, Plesner in Sri Lanka offers a comprehensive overview of Ulrik Plenser's career, covering all aspects of his influence and work; Ulrik Plesner and the Impact of Post-War Scandinavian Design in Sri Lanka, looks at Plesner's role as a significant link to networks of Scandinavian modern design and their underlying approaches and methods; Learning from Plesner is a personal account of a past student of Plesner and conveys the architect's importance as a teacher, and A Conversation with Ulrik is a compilation of a candid discussion with Plesner held in 2013 and reveals the architect's principles and views on architecture. Moreover, the House in Polontalawa, Ulrik's Work in Israel and Ulrik's Work in Sri Lanka are features that bring to light transformative and landmark creations by the architect spanning his career.

Ismeth Raheem, a past student and close associate of Ulrik Plesner has been an instrumental and insightful resource in putting together this issue, from start to finish. Similarly Ulrik Plesner's daughter Maya Plesner together with Plesner Architects in Israel have provided invaluable contribution in making this issue a comprehensive and meaningful tribute. Finally, In Situ: An Architectural Memoir From Sri Lanka authored by Ulrik Plesner proved to be a vital reference work for many of the articles featured here.

Ulrik Plesner with his daughters, Daniela and Maya at Plesner Architects in Israel

At the completion of this issue and looking back on an illustrious career of a versatile architect, the words of a past student of Ulrik Plesner continues to resonate and seems worthy of reiteration here:

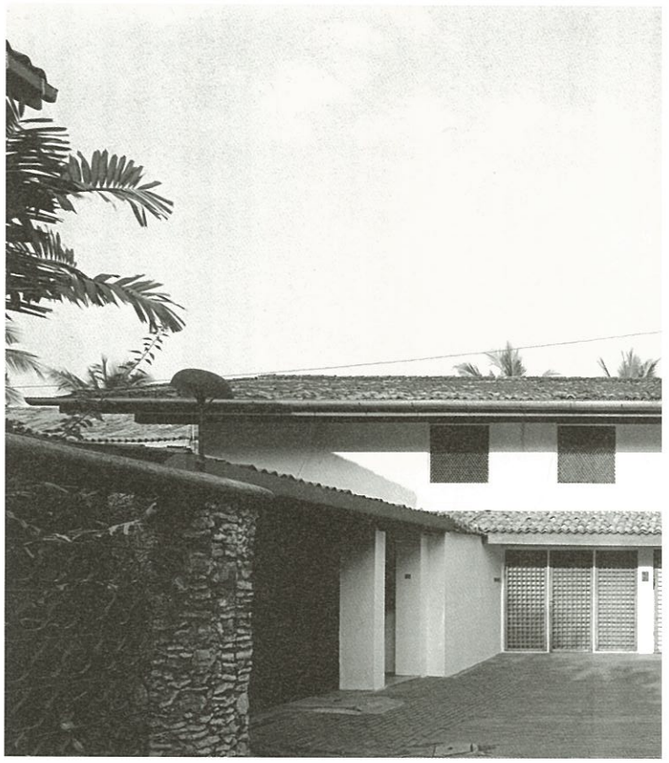
"It is a reminder that, despite a frenetic quest to innovate, and to be novel there still lies the need to be inspired by lessons from our heritage again." – Anura Rathnavibhushana. **bto**

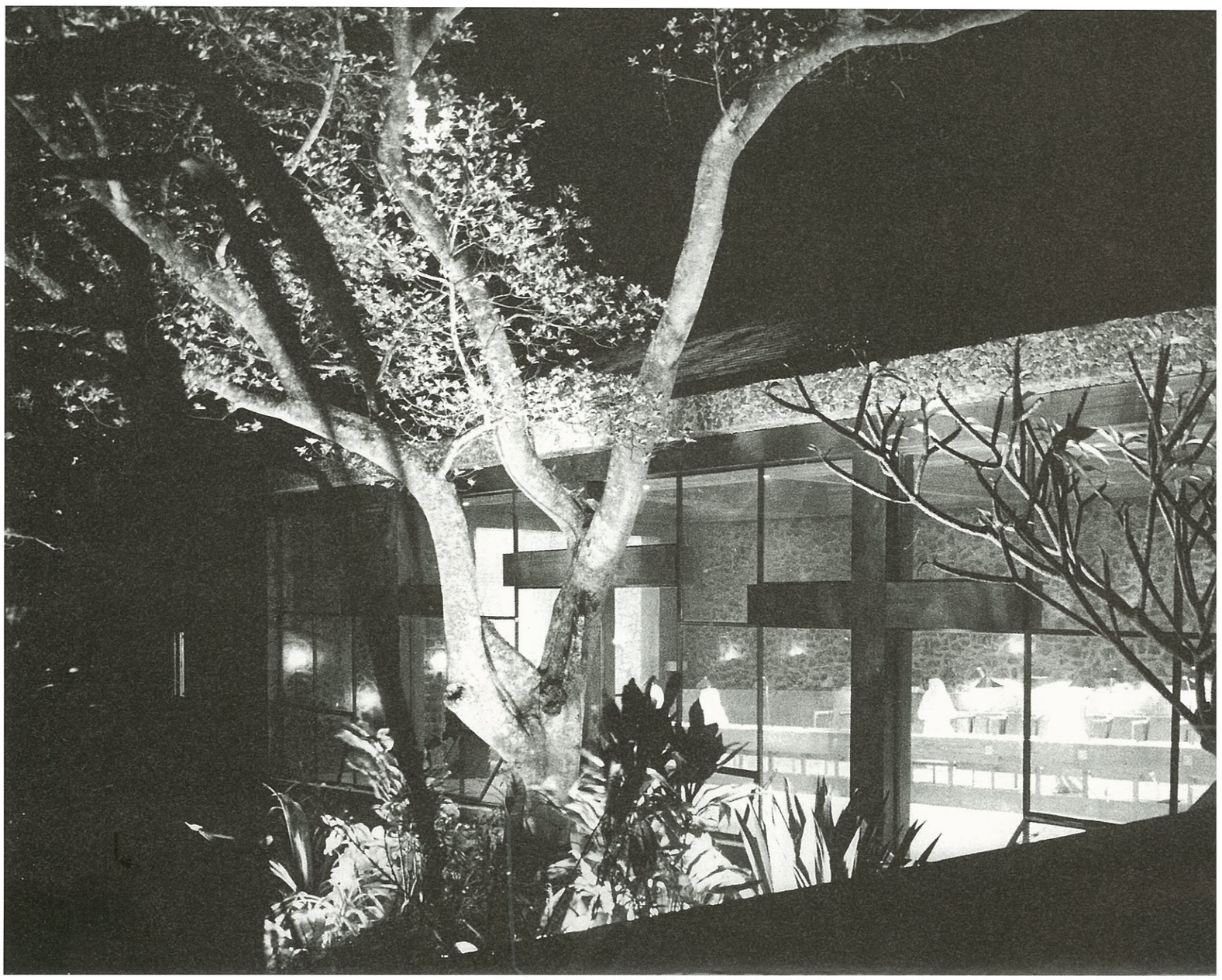

CONFETTI

PLESNER IN SRI LANKA

The post-colonial decade of the 1950s was a pivotal period of the country's architectural history. In those crucial years more than a dozen architects returned to this country having qualified in architectural schools in England, Australia, India and one from America [Taliesin West Frank Lloyd Wrights' studio and school]. Armed with new architectural concepts and building techniques these young creative personalities were to meet the challenge of a country looking for new orientation to recreate the man-made landscape in a country that had only recently gained independence from Britain.

Text Ismeth Raheem





They were the first batch of architects of the post colonial period, assured and confident to usher in a new era. But among this disparate group were four architects – uniquely different from each other – that set the tone and brought about a change of approach in architectural design and to forge what was to be their own distinct style.

Minette de Silva, [1916-1998] Valentine Gunasekera [b.1931] and Geoffrey Bawa [1930-2000] all graduated from the Architectural Association School in London. The first three architects mentioned came from a privileged middle class background and attended the best of schools in Colombo for their early education. Minette De Silva was remarkable not only for her dominating presence but also as she was the first Asian woman to be an Associate Member of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Moreover she forged a romantic link with the master French architect and artist Le Corbusier. By some strange coincidence they were linked by another unusual personality who was not Sri Lankan.

Ulirk Plesner who was Danish in contrast was startlingly different. He had no relative or antecedents in Sri Lanka, and no visible links to this country. But he was to play a significant role. Not only did he have an impact on contemporary architecture but he was also an inspirational teacher of architectural design, and a promoter of the arts.

Born in Italy in 1930, Plesner was the elder of two sons. His father was Danish, an artist and historian, and his mother an artist of Scottish descent. Plesner's father died of a surgical misadventure when Ulrik was only eight. His stepfather was Kaare Klint [1887-1957], a Scandinavian. He set up the first interior design school, for furniture and lighting, at the Royal Danish Academy, Copenhagen. Architects and historians consider him as the 'Father of modern furniture and lighting'. Plesner was steeped in modern Scandinavian design from an early age even before he enrolled at the Royal Danish Academy, Copenhagen, in 1950.

The teaching there was based on serious attention to the finer details in designing domestic scale buildings. Among his teachers were some of the great Scandinavian architects of the post-war period; Alva Alto (1898-1976), Arne Jacobsen (1902-1971) and Kay Frisker (1893-1965). After graduating in 1955 from the Academy, with a remarkable record, Ulrik worked in Denmark and England.

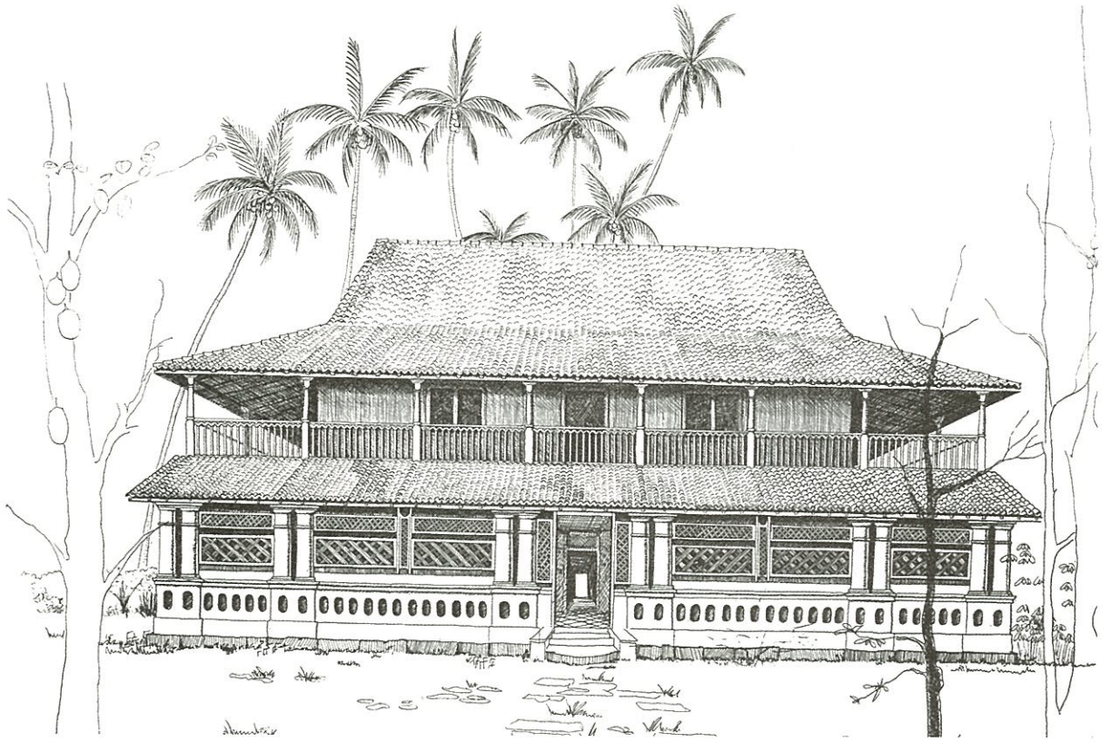
1956 was a momentous year for Ulrik Plesner. In search of new experiences and moved by fate as well as a conviction that Buddhism was the only religion that makes sense with regard to modern living, Plesner submitted a design for a monument to commemorate the Buddha Jayanthi (celebrating 2,500 years of the establishment of the Buddhist philosophy). This architectural competition was held in New Delhi in 1956 and the Chairman of the committee of judges was the then Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Plesner's entry for the Buddha Jayanthi memorial was awarded the second prize for its radical design. It attracted the attention of Minette De Silva who invited Plesner to visit her studio in Kandy, Sri Lanka.

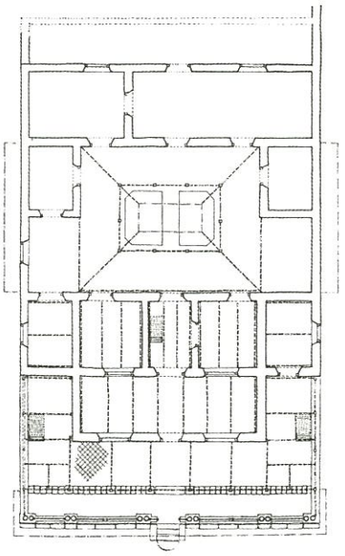
In 1957, Jorn Utzon, the Danish architect won the Sydney Opera House Competion against all odds with more than 233 entries from 33 countries. He was specially selected as the winner by the Norwegian-born Eero Saarinen. Utzon invited Plesner to join as his site architect but Plesner declined the offer as by then he had already decided to travel to Sri Lanka at Minette De Silva's invitation.

By 1958 both Minette De Silva and Plesner collaborated on domestic buildings for clients in Kandy and Colombo. Not receiving a salary for several months, Plesner, who was a guest of Minette's brother, Fred De Silva, was becoming increasingly anxious. Plesner then met Geoffrey Bawa who himself had returned

Opening page: Ulrik Plesner during the early years in Sri Lanka. Opposite page: top, exterior view of Maurice and Malkanthie Perera house; bottom, the Chapel of the Good Shepherd Convent, Bandarawela, 1963.

This page: above, The living room of Maurice and Malkanthie Perera's house. Colombo 1964. The little garden court is protected from the road by a high wall and concrete louvers for privacy and safety while letting in air and light.





from England after his architectural training at the same A.A. School of Architecture and who invited Plesner to join his firm of architects, Edwards, Reid and Begg.

The 1950s were a period of great uncertainty for artists and architects in Sri Lanka. Virtually all matters concerning styles of art and architecture were dictated by what was currently happening in London. In matters of serious artistic taste, Britannia still ruled the waves.

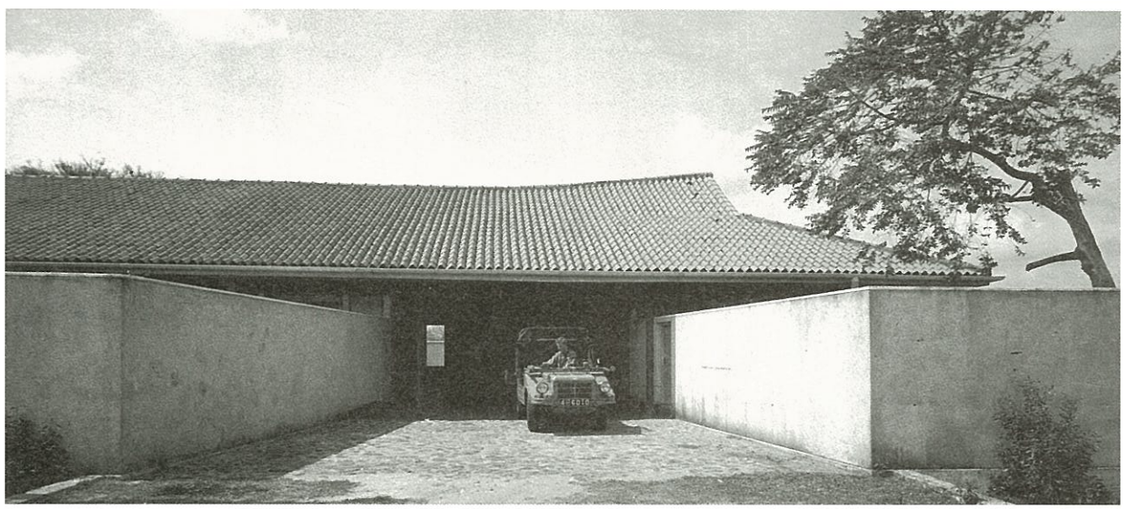
However, it was also a period during which many talented young architects, Minette De Silva, Ulrik Plesner, Geoffrey Bawa and Valentine Gunasekera were breaking new ground.

With the arrival of Plesner in 1958, there was a fundamental shift in the attitude to design of buildings in Sri Lanka. Plesner's approach to designing buildings was in contrast to the norm: the monumental was replaced by simplicity and clarity of design. Built between 1960-1964, Plesner's one-room apartment for Barbara Sansoni, houses for Maurice and Malkanthie Perera, and a house for Ian and Gun Pieris, show how Plesner transformed the basic approach to architecture in a tropical climate like that of Sri Lanka. His flair for using utility materials like terracotta tiles for flooring, timber trellis doors and windows, tile on asbestos roof, (exposed in the underside without expensive ceiling sheets) were all diagnostic of his design approach.

In his role as an architect he demonstrated the art of designing a building simply, efficiently, and utilizing indigenous materials and technology and, most importantly, on a domestic scale in a country still in its throes of development. Plesner's training and skills in his twenties as a master bricklayer and carpenter came to the fore.

He would often demonstrate brick laying techniques he learnt in his native Denmark. Although Plesner's training in architecture and building technology were based in one of the most advanced countries in Europe–Denmark – his firm belief was that such a transfer of sophisticated building practices in Europe to a developing country could not take place. The outcome of complex detailing of building components and manufacture would result in an unusable, inefficient and costly building whose maintenance would be prohibitive. His grasp of building techniques and detailing of simple domestic scale architecture made a great impact among his students in the newly established school of architecture.

Plesner reminisced on one of his earlier designs for a circuit bungalow:



Top: measured drawings of 18th century trader's house by the coast in Gintota; bottom: the Shell Company District Manager's Bungalow Anuradhapura 1960 – the moment of realisation that the "big roof" is the key.

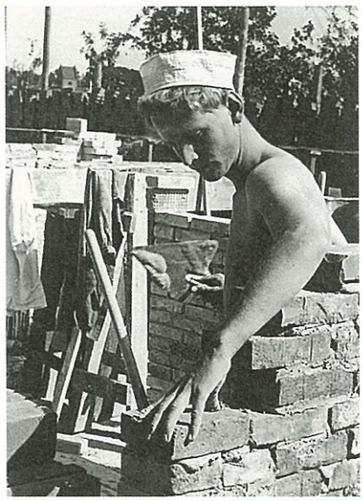
"The client and I went together often by train to Anuradhapura and supervised it and it came out beautifully. And then one day I took Geoffrey up when it was finished and we both said "It's all in the roof! The roof is the answer to architecture in this climate, in this place in this context."

His training as a bricklayer and carpenter gave him a deep insight and understanding into the use of materials such as brick and timber. In this respect he was very unlike his contemporaries who did not have the benefit of this training. Plesner studied how materials were viewed and used before applying traditional techniques to modern materials.

Plesner's distinctive style can be seen in several projects he executed during the early 1960's when he was an associate of the architectural firm Edwards, Reid and Begg. The three houses mentioned and the Good Shepherd Convent, Bandarawela, and the house in Galle for A.S.H. De Silva, although are all set in a Sri Lankan environment, the interiors have a Scandinavian ambience combined with a tropical flavour. There is a definitive influence of a member of staff of the Royal Danish Academy in the 1950s, Alvar Alto, the great Finnish architect.

REVIVING THE VERNACULAR

Groundbreaking efforts had been made in the study of traditional crafts and building practices by researchers in the 1900's. However it was Plesner who in the late 1950s revived the public's interest in the country's architectural heritage.



Top: a typical measured drawing of the 14th century temple in the village of Padeniya, Sri Lanka; inset: working as a bricklayer's apprentice during Plesner's formative years at the Royal Danish Academy Architecture School in 1951.

His pioneering role in chronicling the vernacular heritage of the country's indigenous domestic architecture was an eye-opener to architects and interested the public at large. The majority of the17th-19th century buildings documented with a selected team of four comprising Laki Senanayake, Ismeth Raheem and Barbara Sansoni were in a seriously neglected state. Many of the timber and roofing details were recycled into his architectural designs and translated to a modern contemporary building idiom.

"I had this tremendous interest in old buildings and she (Barbara) got much excited and together we started. I had a little jeep, a wonderful jeep where you could open the front window and sit completely out in the open air and drive everywhere. Every weekend we went out together and very soon Laki Senanayake and Ismeth Raheem joined us. The first one was the temple in Padeniya. They (the monks) said they wanted to pull it down and build a new one. We shamed them into not pulling it down and said we'd come back and measure it. We went back and measured it the next weekend and made a measured drawing. The Ceylon Daily Mirror published, every Saturday, a whole back page.

Our only outlet at that time was these articles in the Daily Mirror. But slowly we created a whole group of people who were interested in it, looked forward to it and supported it."

In more recent times Plesner was the first to study construction details and techniques of older buildings of the 17th and 18th century to find solutions to problems in contemporary architectural design.

TEACHING AT THE FIRST NEWLY FOUNDED SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE [KATUBEDDA]

As a teacher in the School of Architecture at Katubedde, Plesner would often demonstrate the methods of recycling traditional building features and encourage the use of indigenous materials-inspiring students to follow his example.

"Actually, there were three branches to my life in Sri Lanka. One was building with Geoffrey, another was recording and saving old buildings with Barbara and the third was teaching at Katubedde. Justin Samarasekera was a good friend and he was always moaning that he couldn't get architects for the PWD. So he decided the thing to do was to start an architecture school. We gave him full support in terms of volunteering to teach and give criticism and all that. It was a technical school then –

part of Katubedda. We went for trips, to look at old buildings. How you do a roof, how you do a door, how you do a coping; showed them all the walls that turned green because they had no coping!"

It was through his tireless efforts that three of the first batch of architects –Ismeth Raheem, Pheroze Choksy and Vasantha Chandraratne were offered a scholarship to further their education at the Royal Danish Academy, Copenhagen. After lapse of a month Anura Ratnavhibhushana also enrolled on the same basis.

These four architects, after their graduation were to play a crucial role in the office of Edwards Reid & Begg, Architects, under the senior partner Geoffrey Bawa and were entrusted important, collaborative roles in the formative projects of their careers.

FORGING LINKS BETWEEN ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Ulrik Plesner was also the first architect in the late 1950s to pioneer the cross-links between artist and architect by showcasing the work of Donald Friend, the famous Australian, artist, painter and sculptor.

Photo: Dominic Sansoni

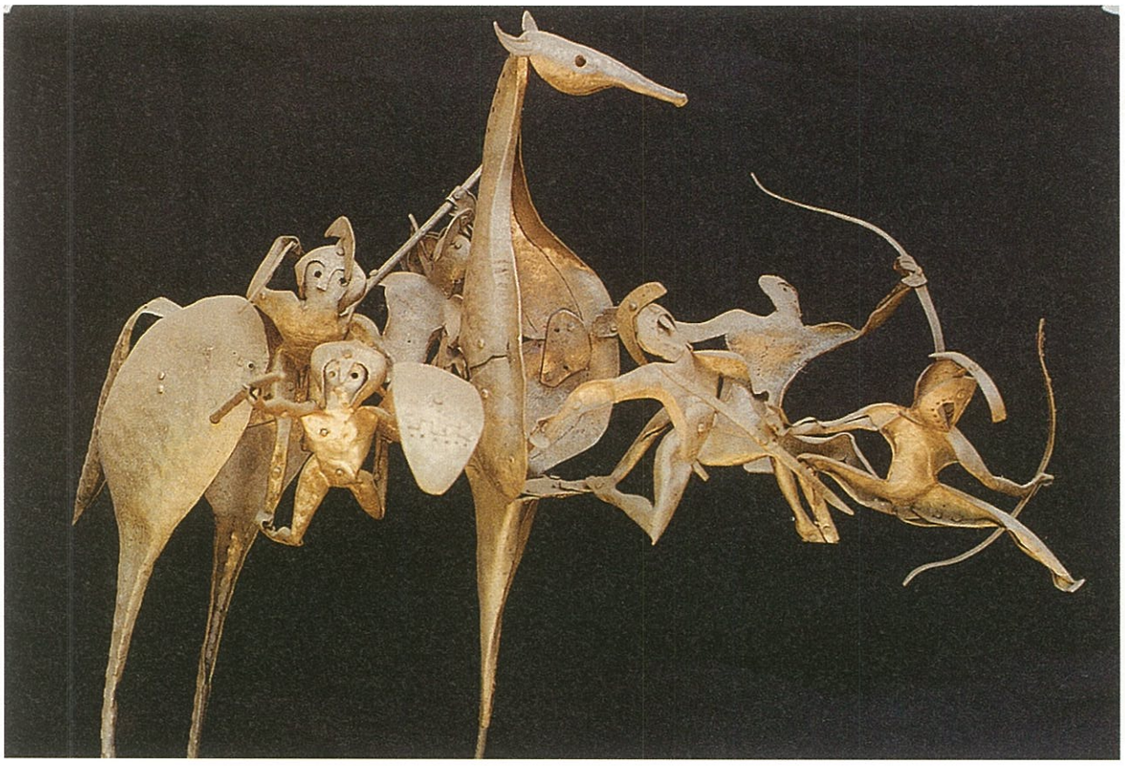
Top: Ulrik Plesner (left) with Geoffrey Bawa (right). Bottom: Ismeth Raheem student and associate of Ulrik Plesner curated the exhibition 'Plesner in Sri Lanka' in 2008.

In 1959 he had his first encounter with Donald Friend at 'Brief', Bewis Bawa's garden retreat. This mercurial artist is considered by art critics to be the foremost and finest draughtsman of the human figure in Australian art history.

It was Plesner's idea that he could challenge Friend to create fine sculptural forms from utility materials such as aluminium. Although artists had used aluminium as a material for sculptural forms for centuries, they were solid aluminium block sculptures.

In the late 1950s aluminium was the standard construction material imported to Sri Lanka, and in sheet form, came to be the universal building material for roof elements, rain water gutters, down-pipes and flashings. Plesner had already observed the potential of this material, while being aware of its deficiencies.

It was challenging for Donald Friend. With extraordinary skill he found a solution, which was above all aesthetically pleasing and acceptable. He drilled and folded the sheets and joined them without resorting to welding. He improved the surface texture by indenting it with mallets, producing a bubble effect on the surface. Often he resorted to finishing the sculptures by applying gold leaf,



which gave it a delicate and lustrous effect. It is possible that Plesner may have backed up the artist's knowledge with his architectural field experience. By September 1960, Friend began assembling and putting together a series of complex beaten sheet metal sculptures and had 19 sculptured pieces ready. Not only did Plesner set up an epoch-making exhibition at the German Cultural Institute, which was then sited in a building at Alexander Place, Colombo 7, he also arranged it artfully, lighting the individual sculptures and designed the catalogue and contributed the text. For the first time a single individual took control of every aspect of the exhibition.

One of Friend's hallmarks was his capacity to benefit from new experience and collaborative work with landscape designers and architects. Bevis Bawa and Plesner were crucial and important for the development of his work. Friend's following diary entry makes it obvious:

"Thanks to David, Ulrik, and Dr Auer, the exhibition has been a really fantastic success: we all worked like demons preparing the room, hanging it with hessian, putting up the 40 or so simple spotlights that lit each sculpture like a piece of jewellery. God what work, and what exhaustion! – A reception for the press, newsreels, and a radio broadcast, miles of publicity in every newspaper. And a grand opening – 250 guests, unlimited whisky, a tremendous feeling of excitement. It was the best-mounted best-publicized one-man show Colombo has ever seen (October 2, 1960)."

Laki Senanayake, and Ismeth Raheem later took Plesner's and Donald Friend's experiments in aluminium and the outcome of sculptural forms in this medium to other avenues.

MAHAWELI TOWNSHIP PROJECT 1982-1987.

Rice, water, irrigation are the three major elements that have shaped Sri Lanka's rural landscape over thousands of years. Plesner returned to Sri Lanka in 1982 to face up to a new challenge of designing and building in an environment wholly unfamiliar to him. Until 1987 he tried his hand planning and laying out the townships that were to provide housing, shops, schools, hospitals, and other amenities. These utilities were badly needed to provide shelter and services for the new colonists. Architects whose architectural projects were largely sited in Colombo largely shunned this work.

Top: The Trojan Horse, 1960. Aluminium 80 x 56 sculpture by Australian artist Donald Friend; top right: Australian artist Donald Friend; inset: Aluminium sculpture by Donald Friend.

Shaping the new landscape within the limitations of very tight financing, coordination problems, and bureaucratic red tape, were constraints that had to be dealt with. Plesner came up with architectural solutions, which went a long way in meeting the needs of the new residents.

Another equally demanding issue was that the whole project was to be accomplished by using local manpower resources, which included provincial contractors with meagre finances. The idea of using basic equipment and local skills by employing the settlers of the new townships was a laudable one.

The designs were to be simple and easily buildable housing units using local building traditions and self help. The outcome was a layout of buildings clustered around streets, which encompassed large squares shaded by huge trees.

The concept was based on the experience he gained from documenting and studying of vernacular buildings from his previous visit between 1958-1967. Having found working solutions to these issues he returned to Israel to pursue his career in a new environment and start all over again. ⓓ

Sections of this article are reproduced content of the catalogue for the exhibition, Plesner in Sri Lanka, held at the Geothe Institut, Sri Lanka, in 2008.

ULRIK PLESNER AND THE IMPACT OF POST-WAR SCANDINAVIAN DESIGN IN SRI LANKA

Design historian, Martin Eidelberg has written that after 1945, 'Scandinavia quickly assumed an ascendant position in the field of design... [becoming] synonymous with the forward-looking aspects of post-war design and craft, as was stressed by the many propagandist publications and exhibits that emanated from these Northern [European] countries. In contrast to the Americanisation of architecture and design in Sri Lanka in the post-war decades, the contribution of Scandinavian modern design to the island's development has, thus far, been overlooked. This article assesses the role of the Danish architect Ulrik Plesner in Sri Lanka as a significant link to networks of Scandinavian modern design and their underlying approaches and methods.

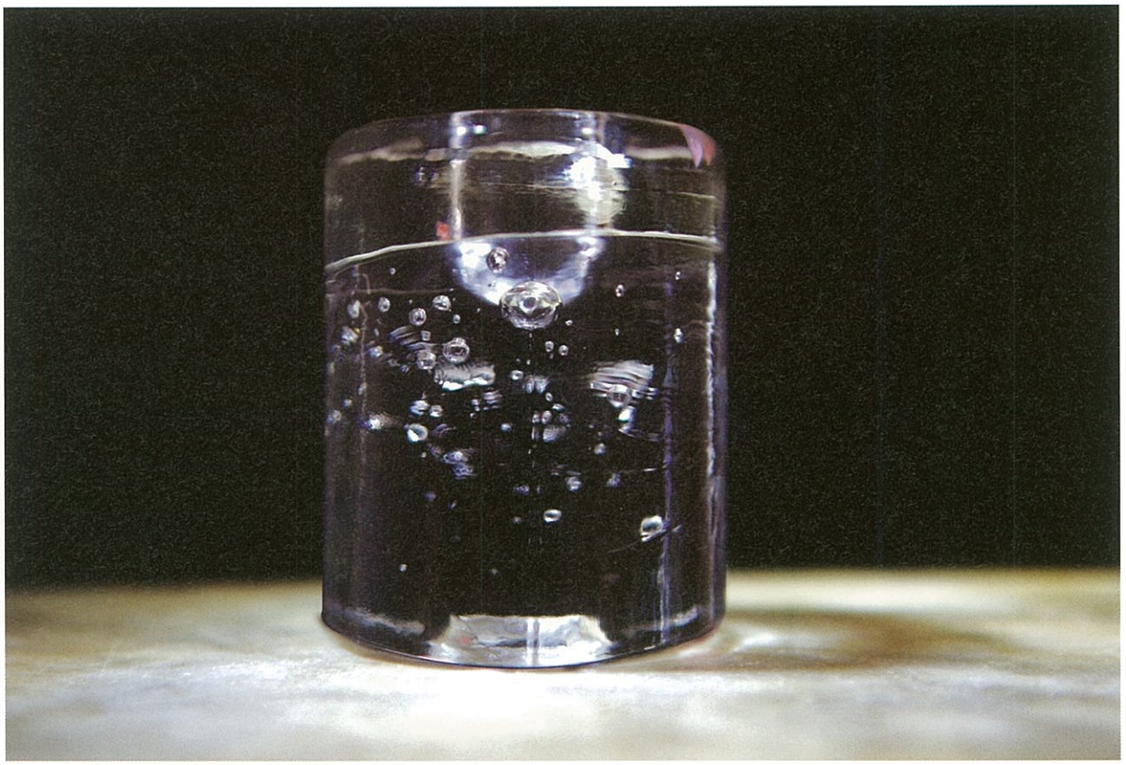
Text Dr Robin D Jones Photos Vishwathan Tharmagulasingam

A key event in the ascendancy of design from the Nordic countries was the exhibition 'Design in Scandinavia' which toured through the USA and Canada between 1954 and 1957. This influential exhibition brought together modern design from all the so-called Nordic countries – Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark – in a deliberate, if somewhat artificial, attempt to construct a concept of 'Scandinavian-ness'; the exhibition and marketing campaigns suggested that design from these disparate countries shared common characteristics. These included a reappraisal of craftsmanship, use of natural materials, uncomplicated functionality which was ahead of its time yet still referencing a continuity with tradition or the vernacular.

Geoffrey Bawa was a key figure in Sri Lanka's post-war regeneration and connection to international currents of modern design. His internationalism was aided by a number of colleagues; one of his earliest and most influential associates, working closely with him from 1958 to 1967, was the Danish architect, Ulrik Plesner. Plesner had turned down Jorn Utzon's invitation to work with him on the Sydney Opera House project (competition chaired by Eero Saarinen). He decided instead to move to Sri Lanka to work with the architect Minette de Silva after being awarded second prize for his Saarinen-esque entry in the international architectural competition for a memorial in New Delhi to commemorate 2500 years of the foundation of Buddhism (Buddha Jayanthi) (1956). During his residence on the island, Plesner also made a significant contribution to the newly-founded (1961) School of Architecture at Katubedde – created in the same year as the Indian Institute of Design.

Plesner had been strongly influenced through his upbringing and training by key figures of Danish modern design. Studying at the Royal Danish Academy, Copenhagen (between 1950-1955), he had been taught by Kay Fisker (later working for him) and Arne Jacobsen; of perhaps greater significance, his step-father was Kaare Klint.

Klints' approach to design undoubtedly had a major influence on Plesner, which he then brought to the island. In 1924, Klint became the first lecturer in Furniture Design at the Royal Academy of Fine



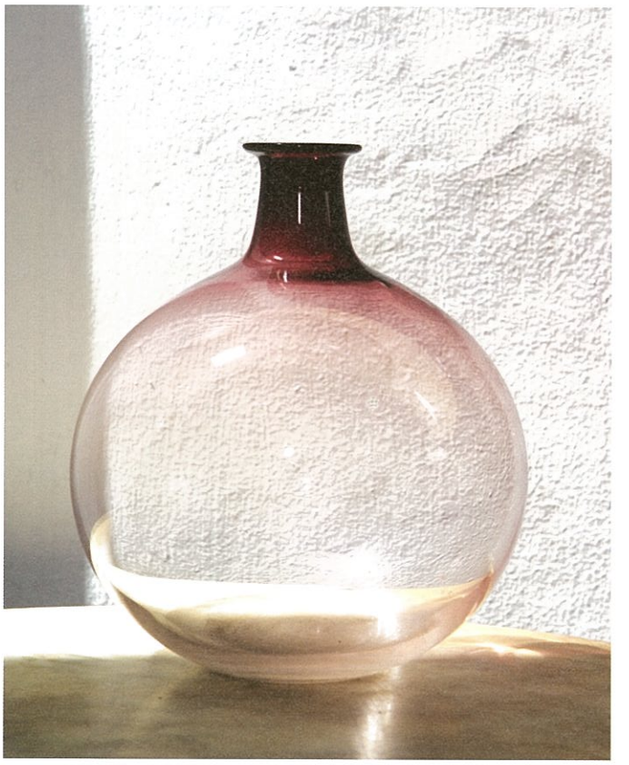
Opposite page: top, Arabia Coffee Cup, Helsinki, Finland 1967; bottom, Marimekko (designer Maija Isola 1927-2001), Cloth purse [height 10.inches], Helsinki, Finland 1967.
This page: above left, Kaija Aarikka [1929-2014] Silver necklace, Helsinki, Finland 1967; above right, Timo Sarpaneva [1926-2006], Candle stand holder (Arkipelago) [height 6 inches], Iittala, Finland 1979; below, Ulla Procopé [1921–1968], Arabia Teapot, Helsinki, Finland.
(Ismeth Raheem collection)

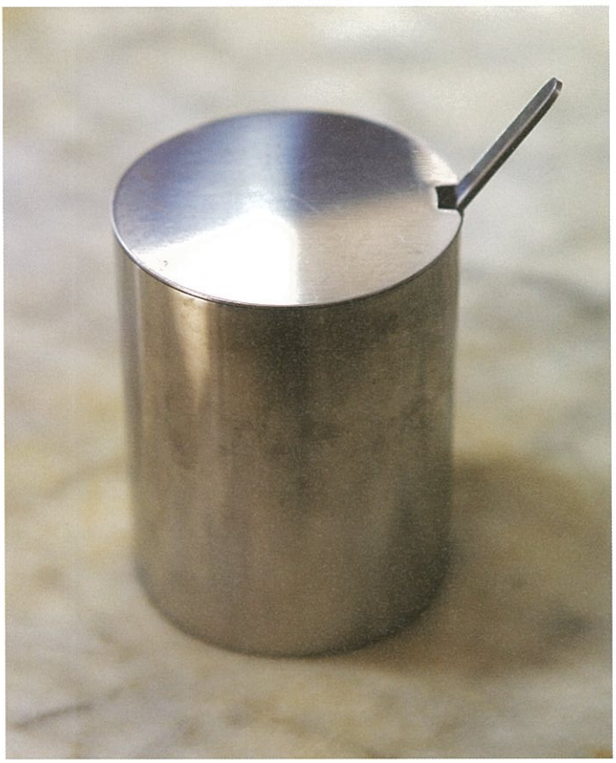
Arts, Copenhagen. Through his own practice and his teaching, he exerted a profound influence on several generations of Danish designers, including, of course, his step-son. At a time when modernism was rejecting historic models, Klint returned to the human experience of natural materials, conventional construction and object types. He found his models in a range of historic furniture, including 18th century English and Shaker furniture from the United States. These were re-worked and simplified into modern furniture that referenced the historical past. This approach to design – studying and re-working historic models in a modern idiom - was introduced to a generation of young architects and designers on the island through Plesner's working practices and his teaching. In addition, Plesner had also been exposed to another strand of Danish modern design through the teachings of Arne Jacobsen: industrial design.

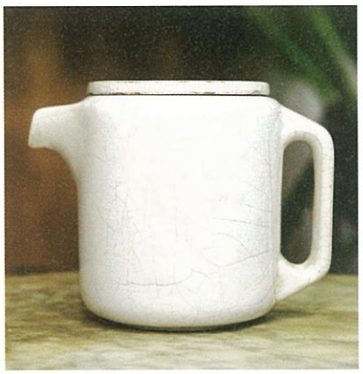
In addition to Plesner inculcating the key tenets of Scandinavian modern design into the small group of young trainee architects in Bawa's office, in 1966, following Plesner's advice and intervention, three architecture students from the island – Ismeth Raheem (b. 1941), Pheroze Choksky (b. 1942) and Anura Ratnavibushana (b. 1940) – spent three years studying in Europe; all three went on to work for Bawa as qualified architects. They gained places, through Plesner's influence and with Danish Government scholarships, at the School of Architecture, the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen (founded in 1754). Here they were taught by tutors such as Hannah and Poul Kjaerholm (1929-80) and Jorgen Bo (architect, with Wilhelm Wohlert, of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humelbaek, commenced in 1958). This educational experience had a profound influence on these young architects.

Kjaerholm had studied under Hans Wegner and Kaare Klint, as well as Jorn Utzon. He was influenced by leading international designers and architects including Ray and Charles Eames, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Gerrit Rietveld. As with the pre-war Bauhaus furniture designers, Kjaerholm insisted on simple, high quality construction in his austerely functional furniture. In addition to

Left: replica of Eero Saarinen [1910-1961], Pedestal Chair, (Knoll International, New York, 1956 to present) made for Bentota Beach Hotel, 1969. (Ismeth Raheem collection). Below left: Anura Ratnavibhushana, copper elevator door with a verdigris patina and a polished brass inlay, for Bentota Beach Hotel, design inspired by Marimekko fabrics, 1969.
Right: Mauve vase [height 9inches and diameter 7inches], Sarpaneva Studio, Helsinki, Finland 1967.
Below right: Timo Sarpaneva [1926-2006] Evening Suit, Mauve, Sarpaneva Studio for Dress Design, Helsinki, Finland, 1967. (Ismeth Raheem collection).







Far left: Arne Jacobsen [1902-1971], Silver Jam Jar and spoon [height 6.5 inches], Copenhagen, Denmark, 1968. Left: Ceramic teapot, Copenhagen Denmark (top); Ceylon Ceramics (for Serendib Hotel), 1970, Sri Lanka (bottom). Below: Kaare Klint Lamp [1888-1954], Copenhagen, Denmark. (Ismeth Raheem collection)

the teaching at the Royal Danish Academy, the Sri Lankan students were exposed to other currents of modern Scandinavian design flowing from Helsinki and Stockholm, visiting these capitals, absorbing their cultural ambience and purchasing Scandinavian modern objects such as Timo Sarpaneva-designed suits, Arne Jacobsen coffee pots and Marimekko textiles.

The impact of Scandinavian modern design is evident in work of these young Sri Lankan architects when they returned from Copenhagen and worked in Bawa's office. It can be seen in the sleek designs for cutlery, crockery and furniture for the Serendib Hotel; the Maija Isola, Marimekko-inspired copper lift doors and Le Klint-like lamps for the Bentota Beach Hotel; the lettering and type-face used in the Ceylon Pavilion at the Osaka Expo, 1970.

As Bawa's biographer David Robson suggests, Plesner brought to the island a 'commitment to pragmatic modernism, and a respect for [vernacular] craftsmanship and tradition'. It is an oversimplification to suggest that Plesner single-handedly introduced to the island the rational and humane benefits of Danish/ Scandinavian modern design. However, he was a vital and direct connection to the main tributaries of Scandinavian design. Whilst his working methods or approaches to architecture and design could be characterised as Scandinavian, they also encompassed developments of the International Modern style, including aspects of modern design from the United States. Perhaps this internationalisation of modern design and its introduction to the island is his most profound legacy in Sri Lanka. ⓓ

LEARNING FROM PLESNER

In the early 1960s, Anura Ratnavibushana was a student of Ulrik Plesner enrolled in the pioneer course in architecture at the Institute of Practical Technology in Katubedde – what is now the University of Moratuwa. Ratnavibushana later worked at Edward Reid and Begg, the architectural firm run by partners Geoffrey Bawa and Ulrik Plesner. Drawing from his many encounters working as a student and as an architect for his mentors, Ratnavibushana shares his views on how Plesner's ethos and approach to the craft and practice of architecture have irrevocably shaped his own. He speaks of values that remain embedded and relevant to this day.

Text Prasadini Nanayakkara

Ulrik Plesner, although from a European background was someone who was passionate about the best of Sri Lankan life. He dressed to suit our tropical climate; lightweight handlooms and sandals and saw in Sri Lanka the best it had to offer to the artistic world. He taught us to love our own things. I loved architecture passionately and desired to know how to become a professional architect.

Together with Geoffrey Bawa, Plesner imparted architectural design with a sense of fun. At that time, to a youngster like me everything they did was fun but with dedication and discipline. That I find is a rare combination.

My first job was with them when I was still a student, designing Hotel Taprobane. Plesner was a very good teacher in that he could illustrate what he was saying. He could draw very well, rapidly and professionally and I would watch in fascination as he drew with a T-square, scale and drawing board, using a clutch pencil.

I was among a group of very young students who learnt the importance of dimensions in architectural thinking. In designing a bar counter for instance, he would simply convey the gist of the idea and stress the importance of dimensions without which the outcome would be completely wrong. He would specify the thickness and thinness and specify finishes that would yield a beautiful result. We learnt to respect the function or purpose according to the needs of the user.

I credit Plesner for sending a fortunate few of us to Denmark using his influence with the School of Architecture in Copenhagen. We were exposed to all aspects of Scandinavian design including Porcelain ware, furniture, light fittings, Marimekko fabrics and product design.

Back at home, Plesner like Bawa, used traditional craftsmen

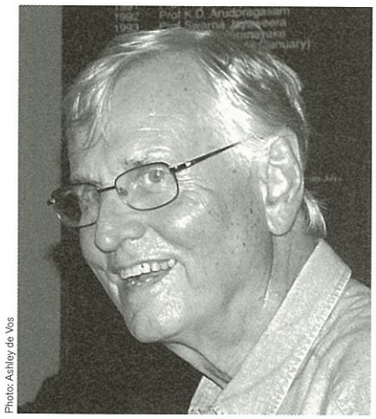


Photo: Ashley de Vos

and their skills to produce simple elegant modern designs. They commissioned the best among the craftsmen to produce work to enhance their architecture and in turn paved the way for local craftsmen to hone their skills. It instilled in us a sense that we could innovate successfully using traditional skills and materials. Perhaps this cultivated in us a love for all things in relation to design.

We became generalists of sorts, getting excited about more than just architecture. Although Bawa and Plesner experimented with modern and western approaches, they quickly realised that the truth lay in what was suited for the climate and the environment. They saw the big picture and found that the use of large roofs offered the sensible solution to monsoon rain. The lessons lay in their work. They did not pontificate.

Plesner is not someone who ever held any pretentions to theories or coveted forms over function. It was purely about solving problems and he showed young trainees the joy of addressing problems rationally and aesthetically as well. His buildings look fresh and delightful even today.

Plesner did what was sensible and it was only natural to learn what one wished from him. It was also fun watching him work and be inspired by his love for learning from Sri Lanka's past architectural heritage; thus, solving design problems in a modern way with locally available materials. Till then so much of ancient knowledge had been relegated to archaeological books. Old buildings had been recorded before by notable historians, but here was an instance where the old was used as the base on which we could build to suit contemporary needs. His example made us understand that this was a sensible approach.

Consequently, Plesner's contribution to modernity in Sri Lankan architecture is immense. The use of aluminium adjustable louvre sets for window shutters, while replacing the glass blades with aluminium sheets, produced a simple and effective solution for privacy with ventilation in his own flat in Colombo.

In the 1960s aluminum was a new material and it remains a viable solution that I continue to use to this day in my own urban dwelling. Another of his innovations is the cantilevered concrete slab for projected out window sills in bedrooms. They protruded about eighteen inches above the room and would be enclosed in timber trellis. Plesner and Bawa both used this artifice. You could use that space as a day bed, or as a surface for keeping useful objects.

To me, the era of Bawa and Plesner was much like Ravi Shankar's sitar with Alla Rakha's tabla creating coordinated, beautiful raga music. They were two individuals who enjoyed one another's company and complemented each other. Their works and their approach to design gave us courage to explore and enjoy our work thoughtfully. It is a reminder that, despite a frenetic quest to innovate, and to be novel there still lies the need to be inspired by lessons from our heritage again. ⓓ

Opposite page: top, Jorgen Boglov Jensen (far left), Anura Ratnavibushana and Ismeth Raheem (centre) and Vasantha Chandraratne (far right) [source: Anura Ratnavibhushana, 'Creating Simplicity', Vijitha Yapa Publications, 2009]; inset: Ulrik Plesner on his visit to Sri Lanka in 2008; This page: right, Ulrik Plesner and Anura and Sundarika Ratnavibushana, [source: Anura Ratnavibhushana, 'Creating Simplicity', Vijitha Yapa Publications, 2009]; below, Ulrik Plesner at Edwards, Reid & Begg office in Colombo, in the 1960s.

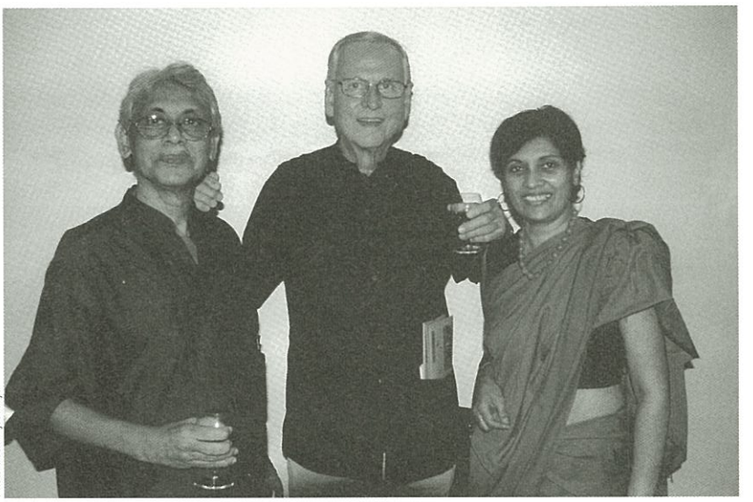
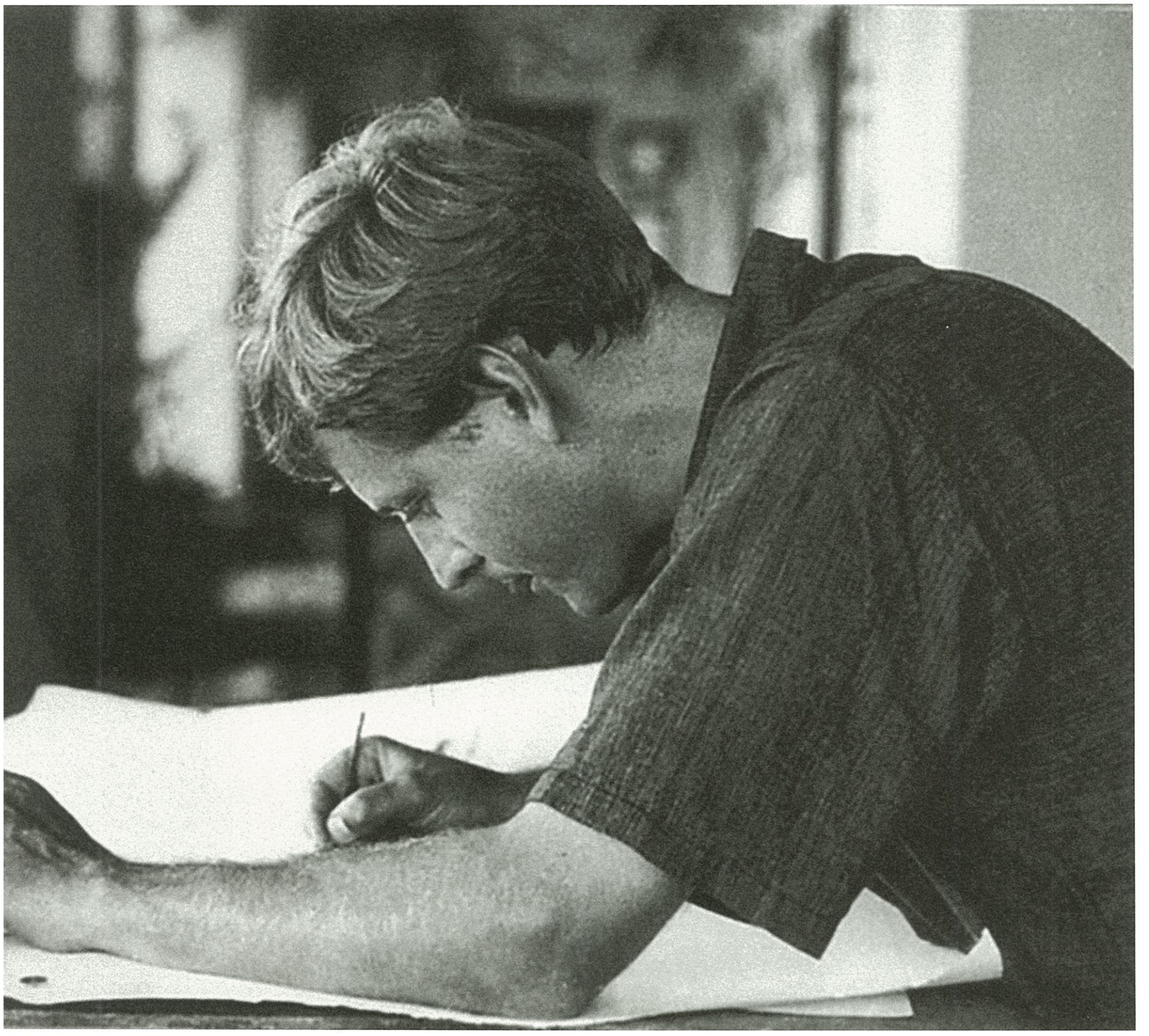
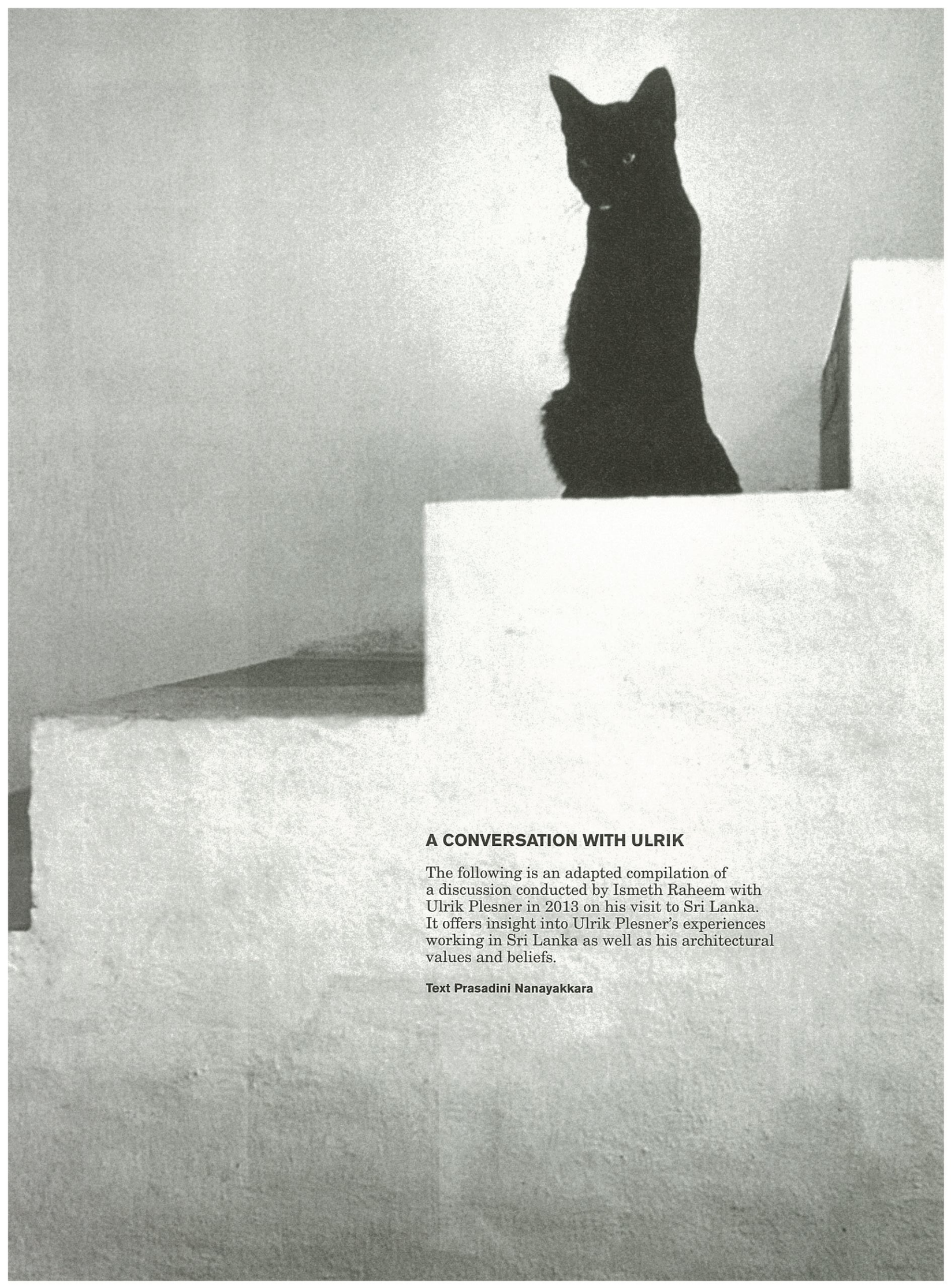


Photo: Iresh Wijesooriya

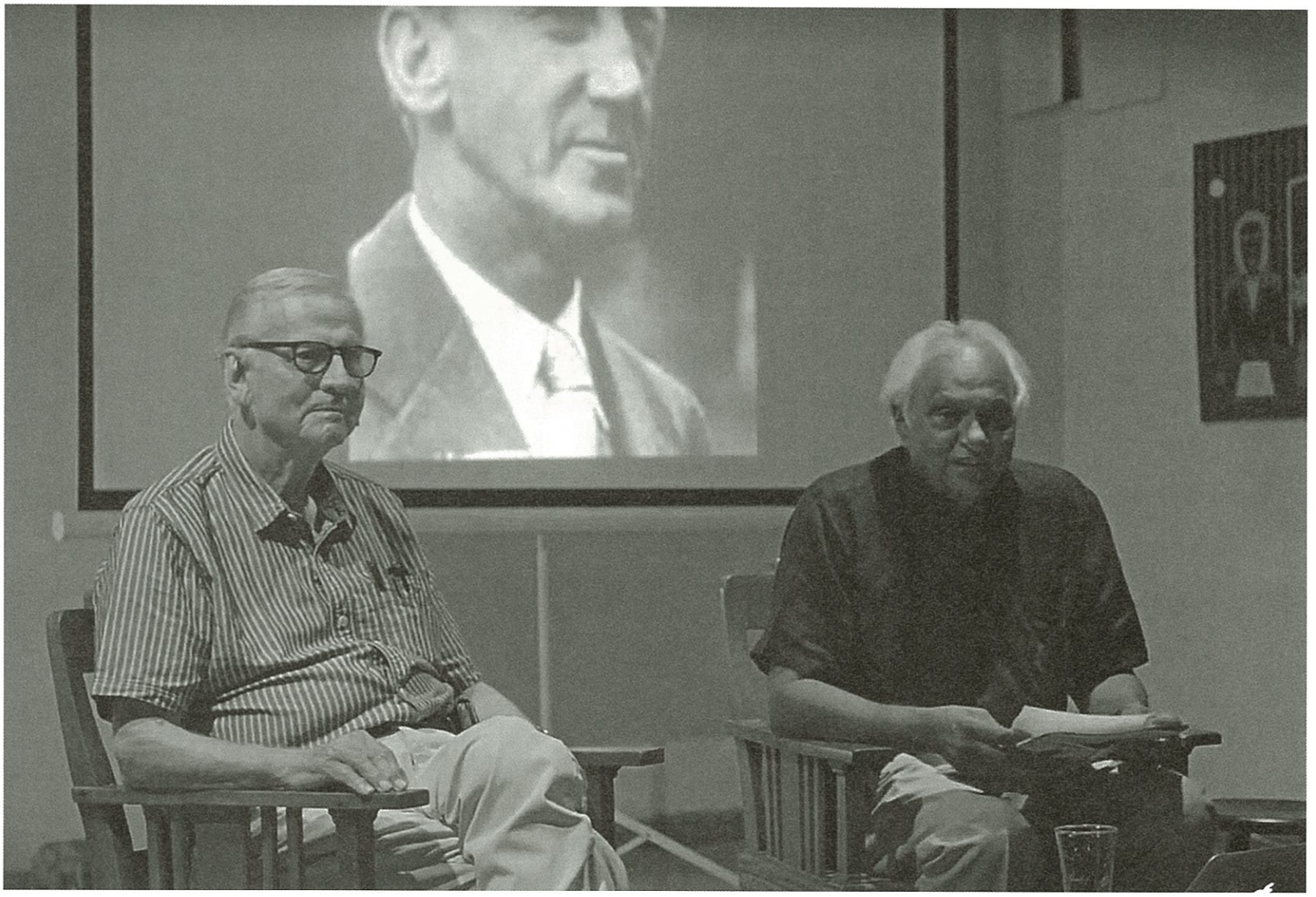




A CONVERSATION WITH ULRIK

The following is an adapted compilation of a discussion conducted by Ismeth Raheem with Ulrik Plesner in 2013 on his visit to Sri Lanka. It offers insight into Ulrik Plesner's experiences working in Sri Lanka as well as his architectural values and beliefs.

Text Prasadini Nanayakkara



Opening page: Ulrik Plesner at the Alfred House Road office in Sri Lanka. This page, above: Ulrik Plesner (left) and Ismeth Raheem (right) during the discussion held in 2013 in Sri Lanka

Q: Could you tell us about your childhood and why you wanted to become and architect?

A: I have no complaints about my childhood. I come from a family of architects. My grandfather's brother was a well-known architect at the turn of the century. The sort of architecture was national romantic, returning to the roots kind. After my father died, my mother married Kaare Klint who was quite an important architect in Denmark..

We travelled to Italy often where I associated with Roman Catholic priests who were architects and I studied about what was important in a building. My mother was Scottish and I learned about English and Scottish country houses and castles through my grandparents who lived in a country house. I grew up in this culture of fabulous homes and learnt that what matters in a building is how it relates to people – not shapes, not sensations but the human content of a building.

Q: During your education at the Royal Danish Academy in Copenhagen from 49-55, it was compulsory for architecture students to undergo site work in one of the building trades; bricklaying, carpentry or plumbing. What was the importance of this?

A: Architecture grows out of the building craft. To be an architect you have to know how to be a carpenter, how to do window details, how to make a roof that doesn't leak, how to do brickwork and stonework, about the problems of foundations, installations and electricity.

Architecture schools in most places today are so concerned with images and icons that architects forget the context, and design buildings, which don't work. They give themselves a bad name and they give the profession a bad name.

Q: Can you explain why you are critical of some of the most iconic architectural work that you have personally experienced as well, such as the Sydney Opera House, Le Corbusier's work in Chandigar and Louis Kahn's engineering faculty in Tel Aviv?

A: They are all great artists but they have completely lost touch with the reality of giving life to a building. It is the human demand that gives life to a building that makes it a home, a museum or school. That's what matters.

Each of these icon buildings is a terrible example of its kind. We saw the disaster that Corbusier created in Chandigarh in terms of not relating to the climate, the people and the way of life and traditions there. Luis Kahn's engineering faculty in Tel Aviv, was another where the people despised it because there were concrete walls in front of the building. It blocked the view and free ventilation.

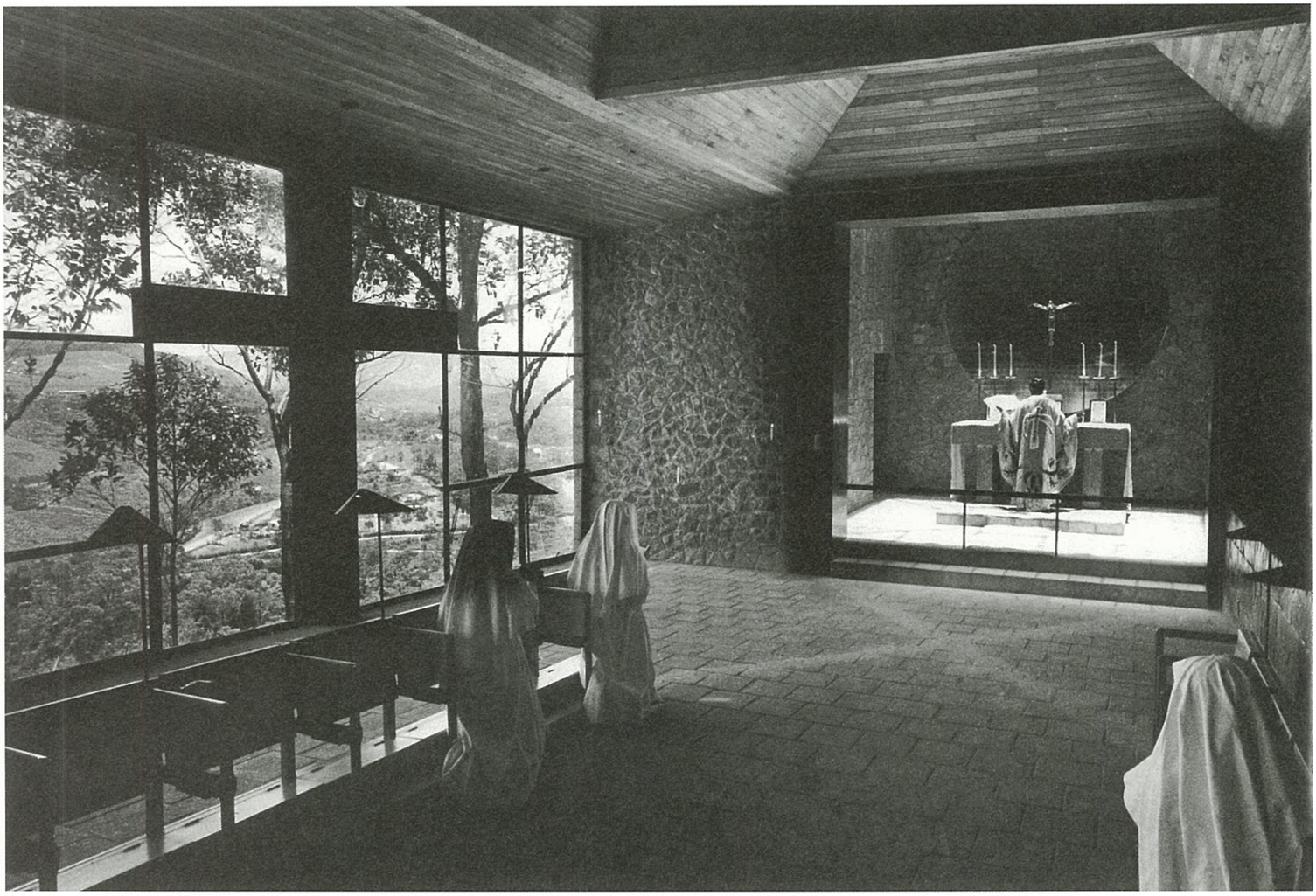
Guggenheim Museum in New York is a bad one as well, because of its style that goes around. Guggenheim in Bilbao is also not a very good museum. All these buildings have a great price for the people who use them, live in them and pay for them.

Today's architects are driven by publicity all over Asia in particular in China, where they construct buildings that are of completely weird shapes. They have nothing to do with the life that goes on inside of them.

Q: The site bungalow in Anuradhapura was where you seem to have enunciated your first breakthrough. Can you explain this?

A: This was the first house that we did after that. When we returned from Chandigarh we felt something was wrong. Then we did this little house in Anuradhapura with a large roof and then we saw that the roof was the answer – the key to everything. After that we felt we were fine.

Q: Minette De Silva was Asia's first woman architect, what are your thoughts?



A: I want to add a good word about Minette De Silva. She got in touch with me through a mutual friend. She asked to meet with me as she had seen a Buddha statue I had done for an international competition. The foremost American architecture photographer Kidder Smith informed me that she was the only progressive architect in Asia and I came here and found out that that was true. All other architects in Asia had a damp cloth all over their architecture. It was all about the British empire, much like the town hall here. It was the same story in Singapore and Hong Kong with British Public works department type buildings.

Q: You belong to the blueprint generation of the T square and drawing board. You are probably the last of the renaissance architects using these instruments. Do you still use them?

A: Yes. Everyone is amazed when they see that. The fact is many architecture schools in Europe now don't allow the use of computers during the first years of study. Computers demand artificial precision down to millimeters, even at the early conceptual stages. You cannot think conceptually with that much precision. It's preventive of creative thinking.

Geoffrey Bawa, was a superior and intelligent man. Like everyone else, I liked him enormously. However, he had an incredibly pampered childhood and grew up not being able to pick up a piece of paper off the floor. I say this not negatively but this was a syndrome that existed 50-60 years past. As a result he could not handle the instruments of architecture. I felt I had a musician, a Beethovan who couldn't play the instrument. I decided to teach him and put him through architecture school for two to three years. From that point on our friendship strengthened and became very effective. We were interchangeable.

Q: In the Bandarawela Church that you did, was there any Nordic Scandinavian influence?

A: I couldn't tell you. At the time I thought it was a Ceylonese church; a small one but not Colonial style, where daylight was used as a spiritual element. Daylight came from the glass tower down on to the altar. The only other light was through a very low north lit window overlooking the valley and the three big crucifixes. I am not a Christian, I denounced my religion many years ago. I denounce most religions, but this was done for such a wonderful woman who was the Mother Provincial. She was a very good friend of Barbara Sansoni. We did this church together, myself, Barbara Sansoni, Geoffrey Bawa and Laki Senanayake. Back then it was called the Gesamtkunstwerk – a united work of art.

Above: The Chapel of the Good Shepherd Convent in Bandarawela. Behind the altar is a large symbol of the universe in gold leaf with a silver crucifix in the centre. A north lit window affords distant views of mountains.

Q: Can you talk about the era of documenting the 16th-19th Century old buildings?

A: That was a very exciting time. There was a whole group of talented architects and artists; Geoffrey, Barbara Sansoni, Laki Senanayake, Ismeth Raheem, Pheroze Choksy and myself. We were an enthusiastic group of people. The only difference with me was that I had a professional background that was of help sometimes.

We found all the beautiful old buildings that nobody cared about. In particular I recall a temple in Padeniya. The priest said he wanted to pull it down, as it was not in a very good condition. He wanted to have vinyl floors, American roofs and so on. Barbara gave him a long lecture on his responsibility to his culture and Laki lectured him on Buddhism. The poor man was overwhelmed.

Next week we returned to measure it and all this work eventually culminated in Barbara's

book, Architecture of an Island, which took many years to publish.

Q: The Colonial period easy chair is something that has been in Sri Lanka for 150 years. These chairs are with arms. Looking at Luis Barragan's chair that is without arms and seeing that a similar design can be found in Bentota Beach Hotel can you say anything of the influence of Barragan's work?

A: I don't remember Geoffrey ever talking about Luis Barragan. The truth is we were not at all academic. We were not interested in what was going on in the rest of the world. We were so involved with what was going on around us here and enjoying ourselves working with our friends and clients.

There were so many amusing clients such as N U Jayawardena, Ena De Silva, and Barbara Sansoni. Sri Lanka had a completely zany middle class at the time, which was absolutely wonderful. We became a part of that with very little thought to what was going on outside of that.

Q: You have worked with Australian artist Donald Friend and held exhibitions for him. You also challenged him to work with an everyday material like Aluminium instead of gold. He was also an excellent draftsman, which is a huge leap from painting. What are your thoughts on him?

A: I loved his work. I loved both his aluminium sculptures as well as his paintings. Everything he created was done with such commitment. For instance, he once saw some fishermen in Beruwela and he was drawn by their way of life, their movements and their boats. He was a great man, he drank a lot and loved a lot and made good friends. Artists like Laki Senanayake found themselves through his work. He gave as much as he received and that's saying a lot. Many people only take and don't give back.

Q: Could you tell us about the Mahaweli Project that you were involved in?

A: It's a sad story. I returned to Sri Lanka in the 80s and met Minister Gamini Dissanayake. They had already started with the project, which was a great and wonderful thing. We set up office in Kandy with 75 people – a whole department by itself responsible directly to the Minister.

He was very interested and we began planning and building six or seven towns – Welikanda, Dahiattakandiya, Girandurukotte and several others. Then, Gamini Dissanayake was assassinated.

Above: Ulrik Plesner's corner at the Alfred House office in Colombo; bottom: Ismeth Raheem with his mentor Ulrik Plesner, 2008.

The project was a huge machine involving a large amount of wealth. All the energy to the project came from him. From my point of view the minute he was gone it petered out. As far as I can see most of the paddy fields are there but the towns never came up. Then the civil war ruined it as well since middle class people wouldn't go and live in any of these new towns. I don't even know where it stands today but I spent seven years of my life there. ⓓ

Photo: Dominic Sansoni

PROJECT

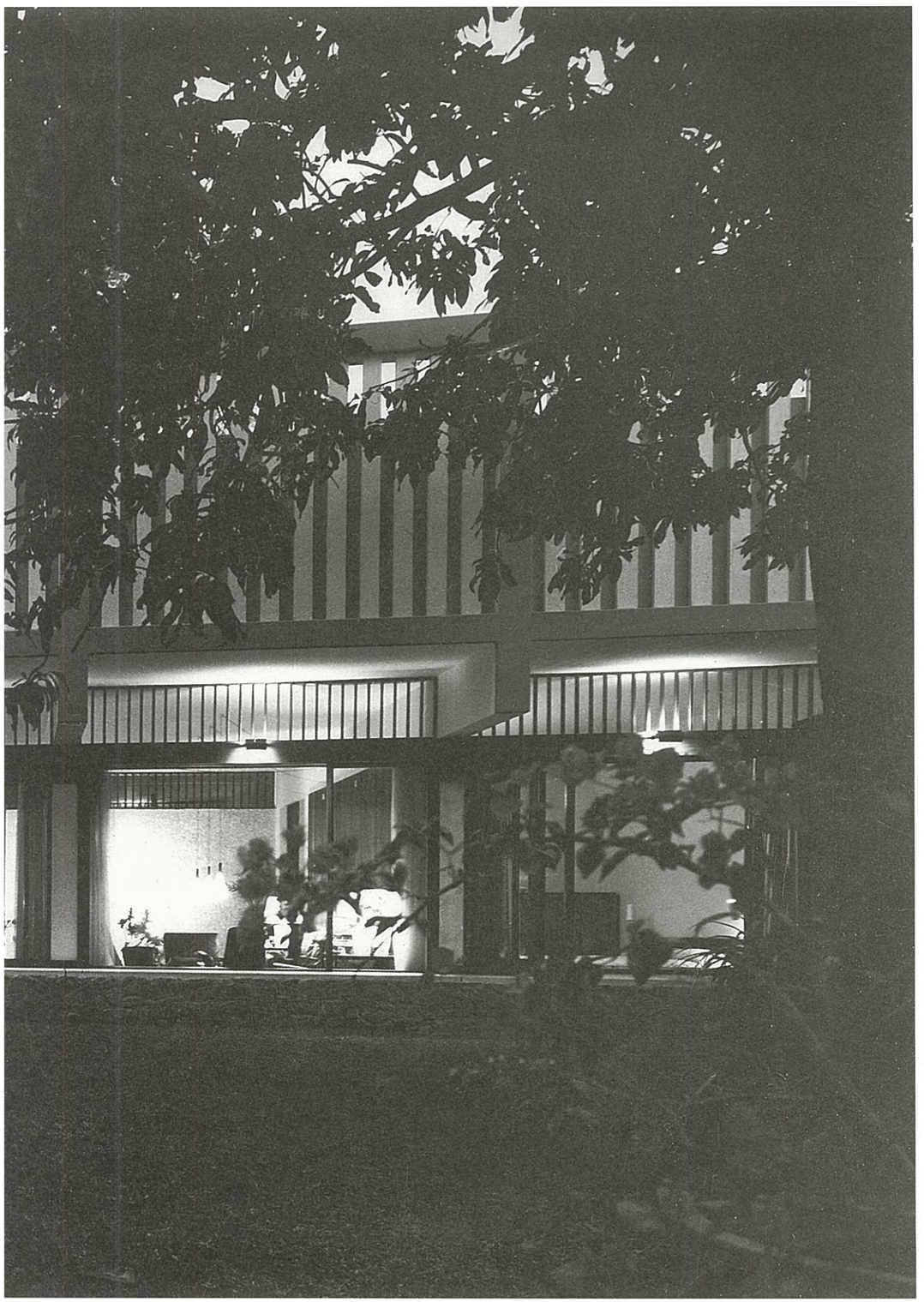
Ulrik's work in Sri Lanka

THREE DIFFERENT SIDES OF AN ARCHITECT

Ulrik Plesner's architectural work in Sri Lanka was not only about the vernacular. He did not hesitate to use new methods or introduce novel concepts to design that represented his freedom of thought. Each building was different from the next and his speciality was not restricted to a certain type of building. Ulrik Plesner gives his personal insights (November, 2015) to Domus Sri Lanka on three projects that are very different to each other.

Text Udeshi Amarasinghe

Opening page: Ekala Industrial Park 1960, the first of its kind in Sri Lanka. These pages: the house for N U Jayawardena



N U JAYAWARDENA HOUSE

The client was very progressive and tough. He wanted a house that was the "best from the West". Being the only European architect in Sri Lanka at that time. It was Plesner that fulfilled the role of architect. "He was a highly intelligent and amusing man, and we found agreement in almost everything, " says Plesner about N U Jayawardena who was the client.

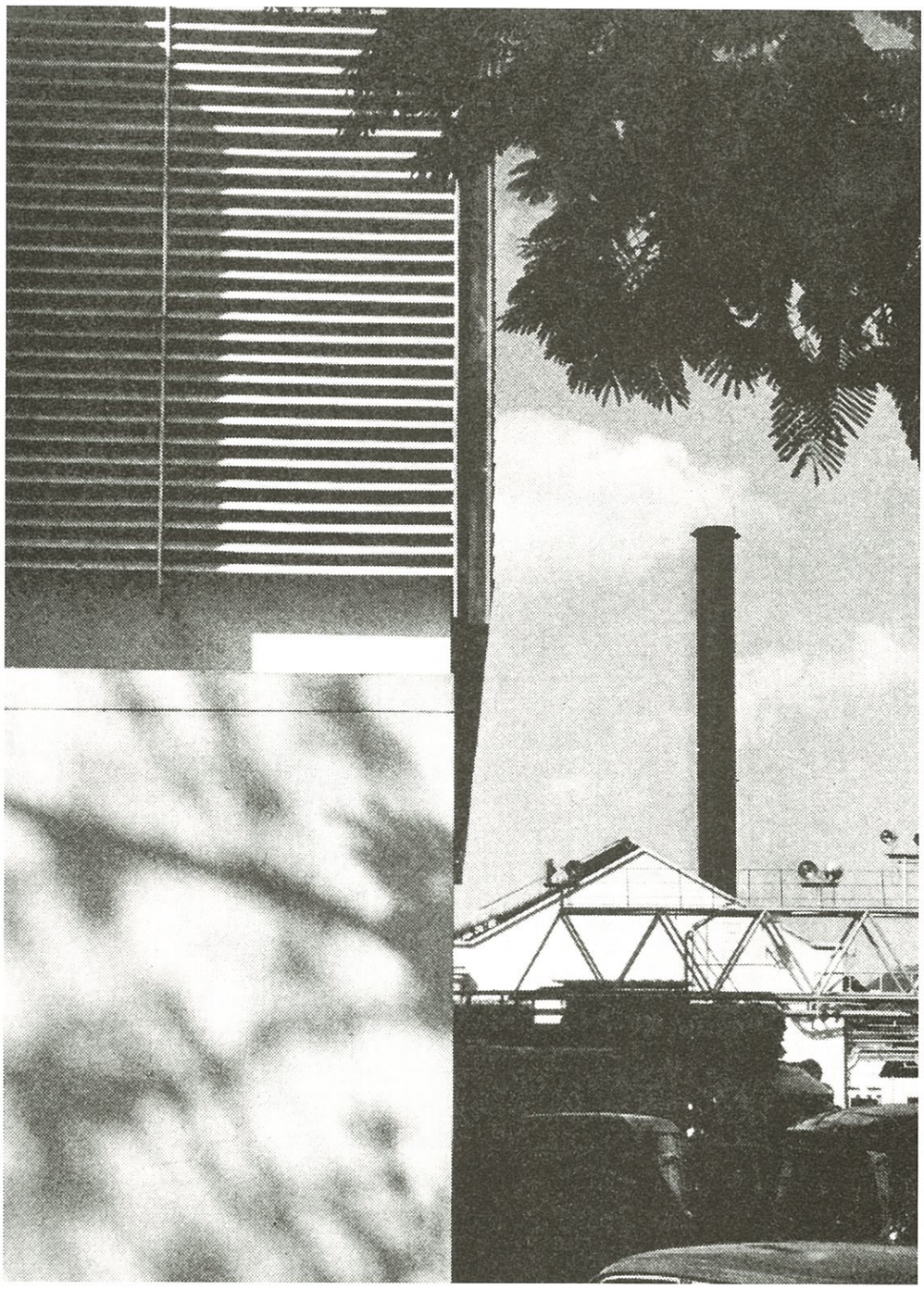
This house also gave Plesner the opportunity to bring modern architecture to Sri Lanka. "I wanted to take advantage of modern engineering and construction systems and the client agreed enthusiastically to import expensive materials and systems, like sliding door gears," he explained. The house was to be made using reinforced concrete, situ reinforced concrete and precast concrete.

Plesner used a logical pattern that was required for small plots of land, this was about 40 perches. "I spent an enormous amount of time on the drawings of this building, which was very modern for Ceylon." The house was built from one side boundary to the other, very close to the street with a large garden at the back. The large living room, dining room, study, a room for receiving visitors, two kitchens and staff quarters were on the ground floor. The two large bedrooms were upstairs with two grass covered roof terraces that provided ventilation. Plesner explained this further, "the roof was flat and water proofed and almost 30 cm of good gardening earth was put on the roof, so that it became a garden for the rooms upstairs. We furnished the house together including all small details."

The house stands technically perfect to this date and well-maintained. "Visiting 50 years later I was glad to find that the roof didn't leak and all the furniture was exactly in the same place including the shrine room", says Plesner.

"The spirit, function and materials used to build the house did not compromise Ceylonese traditions or conventions but the extensive use of precast concrete elements for walls and roofs, gave it a very "modern" look, which we were all proud of".

This page: top and bottom, the Unilever Headquarters in Colombo 1959-1960. Opposite page: top and centre, different perspectives of the Ekala Industrial Park, 1960; bottom, the industrial park 20 years later.



UNILEVER HEADQUARTERS

"Soap is a good business in Sri Lanka. Everybody seems to be standing in a river or a lake washing themselves and their cloths, until the rain comes, then the people stay home and the crocodiles stay in the river," says Plesner reflecting on some of his early experiences in Sri Lanka.

The Unilever warehouse and office on Grandpass Road had been soaked by rain and on one day it received 100 mm per hour of rain. The store was ruined causing great damaged to their records and files. After the survey the company decided to build new headquarters.

"Asking around the old established British firms they found that Edwards Reid and Begg, the firm that had just hired me, was the only established European architectural firm, so we got the job to build the new headquarters that would serve as offices and stores for the organisation. This was in 1959-60," explained Plesner.

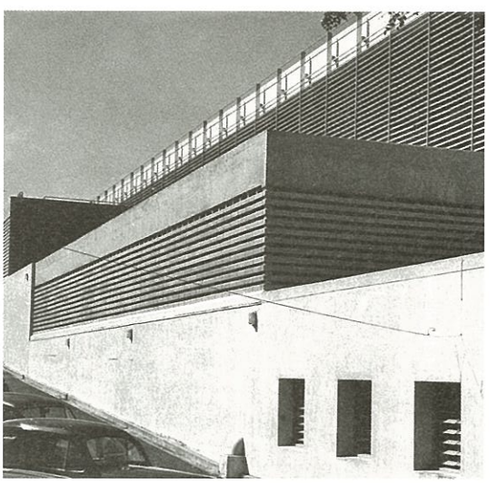
"This was the turning point where I became a partner at the architectural firm and Geoffrey Bawa and I decided that we want to work together. Nilgiria, the boss of the firm, agreed."

The project was a challenge as the client insisted that they needed the building in two months. "I nearly resigned, because such a project normally takes about a year. Nilgiria thought his charm would prevail, and took the job appointing me and Geoffrey as job architects." He further explained, "the principle of the plan became a large tall ground floor with plenty of rooms for stores and easy ground floor access for receiving and sending goods. On top there was the flat roof, terrace and offices for hundreds of workers and the management. The external walls of the stores had to let in light and air but no rain could come in even when it was horizontal." The facade cover of the building consisted of large galvanised louvres, which would give permanent shade to the galvanised windows. An approach that was very forward for its time the building had a 'metal shading system', which was fabricated with the windows by Hope Window in England.

This kept the light out and the employees had to work in electric light all day. "But the company was satisfied. It was an improvement from what they were used to."

The office floor above the stores had window walls of all-glass protected externally by fixed aluminum louvers so that you could work all day in natural day light protected by constant shade from sun light. The louvres were in fact large metal venetian blinds set on the outside.

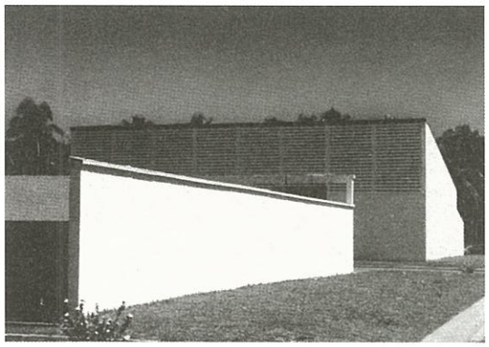
"While waiting for the louvres, we received a telegraph from the fabricating company that the ship with windows and louvres had exploded in Tangier Harbour and had sunk. There was no reason given except that the insurance would pay for new production, which would take four more months. We were off the hook and started again. Three months later another telegram came saying that the next ship had hit a rock in the Red Sea and the windows would be delayed another seven months. Changing the design saved us. The building was finished and I was very happy with it, though few said it was very modern".



EKALA INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

"I think this is one of the happiest and most satisfactory jobs I was ever part of," says Plesner about the Ekala Industrial Estate.

The purpose of this project was to provide efficient production spaces for small industries in order to help and encourage them. It was funded by an international aid agency and was an inspiration for the architects. The Ekala Industrial Estate was the first industrial estate in Sri Lanka. "Unlike most foreign aid projects this was managed by an engineer called Sterling St John, who was committed to the idea of helping others, as opposed to many foreign aid projects which were busy taking care of themselves," says Plesner.

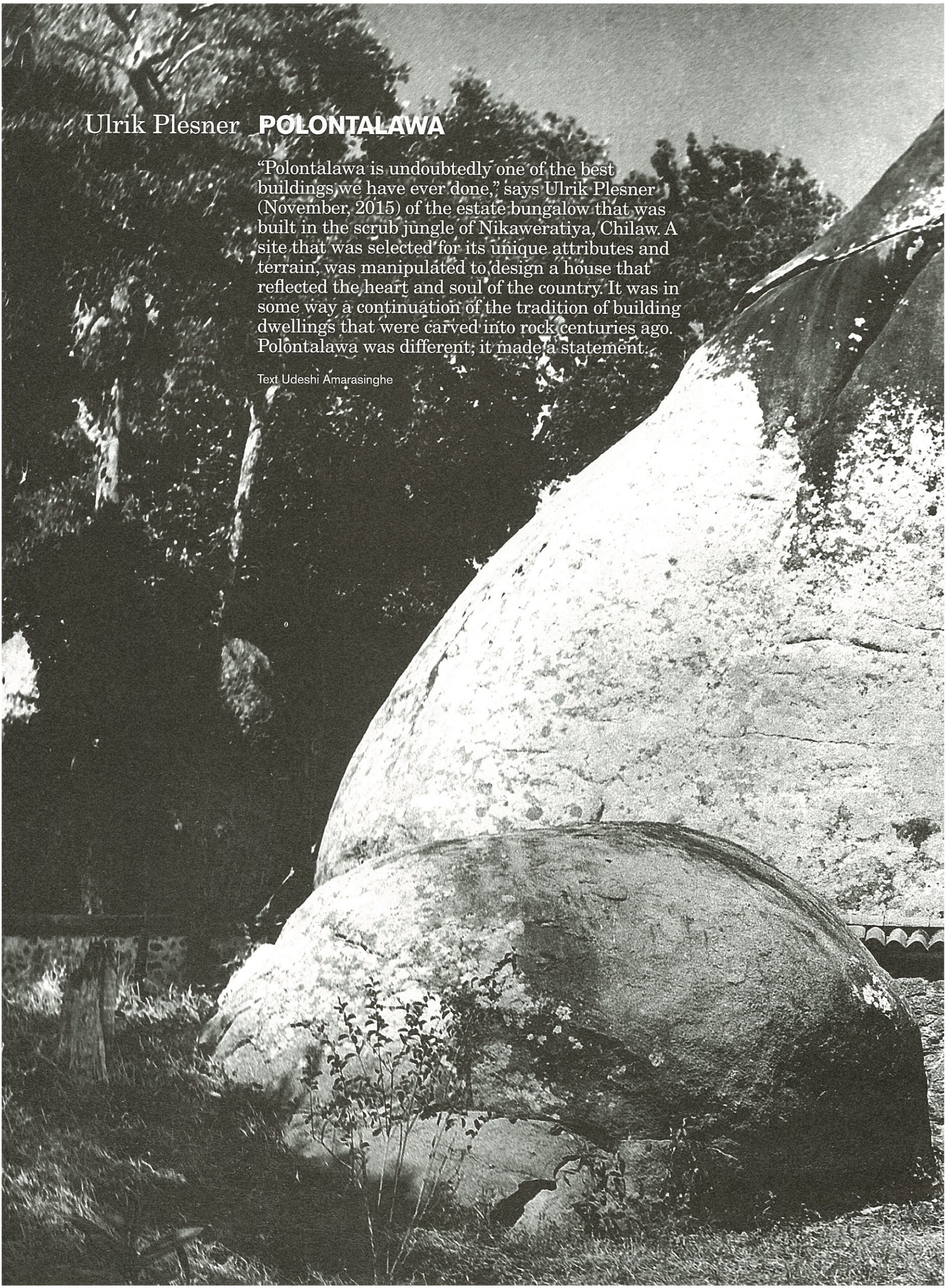


The main challenge was that the site was a location out of Colombo and it was very difficult to find a local authority to obtain permission.

"With Sterling St. John, it was a daily research job to find how things worked in the different divisions of production factories, how much storage they needed, creating efficient loading and unloading areas. We did a complete work analysis, which these entrepreneurs had never experienced before." Twenty small industry factories, with good daylight and natural ventilation were designed. 'The buildings were large cube-like structures of white-painted brickwork with no projecting eaves.' Each factory had an enclosed yard and a functioning wall for water. The buildings did not however provide shade or protection against rain.

"Over the next years a great number of suitcases were made, and radios assembled. Since then the industries grew and thrived, manufacturing and assembling products for European and American companies. The good working conditions created a productive atmosphere that expanded with time."

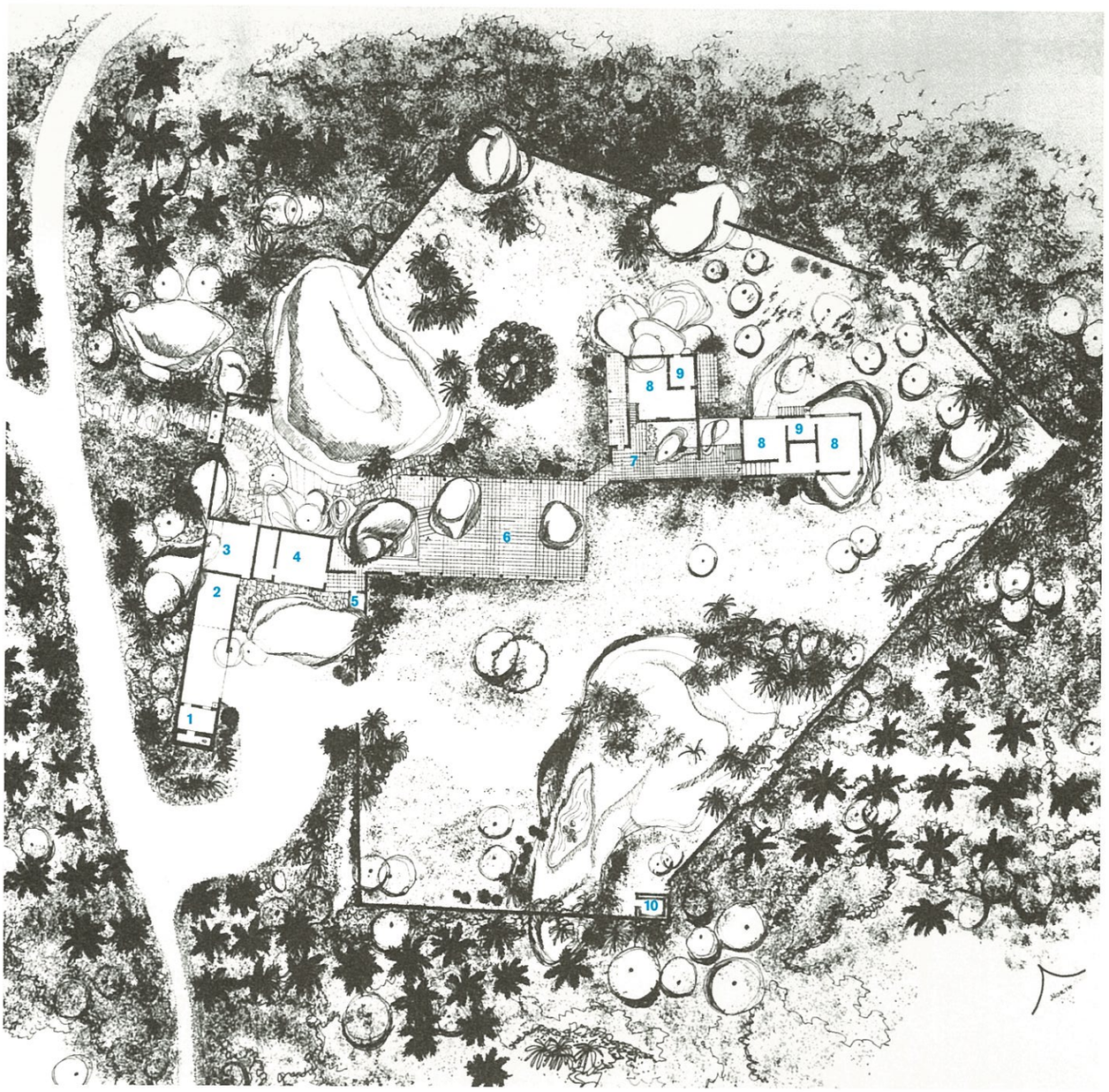
These three projects that Ulrik Plesner designed in Sri Lanka reflect his versatility and modernist approach. His architectural portfolio is diverse ranging from residences to industrial parks. His influence on Sri Lankan architecture is very much visible even today. ⓓ



Ulrik Plesner **POLONTALAWA**

"Polontalawa is undoubtedly one of the best buildings we have ever done," says Ulrik Plesner (November, 2015) of the estate bungalow that was built in the scrub jungle of Nikaweratiya, Chilaw. A site that was selected for its unique attributes and terrain, was manipulated to design a house that reflected the heart and soul of the country. It was in some way a continuation of the tradition of building dwellings that were carved into rock centuries ago. Polontalawa was different; it made a statement.

Text Udeshi Amarasinghe



1. Room for domestic help and water tower
2. Service yard
3. Estate office
4. Kitchen
5. Toilet
6. Large open living space
7. Lounge
8-9. Bedrooms and bathrooms
10. Power plant

Page 24-25: the entrance to the house in Polontalawa. This page: above, site plan of Polontalawa house. Opposite page: top, the house among the rocks; bottom, arrival to the house. At left the entrance lych-gate in the middle of the estate office and to the right the water tower.

The brief from the client was to build a safe and strong house for the manager of the thousand acre coconut plantation. A land area with large round 'orange-coloured rocks, with pre-historic cleavage marks', was selected as the ideal location for the residence. Since this was the first proper building that was to be constructed on the plantation land that was being cleared of jungle, Plesner did not have to think about boundaries or take into account the usual considerations when designing a property. The entire land was essentially his canvas. The manager's house had to be extraordinary befitting such a unique location.

The plan of the land was sketched by Plesner himself as it was not possible to do a surveyors plan due to the rock outcrops and scrub jungle. He used alternative and somewhat creative methods to obtain the measurements that were interestingly accurate. The construction of the work was done by the village masons and carpenters, while the drainage and electricity were outsourced to experts. The house was designed as four interconnected buildings where some were on rocks and the others facing the rocks. A stonewall enclosed the one-acre natural rock-garden with beautiful trees, where the main house was located. The entrance to the property was a 'roofed lych-gate with a long low wall at the foot of the tall rocks and ended in a tall stone water tower.'

The centre of the house was the living room open on all sides with beautiful views of the garden and the rugged terrain. The rooms were placed together with 'trellis window and locked entrance.'

Photo: Per Nagel 'Living architecture'

This page: top and bottom, the living room looking towards the entrance between the rocks. Opposite page: top, the roof of the living room; bottom, different views of the living room showing the opennes and surroundings of the property.

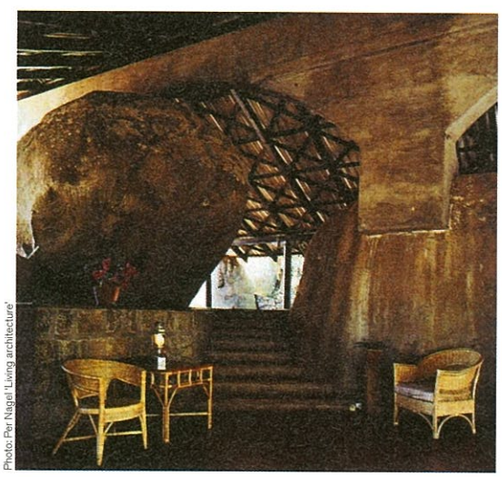
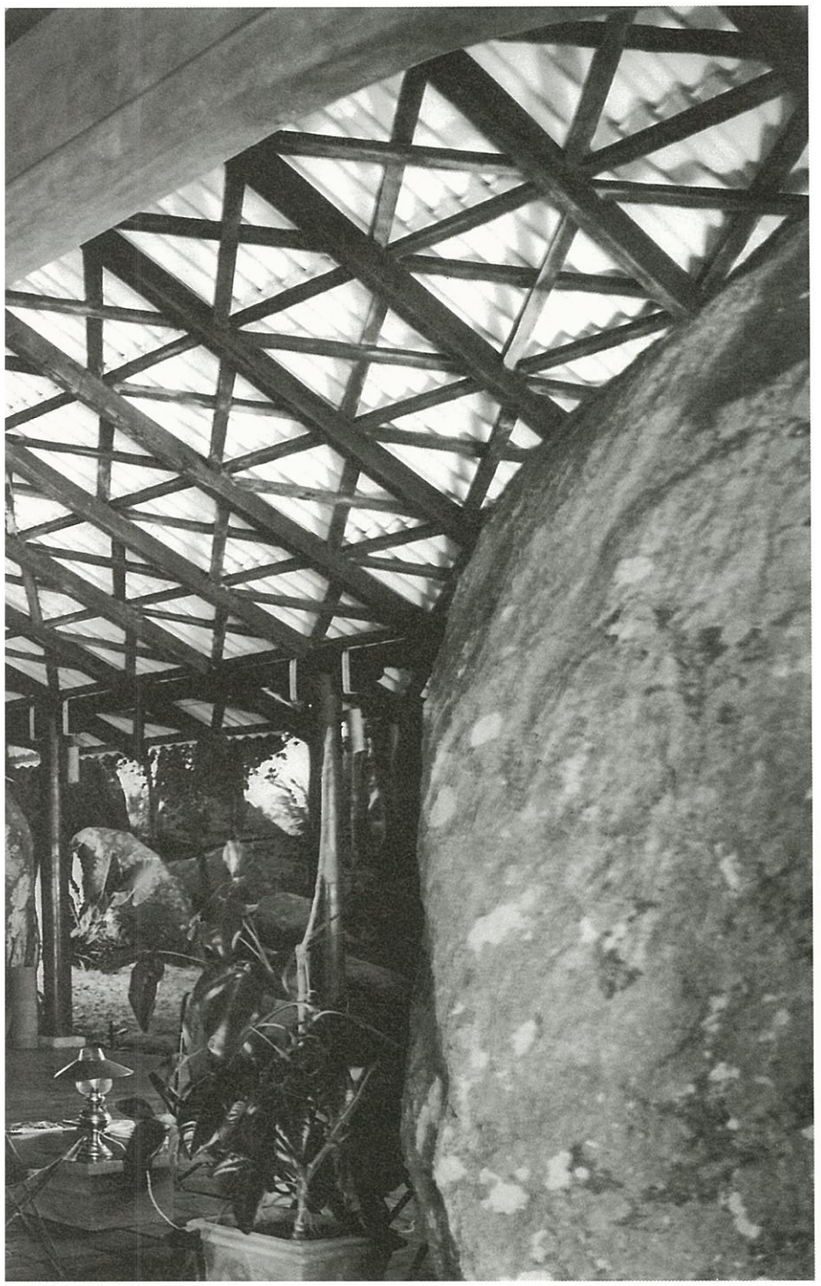


Photo: Per Nagel 'Living architecture'

The entire design of the house was first spread out on the land using white string and long white bamboo rods that defined the walls, the ridges and the roof of the building. "The Swiss manager of the property had a leopard kitten that used to play with the white string as the worker's laid it out." This string maze was there for an year. There were three large rocks in the centre on which the main beam of the roof was to rest. These were not aligned, as such a Geoffrey Bawa – Plesner's partner – instructed for five one inch holes to be drilled into the side of the centre rock to form an arched beam that has held the roof to date.

There were no strict plans, time-frame or budget for the bungalow to be built. The building grew with Plesner and Bawa's



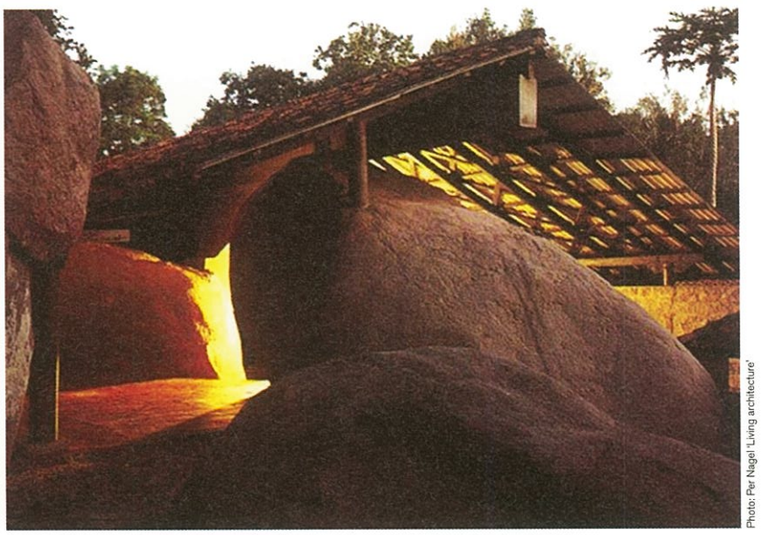


Photo: Per Nagel 'Living architecture'

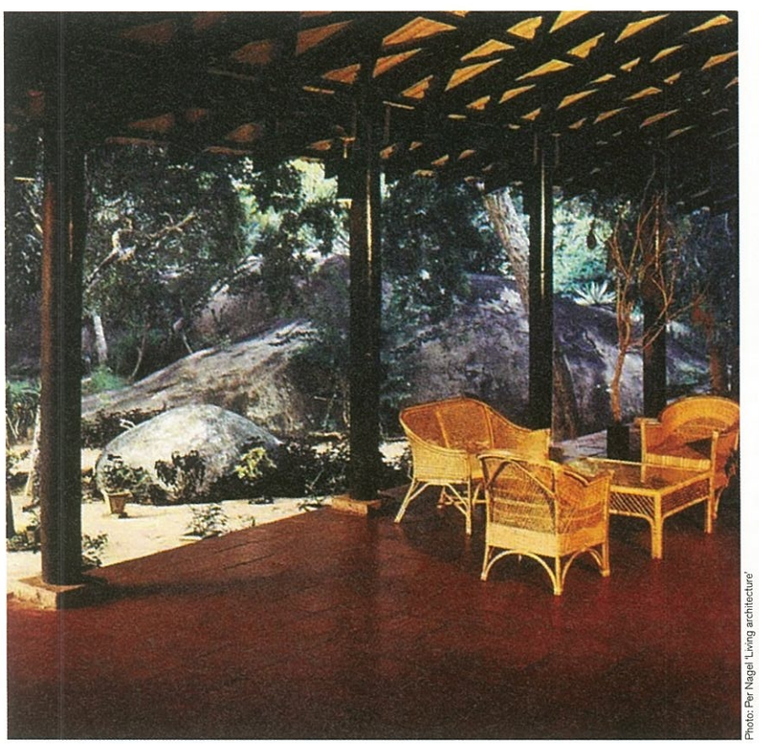


Photo: Per Nagel 'Living architecture'

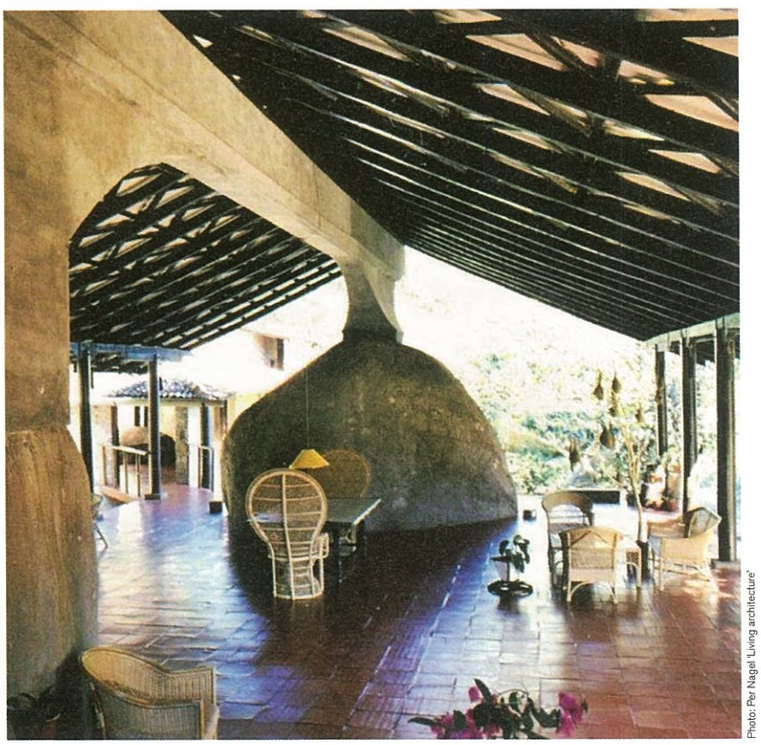


Photo: Per Nagel 'Living architecture'

This page: top, the bedrooms as seen from the garden. Opposite page: top, the natural environment was kept as it is with rocks and trees; bottom, the living room.

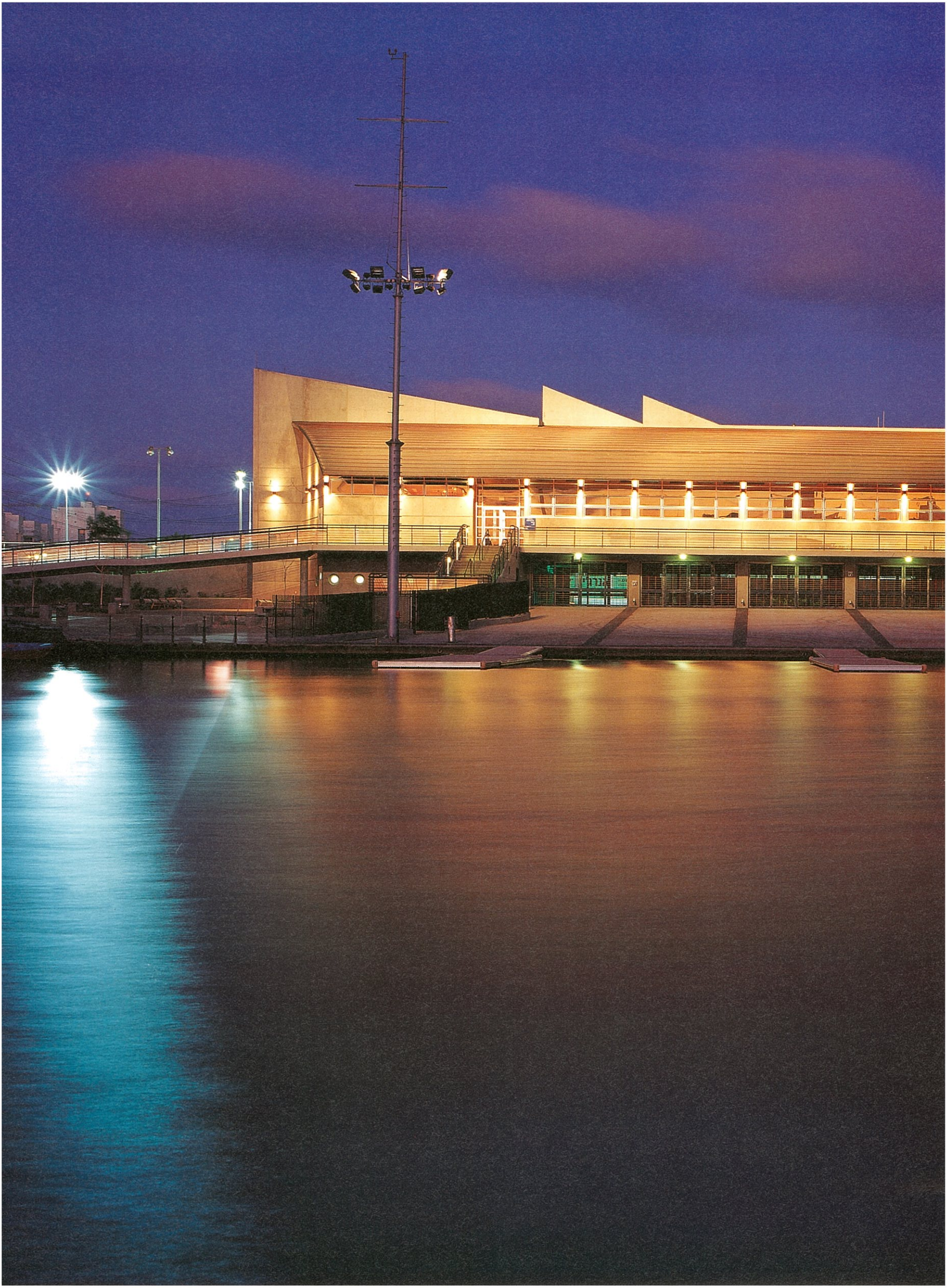
each visit. The bungalow was constructed using local material except for cement, roofing material, electrical wires and pipes. The workforce was from the village as well. Timber was from the jungle and, the clay tiles for the floor was manufactured in a local wood fired village kiln close to the plantation.

There were no walls in the main room, where the massive roof was held by the concrete arched beam and polished coconut columns. The roof was of corrugated sheets covered with half round country tiles. The natural trees were kept, while the scrub jungle was removed and the ground was covered with gravel. Only the bedrooms had doors and the massive wall surrounding the property provided the security for this residential space.

The house provided an experience from the time a person entered through the lych gate. One would have to walk past rocks, a jungle garden and cross a small bridge to arrive at the rooms.

Polontalawa could be considered as one of the last buildings of a generation that espoused a sense of freedom and creativity that was reflected in their designs. The natural environment was maintained and respected. The features of the site became part of the design. Nothing was altered to accommodate a built structure.

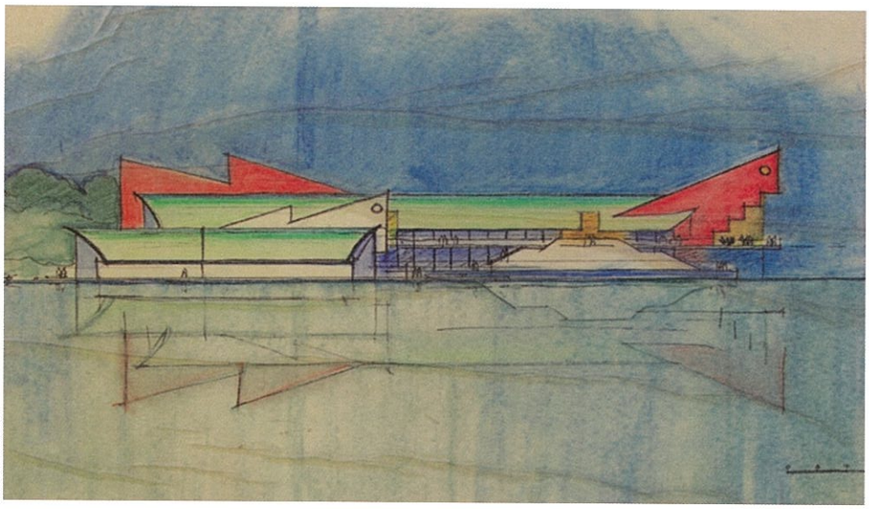
In Polontalawa, Ulrik Plesner showed a path that was less stringent that gave space for an architect to be creative while being innovative where the final end-product was a building that was timeless. d



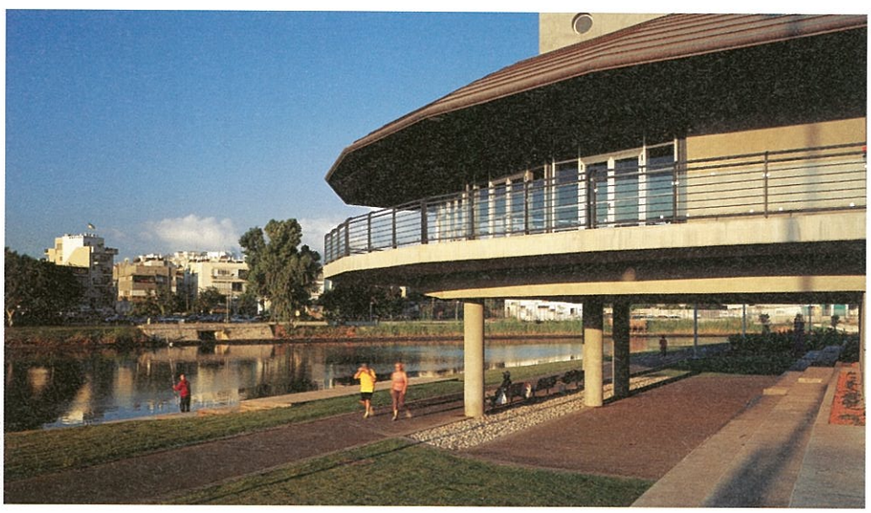
ULRIK'S WORK IN ISRAEL

Ulrik's Israeli 'chapter' began 43 years ago. It constituted the majority of his adult life and had a significant influence both on him and on the local Israeli architectural scene.

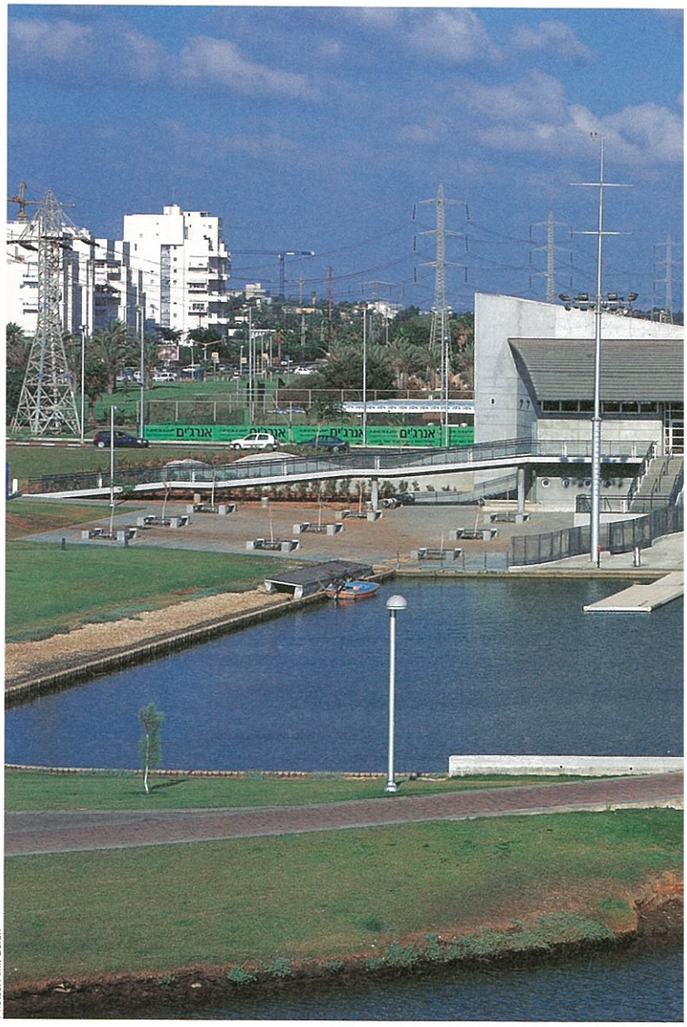
Text Maya Plesner



Photos: Amit Geron



Photos: Amit Geron



Photos: Amit Geron

Pages 32-33: Nautical Training Center, Tel Aviv – a view from the south with the new boat marine in front of the building.

This page: top, the sketch made for the competition of the rowing club, originally designed with a 'baby' boat house adjacent to the big building, which was not built at the end; above, a view point of the pedestrian boardwalk of the Yarkon park, which continues under the building to the sea.

Opposite page: top, view from west, overlooking the Yarkon river, the marine that was done for the building and the bridge that allows the boardwalk connection to the sea; bottom, the 'front' of the boat. Designed as the club for the rowers, overlooking the Yarkon river.

After studying in Copenhagen, working for nine years in Sri Lanka, moving to London with his Israeli wife, Ulrik finally ended up in Jerusalem in 1972. Since then he was the city architect of Jerusalem, and had his own office shared with different partners along the years. For the last 20 years he has been working together with his architect daughters: Daniela and Maya Plesner. Together they design and specialise in public buildings and private residences.

His acquaintance with dilemmas in the development of the historical city of Jerusalem started even before coming to Israel, as he describes it:

"One day, in 1968, I got a letter from Teddy Kollek, the mayor of Jerusalem, inviting me to a conference and to be a member of 'The Jerusalem committee'. Kollek said he had asked Geoffrey Bawa and me, as he wished the committee to include respected architects from Asia, but he had heard back that Mrs. Bandaranaike, the Prime Minister of Ceylon, had refused Geoffrey's exit visa, as recently (after the six day war) Ceylon had cut diplomatic relations with Israel.

Kollek then asked if I would come alone and represent Asia, since he had been informed that we were a respected office there.

I flew to Jerusalem to represent Asia to find that the other respected architects included Louis Khan, Philip Johnson, Richard Meier and Christopher Alexander.

The meeting took place in a hall in Tel Aviv. Teddy Kollek presented the new plan for the future of a united Jerusalem – the medieval walled city of Jerusalem with the later 18th and 19th century developments. I was appalled as the plan made the same mistakes as most 20th century plans for beautiful old cities, where traffic solutions were given top priority destroying beautiful old buildings and whole quarters to make way.

Beijing (Peking) destroyed its ancient walls, Stockholm destroyed its fabulous centre, and many unique medieval towns in Europe went the same way. The fact is the best preserver of old cities is poverty.

Investment, modernisation, and modern planning destroyed unique and wonderful old cities all over the world, and continue to do today, including in China. They only survived in faraway places where nobody wanted to do business.

The city architect of Stockholm said later that if they had known in 1950 what they know today, they would never have done what they did.

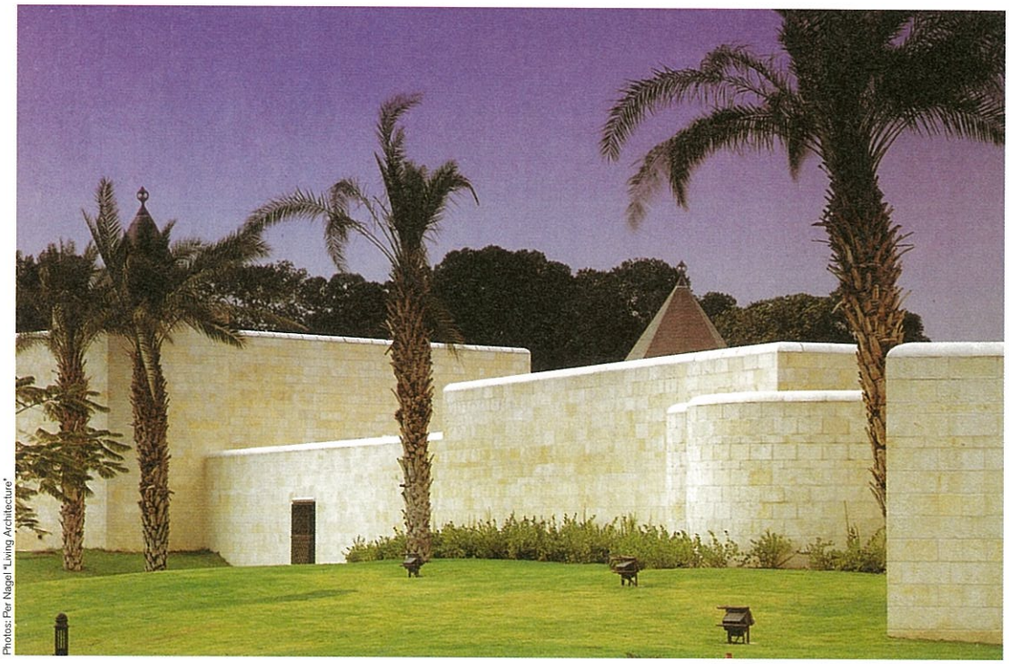
The plan of Jerusalem showed a new six lane motorway in the valley around the old city with an interchange that rose higher than the tower of the Scottish church and completely destroyed the character of the town. In addition, 17 storey buildings crept right up to the magnificent wall, completely dwarfing it. And in a more modern 19th century part of Jerusalem, a right angle network of streets was to be bulldozed through the town.

After the presentation I criticized the plan in detail. At the end I looked at Teddy Kollek and said, "if you carry out this plan, you will ruin the city you love!" He did not answer. But after the meeting he went back to Jerusalem and scrapped the plan and fired the planners. Some days later he appointed a new planning team consisting mostly of young Anglo-Saxon architects, including, Mike Turner, David Fieldes, Art Kutcher, and me.

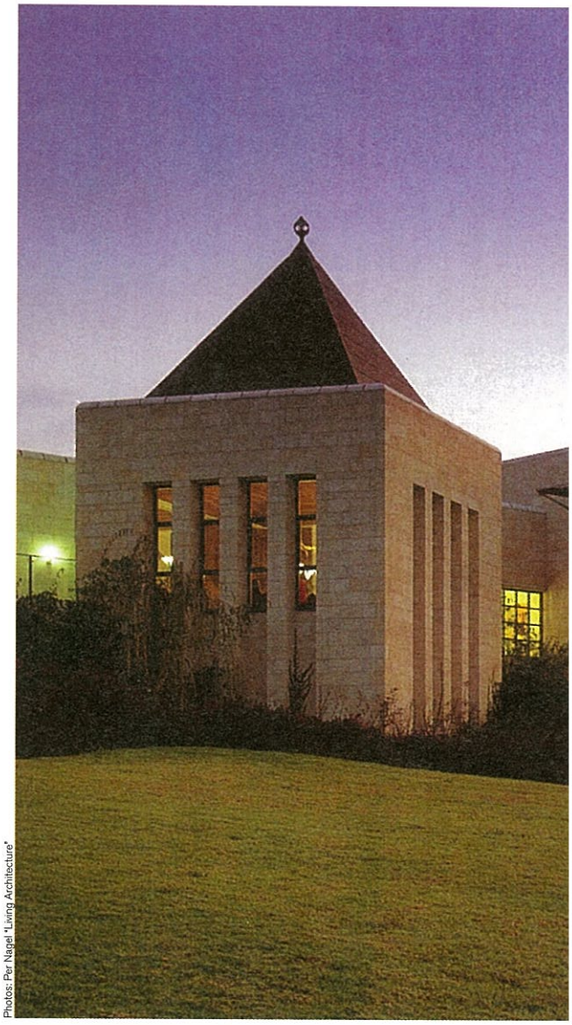
He offered me the job as a city architect. I declined because my Hebrew was not good enough, but a year later, he repeated the offer and for a short while I held that job. Together with Mike Turner and David Fieldes we prevented some of the worst portions of the plan from being implemented; we stopped the six-lane highway in the ancient valleys, and the 17 storey buildings by the old city walls.

Photos: Amit Geron

Photos: Per Nagel "Living Architecture"



Photos: Per Nagel "Living Architecture"



Photos: Per Nagel "Living Architecture"

This page: top, House of Gabriel on the sea of Galilee – a view of the building from a boat out at the sea of Galilee, where the building appears as a small village open to the view; above, a view from the road, the stone facade with roofs glancing above. Today it is all covered with thick planting.

Opposite page: top, Evening view from the sea overlooking the coffee area and the 'peace' room, where Yitzhak Rabin and King Hussein signed the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan. In view is the glavanized steel 'forest', supporting the perforated roof deck between the date palm trees and the building; bottom left, the entrance pavilion; bottom right, the path going down to the sea shaded with steel trees construction shade.

Teddy supported us all the way. We also stopped the bulldozing of new streets through the 19th century part of town.

The wish to build tall buildings in Jerusalem has been around since the 19th century. Tall, New York style buildings are for many a sign of progress and an automatic real-estate twitch without knowing what harm they could do to the infrastructure, personality and character of a beautiful old city. All over the world, real-estate interests take precedence. We were supported by a wide public opinion, which faded away when we eventually retired because we were by nature not civil servants."

Apart from Ulrik's major contribution to keeping the character of the old city of Jerusalem, he designed a few parks in Jerusalem and buildings that are highly appreciated for their beauty, functionality, suitability to the surroundings, and modesty. Here we describe three of them: The Nautical Training Center, Beit Gabriel on the lake of Galilee, and the AIS, the Americn International school in Even Yehuda.

Nautical Training Center, Tel Aviv, 2002, 3,000 sqm

A centre for rowing, canoeing and other water-sports activities, as well as for teaching the schoolchildren of Tel Aviv the basic practice and safety precautions in inland water sports.

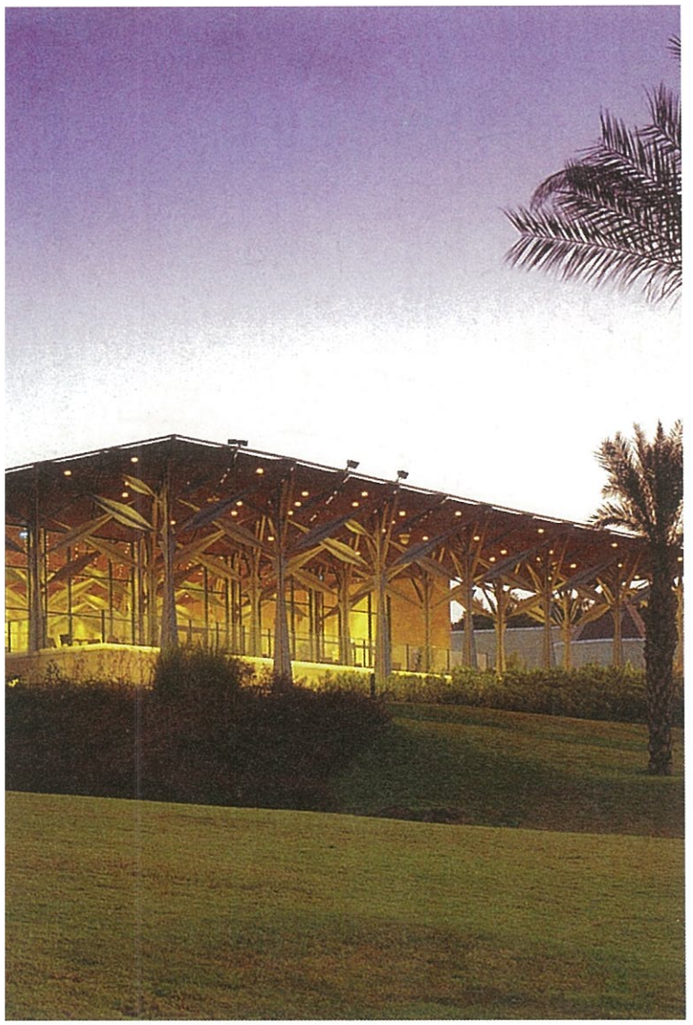
The lower floor is a boathouse and the upper floor contains clubrooms, changing rooms, fitness room, classrooms, trainers and management offices, as well as a restaurant in the prow of the ship, overlooking the river. The copper roof is designed as an overturned, beached boat with keel to the sky. The design of the building reflects a strong environmental concern. The roof projects three metres all around ensuring that all windows are permanently shaded. The upturned 'keel' provides for sun heaters, as well as a sophisticated natural ventilation system to the interior of the building. This allows any space in the building the choice between natural through-ventilation or air-conditioning at any time during the year. Most users choose natural ventilation most of the time, thereby saving electricity cost and energy. Since the Yarkon River is liable to severe flooding at unpredictable intervals, the main floor is designed above worst predicted flood level, leaving the lower floor for boats with no damageable services such as electric points, and is open to let the flood pass through from side to side. The whole facility is a gift to the Tel Aviv youth in memory of Daniel Amichai, a young rower, who was killed in a traffic accident.

Beit Gabriel Cultural Center, Sea of Galilee, 1992, 5,000 sqm

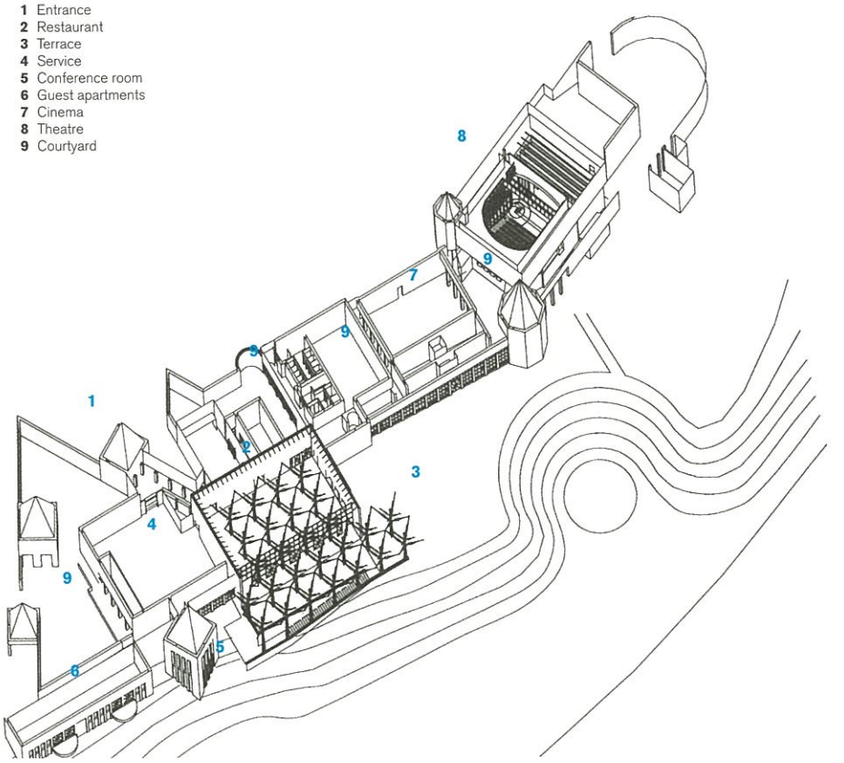
Like small middle-eastern villages Beit Gabriel lies on the south shores of Lake Galilee with a large shaded terrace looking north to Mount Hermon on a clear day. It was donated by Gita Sherover in memory of her son, as a cultural and social centre for this comparatively remote part of the country. The activities within Beit Gabriel are designed along a pedestrian walk alternating with heavily planted courtyards and views of the lake. A theatre/concert hall, exhibition spaces, cinema, and library, conference room (where King Hussein and Yitzhak Rabin signed the peace agreement), and the main café-restaurant and meeting place are found within. With its many varied cultural and social activities, Beit Gabriel has become a popular regional center and tourist destination.

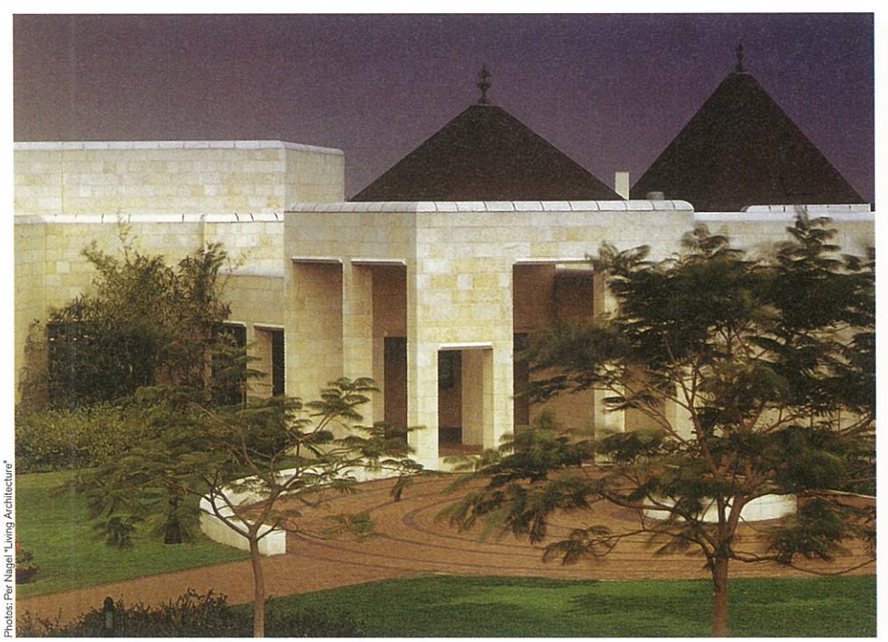
The Walworth Barbour American International School, Even Yehuda, 2007, 14,000 sqm

This school in Israel was established some 30 years ago to cater to the educational needs of

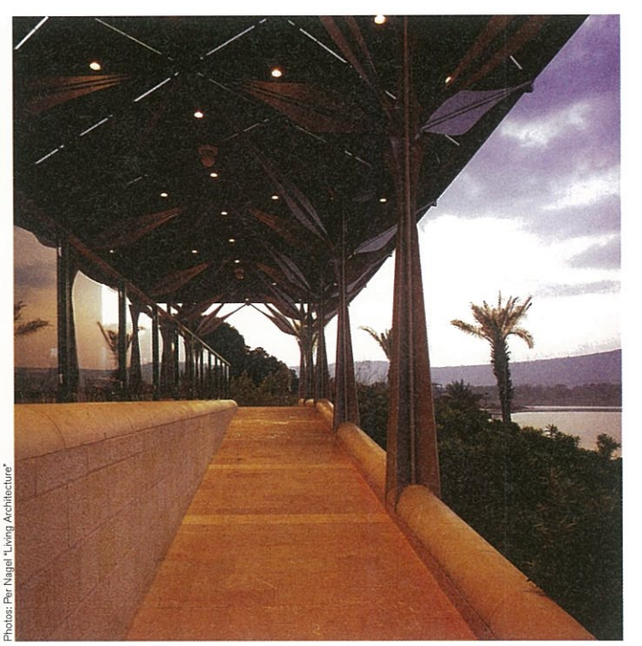


1 Entrance
2 Restaurant
3 Terrace
4 Service
5 Conference room
6 Guest apartments
7 Cinema
8 Theatre
9 Courtyard





Photos: Per Nagel "Living Architecture"



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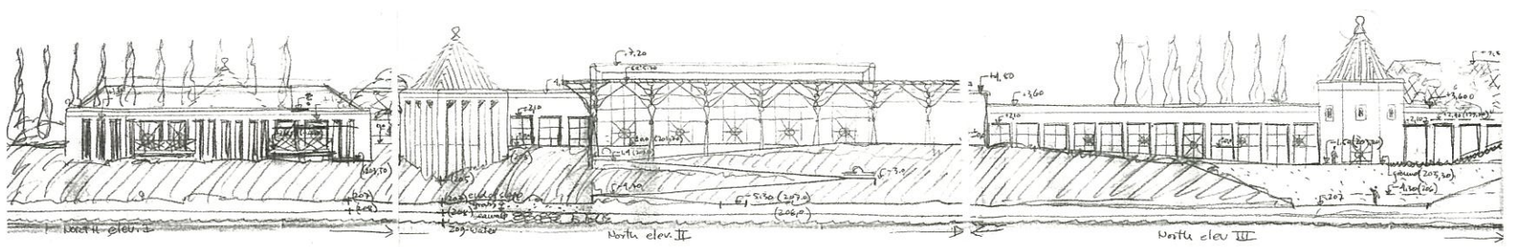
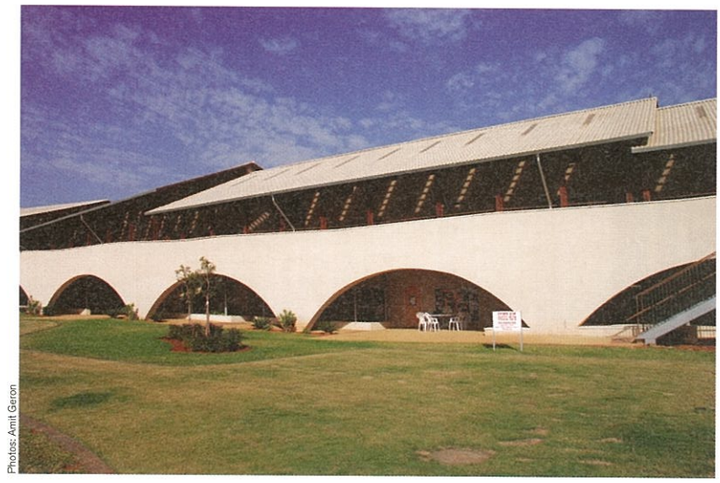
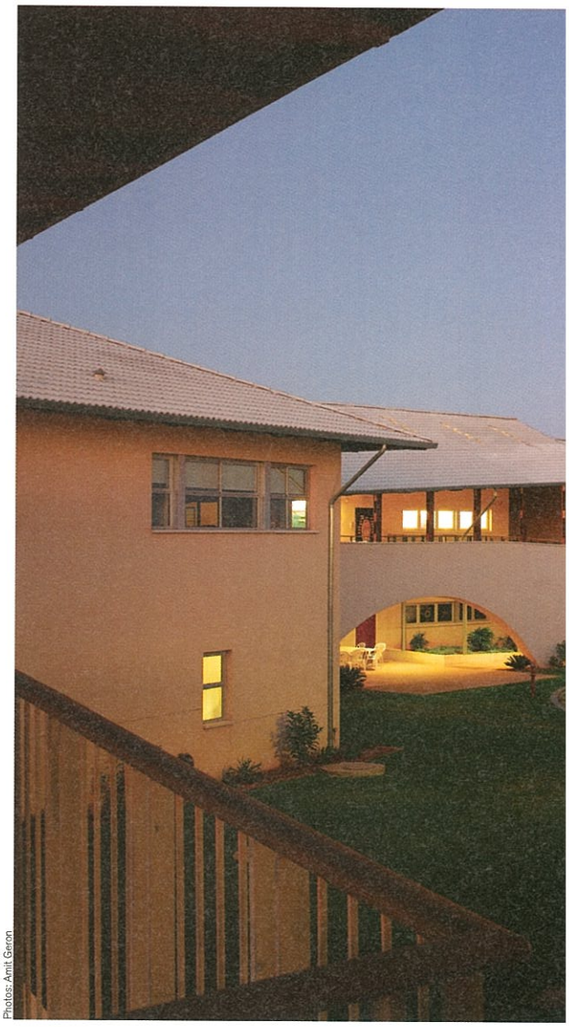




Photos: Amit Geron



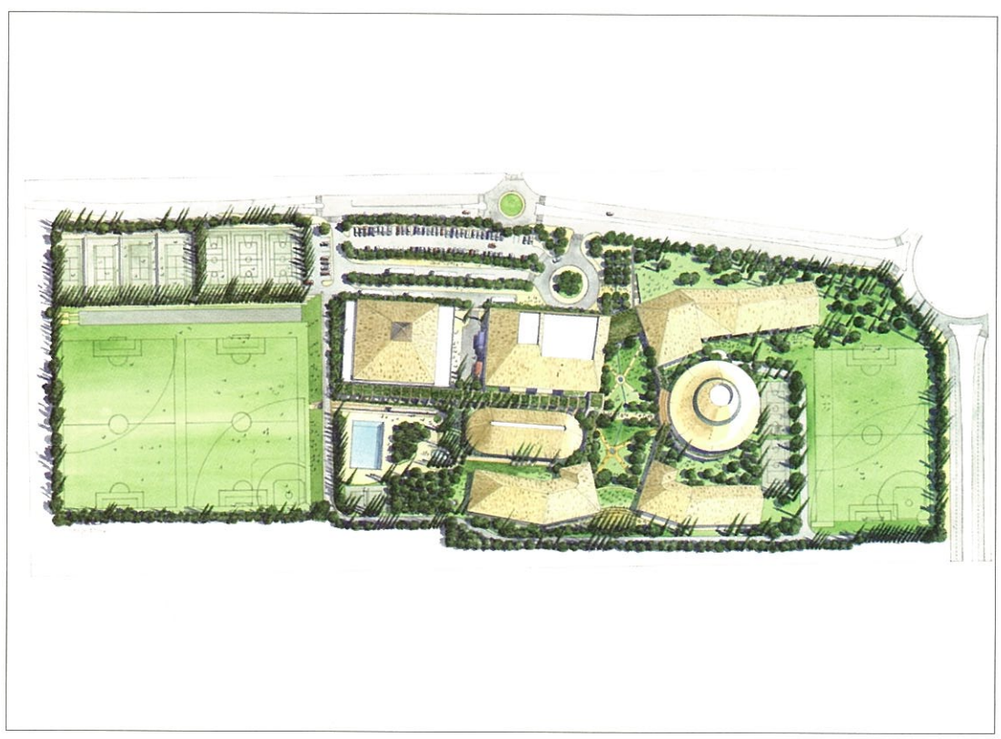
Photos: Amit Geron

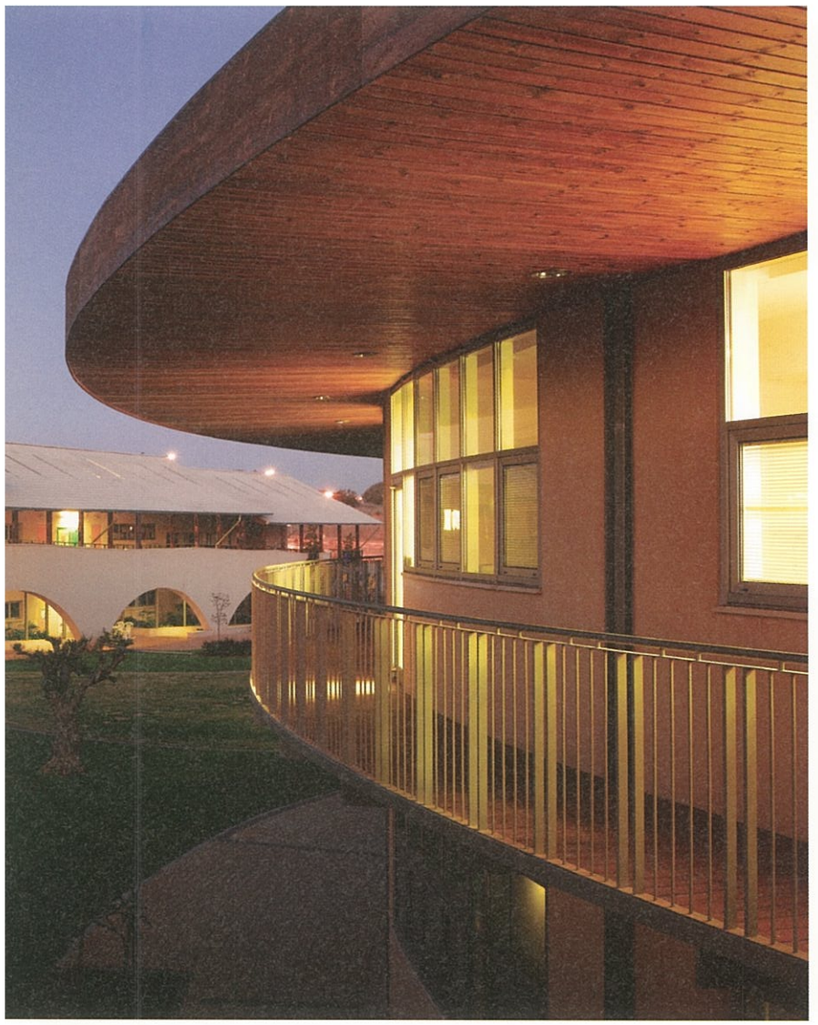
Photos: Amit Geron

This page: top, The American International School – the buildings are dominated by large, tiled roofs like the wings of a stealth plane; above, a general view from south. The library – a round building that appears raised at the centre. Centre: A view from the main court, with the library building on the right and the primary section of the school on the left. Opposite page: top right, the open 'corridor' of the primary school, open to the view on one side and the entrances to classrooms on the other; bottom, an aerial view of the school from south.

families of the diplomatic community as well as other ex-patriates living in Israel.
The school grew too big for its facilities in Kfar Shmaryahu, and was redesigned on a site in Even-Yehuda in collaboration with Architect Haim Dotan. The new campus consists of seven different buildings: the Elementary, Middle and High school buildings, Library, Arts building with auditorium, Gym and Cafeteria. The grounds include football and baseball fields, basketball courts, tennis courts and a pool.

All the facilities needed to educate students from kindergarten to twelfth grade. The focal point of the project is a spacious central courtyard with trees, grass, water and shaded walkways. All pedestrian traffic meets at this central courtyard, making it the living, green heart of the school. There are no corridors, all communication is by open covered ways providing protection against rain and sun. The buildings are dominated by large, tiled roofs like the wings of a stealth plane creating shaded outdoor spaces for kids to enjoy. This feature also shades the windows and allows cross ventilation for the classes. The overall skyline of the campus is kept low and unobtrusive in the landscape. d





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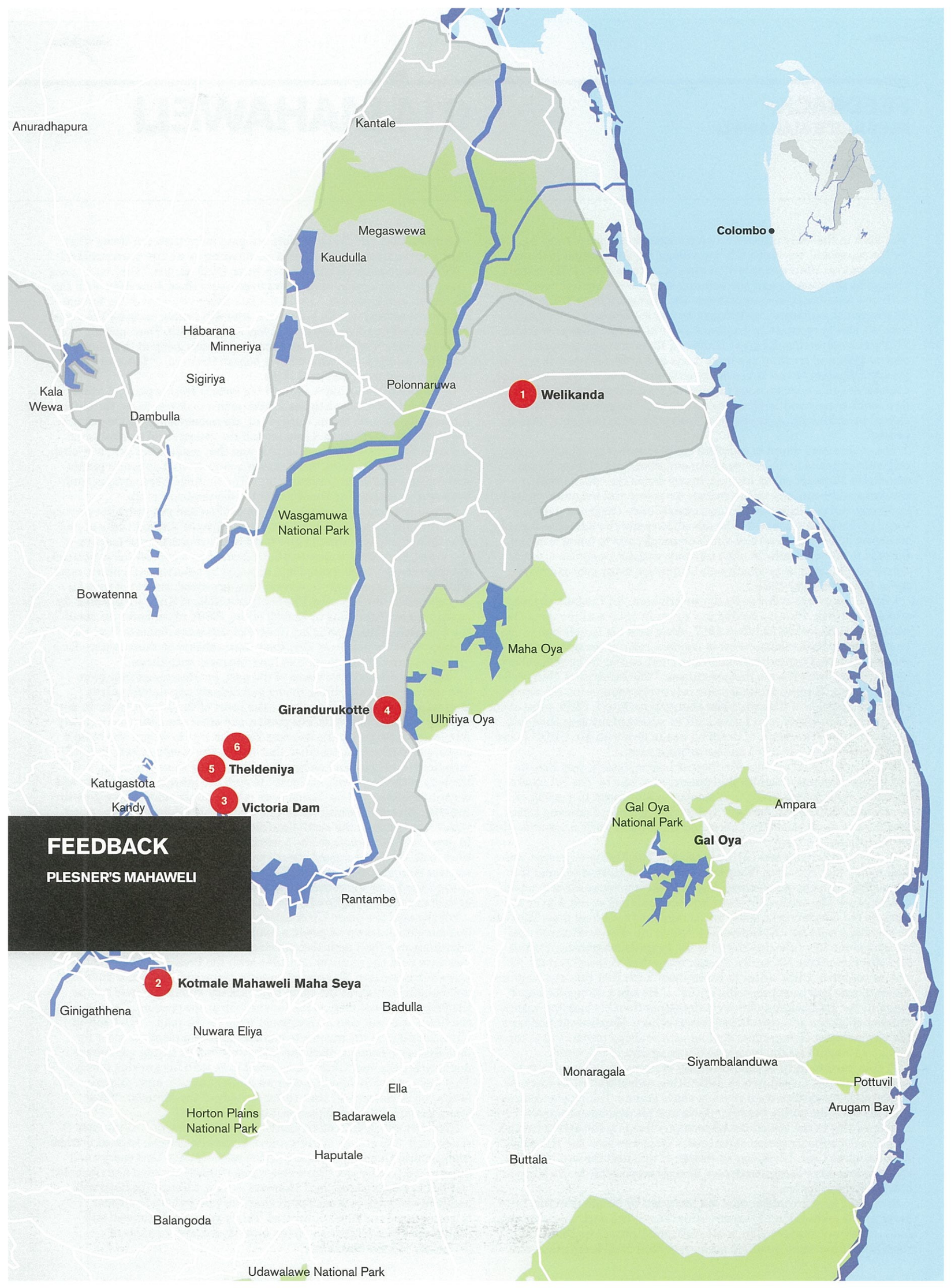


FEEDBACK

PLESNER'S MAHAWELI

FEEDBACK:
PLESNER'S MAHAWELI

014 MAHAWELI

Way back in the early eighties, when hot news was hard to come by, save for the occasional 'television box' per village, the Accelerated Mahaweli Project was an affair everyone had something to say about. The regime change in the country and the ensuing surge of events left everyone with new found hope and aspirations. The Mahaweli Project was a giant international aid project, undertaken by any government in Sri Lanka, with an aim to increase hydropower generation and food production. This was by diverting the great Mahaweli River winding through the central hills, and creating five large dams and artificial lakes, to provide gravity irrigation to vast areas of dry zone scrub jungle. This also meant, transferring of a huge farming population from overcrowded traditional farmlands to new and large assets, in line with the promise of the newly elected president J.R. Jayewardene, "to provide farm land for a million people".

The government dared to complete the project in a meager five years, originally planned for thirty years. An ambitious undertaking by any standards. However, many local engineers defied the odds to work on the dams and necessary infrastructure for power and irrigation, helped by foreign aid and expertise. An enormously more challenging issue of social engineering remained to be solved; to create the infrastructure of transport and towns to service a million people, and to tempt a million farmers to move out into an alien territory, without compulsion; towns where people could be productive and happy for many generations to come. It was the year 1981.

Ulrik Plesner was called in by the government. Sri Lanka was nothing strange to Ulrik. He first landed in Ceylon in 1958 and his inspiring work here ended when he left in 1967, along with his Israeli wife whom he married in Sri Lanka, to work in London. Some of the ministers in the newly elected regime were known to Ulrik earlier, as he remembers, "suddenly my friends were the government." The Minister of Mahaweli Development, Gamini Dissanayake, relatively young himself, already knew the aptitude of the young and energetic architect. Ulrik quips about his return, "An elderly man I gave a lift to, squeezed my gear changing hand and said: "The whole of Colombo was in love with Mr. Ulrik." I was deeply moved and felt as if I had never been away…"

For my part, I had not met Mr. Plesner before, until he was here to receive the Honorary Membership presented to him by The Sri Lanka Institute of Architects in 2008. Listening to him speak to a group of students on Sri Lankan heritage and the importance of drawing lesson from it, only made me marvel about his insight and passion towards what we essentially call 'ours.'

By the time Gamini and Ulrik got talking, The Mahaweli project was well under way. Some big Western countries had started to build the dams. The main channels connecting the reservoirs were already under construction. The settlement areas had been marked as red dots on the map. As red dots however, these towns remained for a long time. The dots on the maps were not the business of foreign aid. The government had assignd planning of the new towns to the irrigation department which had other priorities. Naturally, Plesner was asked to spearhead the job and he cosented. Ulrik writes in his memoir "I felt that this was what my life until now had been preparing me for…" He had a strong feeling of empathy for Sri Lankans, obviously stemming from his building a great number of houses and schools and factories here. Moreover he had been the city architect of Jerusalem dealing with evolving towns. And to cap it all he had worked for the largest engineering firm in the world.

Trying hard to fit in to the prevailing system, Ulrik found it to be a futile exercise. Co-ordination difficulties, unbending rules were all stopping the townships from growing above ground. Taking precedence from his one-time buddy, Geoffrey Bawa and his parliament project, Ulrik explained this to the Minister who promptly freed up the architects and planners from the irrigation department. Thus was born the Mahaweli Architectural Unit. Ulrik was in charge of this unit for seven years, recruiting another Danish architect, directly responsible to the Minister and the foreign donors.

Strangely, local architects were not attracted by job offers in this huge government undertaking. Plesner writes "This is the dark side of foreign aid. …They are supported by local staff, often no less qualified than they, sometimes more qualified because of their local knowledge and understanding, but the foreigners are paid more than ten times what their local equivalents get. This is humiliating as well as unreasonable…"

This consciousness is clearly seen when Ulrik admits, "They were going to get some big foreign contractors to come in. I had a meeting with the Mahaweli management… I said the last thing you want is big foreign companies coming in with bulldozers, who will simply scoop all the money and do something that nobody will feel at home with. They agreed... We had something like two thousand small contracts going at the same time. And each contract was tenured by a *baas* in the area…" The aim was to use basic equipment and local skills.

In the newly set up office – an old tea factory, freshly painted white and with cathedral like heights, Ulrik's prime task was to get the basic concepts for the new towns worked out. He remembers, "We travelled, a few architects together in a jeep around the country and studied small towns in Sri Lanka, analyzed what it was that made them tick, how shop keepers used their shops, what makes a crowd, what supports public activity and also what threatens it…" The findings were obvious, and became a shared spring-board for all the development plans.

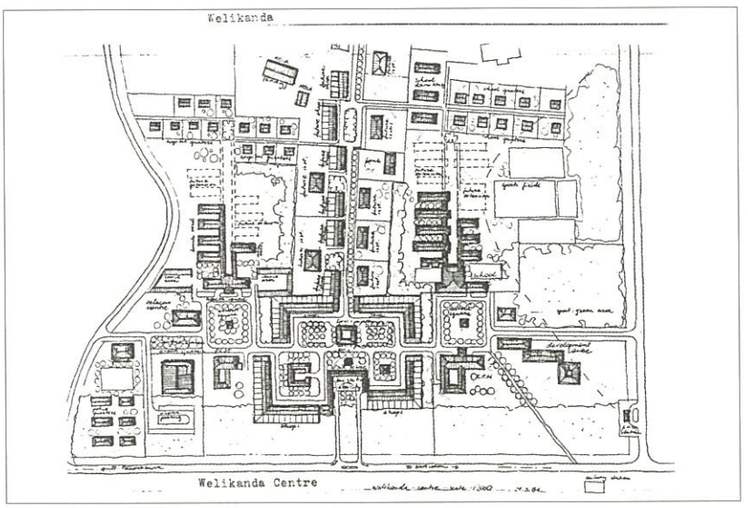
Simple, yet sensitive guidelines were drafted and put through everyone, from site engineers to the minister. Along with the distinct traits of each site, these guidelines were to give birth to the character and makeup of the towns. The towns were essentially located on a loop off the main road yet close enough to be spotted and accessed by vehicles and bullock carts, with convenient parking – a wisdom that has stood the test of time for any new town development. Plesner quotes Robert Knox – a prisoner for twenty years of the King of Kandy, in the 1680's when he wrote about the Sinhalese, "Their towns are always placed some distance from the highways, for they care not that their towns should be thoroughfare for all people, but only for those that have business with them..."

Very much like organic towns of the past; healthy towns that grew and thrived naturally, these towns had densely populated centres. Beginning from the market place – the heart of the town literally in the middle – schools, hospitals, bus station and other amenities were closely intertwined along with the housing. The idea was to design and build a multitude of functions, together, that would give rise to growth from all directions. Financial and architectural strategies were drawn up, with the help of the Mahaweli Authority, to curb the growth of temporary and chaotic building erection. Roads were laid to subtly guide future growth. Building guidelines which fell in line with local building traditions and which were the way the small time contractors built anyway, were put in paper and then applied. The outcome was simple buildings with wide tiled roofs, clustered around streets with large central squares. These squares were planted with 'root balled' trees expected to grow and give enough shade, for the commuter who came to do business with the shops as well as for the villager who was chatting to the hospital nurse.

For the next few years Ulrik devoted himself to making the plans and guidelines drawn on paper, a reality. As he confesses, he was more administrator than architect making weekly trips to Colombo for meetings with the minister and often with the President. "Everything was already too late. We worked on town plans and individual buildings and building details at the same time… Many buildings I only saw as the first sketch and then as the finished job at the opening. The rest of the time I was one man management team on the road…" This set up Ulrik felt allowed the architects and draughtsmen plenty of scope for independent reasoning. With the Mahaweli Project taking good shape and nearing the end, Ulrik left to Israel to be with his growing family. This was not before handing over an all-Sri Lankan, auto-piloted Mahaweli Architectural Unit to the custody of the Minister. "After seven years, I retired and passed it on to a Lankan."

Ironically, the politics of Sri Lanka was turning nasty… Ulrik later reminisced, "the energy of the massive Mahaweli Scheme seemed to come from Gamini Dissanayake and with his assassination that energy and impetus were sadly lost. The whole wonderful future vision had crumbled just before the finishing-line." However driving through the beautiful paddy fields today, it is testimony that the vast irrigation system is working and rice fields cultivated. Thirty years on, Mahaweli still continues to feed 59 per cent of the total Hydro power supply of Sri Lanka. **Zeena Marikkar**

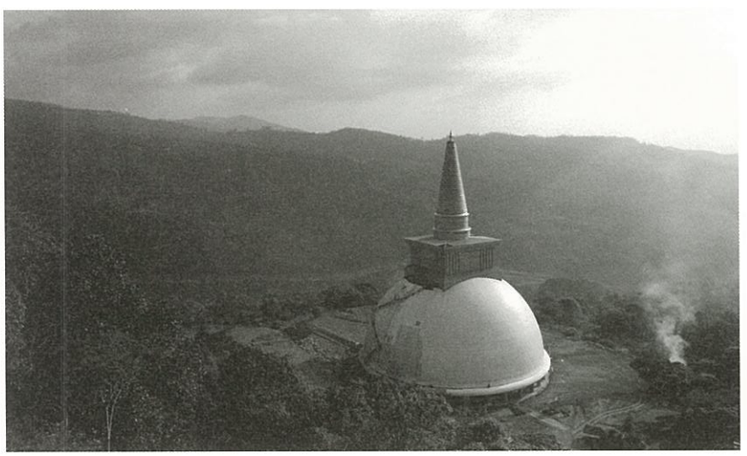
① PLAN OF THE WELIKANDA TOWN CENTRE, 1987



WELIKANDA TOWN CENTRE, 2011

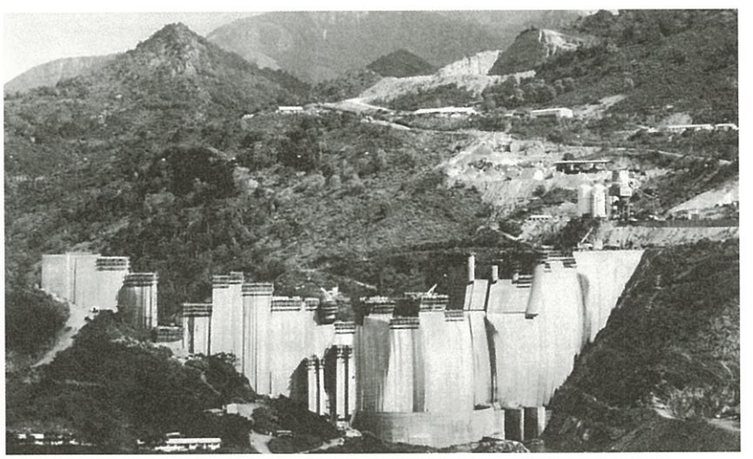
② THE KOTMALE CHAITYA OR DAGABA

Gamini Dissanayake wanted built.
The dome alone stands unfinished



③ THE VICTORIA DAM

Under construction.
A gift from the British.



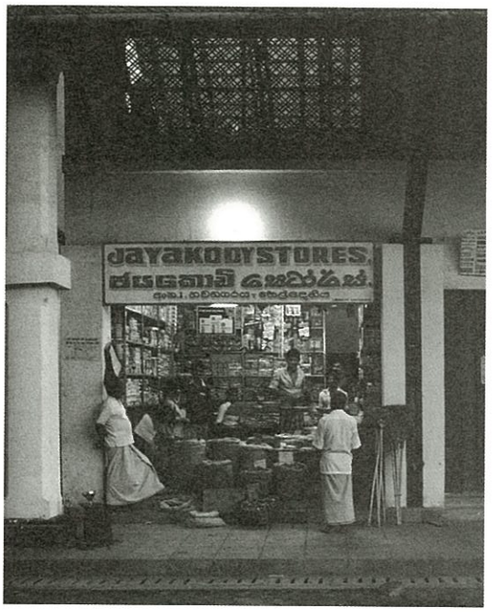
4A GIRANDURUKOTTE TOWN

Shopping Street Drawing

4B GIRANDURUKOTTE TOWN

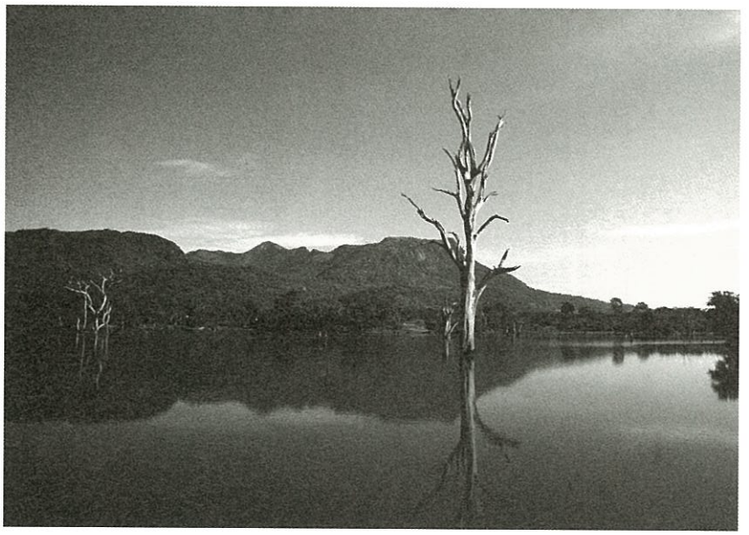
Shopping Street

⑤ A SHOP IN TELDENIYA



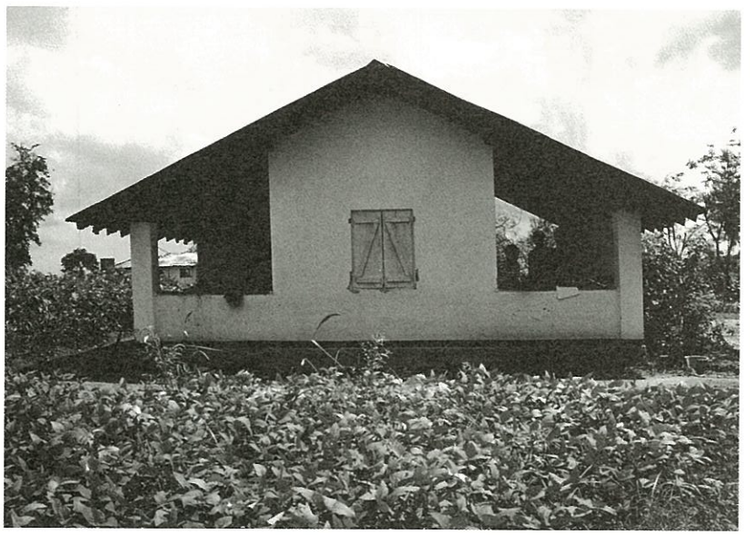
⑥ TELDENIYA POST OFFICE

4TH CENTURY TANK
Reactivated in the 1930s and now part of the Mahaweli Project



DEVELOPMENT
In the the spirit of traditional Sri Lankan small towns with future growth in mind

LOW COST HOUSING
Built with funds and material from the Mahaweli Authority



LOW COST HOUSING
Built with funds and material from the Mahaweli Authority

ELZEVIRO

"Buildings are for people"

The house is also a home for one's imagination – the senses become more awake by being used, and they get sharper.

Ulrik Plesner

Following is an article by Ulrik Plesner published in Arkitektur no.3 1971. Reproduced in its entirety the article titled 'Buildings are for people' explains the architect's architectural values.

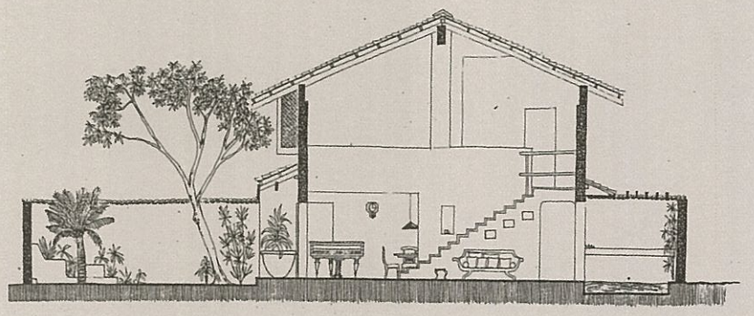
It is best to begin with examples. The three houses illustrated were built for myself and two friends in Ceylon. Inspired by the friends – my valuable Danish attitudes undermined by their lack of understanding of ethics and technique – the houses grew out of the feeling that there is enough time in the home, that one can sit and talk where one feels like it, in the bedroom window, on the stairs, under a tree in a garden, not necessarily in a so-called sitting area. That one can sleep downstairs, on the window cill or in the bed. That one has something beautiful to look at when raising ones eyes from the table, or that one sees something exciting from the living room – water that moves, or a seat under a tree – both contain a promise, and the temptation in one's thoughts to get up and go towards them.

My own house was made so that one did not see a completed space – there was always the promise around the corner, the statue in a niche, the drama of going from the high open space into a dark air-conditioned low cave with niches and columns and statues in niches in columns, and the sound of water from a small pool that you could roll sideways into from bed. One could sleep upstairs or downstairs or out in the garden. – The house is also a home for one's imagination – the senses become more awake by being used, and they get sharper.

The houses are built of brick and concrete and are painted white. They have wide eaves against the sun and the rain, open sides to catch the breeze, and wooden trellis and a concrete pergola to keep out thieves.

They are an attempt to find again some of the values that were lost on the way forward. The real values we had in the village, and for example on the Greek island of Sifnos as described by Michael Varming in a recent article in Arkitekten, can be refound and brought to life today if we want to. It is a question of priorities. Christopher Alexander is working on this, and he is now systematically identifying and describing those qualities in our built surroundings, which have a direct relationship to and influence on us each as a private feeling person. He calls them "Patterns". The relationship to our front door, to town squares, to roads, to what you see when you sit in a room, etc. All the things that are important for us who have to use buildings, and for us who have to build them. Anthropocentric architecture.

There is nothing new in this. On the contrary it is very old, most architects would say they have been doing this for many years. Nevertheless it is with a dreamlike feeling of unreality that one sees magazine after magazine full of buildings and projects, which are primarily sculpture or metabolism or archigram or practical building industry, or brutalism or mass production of curved elements, structural purity, etc, (Mies van der Rohe was the worst), all so-called "ideas", which have nothing to do with the man walking around in the building.



That buildings are for people is difficult to understand, particularly deep down where one's priorities are decided. In Ceylon this is not so difficult because people's scale of values begins with people. When you get to crane runs and building programmes they are not interested any longer. One sees German engineers go home with nervous breakdowns after two months.

It is equally important for us in the West to get first things first – otherwise the strange and terrible sight will continue – a society, which produces more and more of the good things, and people who feel more and more divorced from this society.

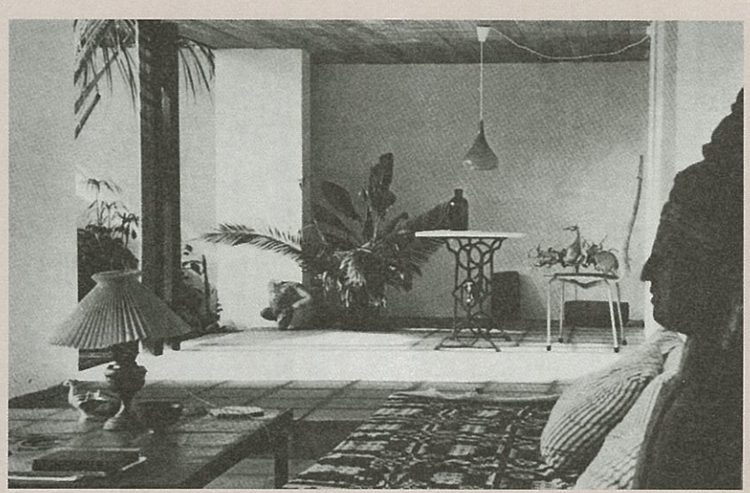
We who build can do something. Buildings are not only the jig-saw puzzle they have become, of building methods, money, structural honesty, square metres, circulation diagrams, etc, – these of course are the means. But the purpose is to give the man joy.

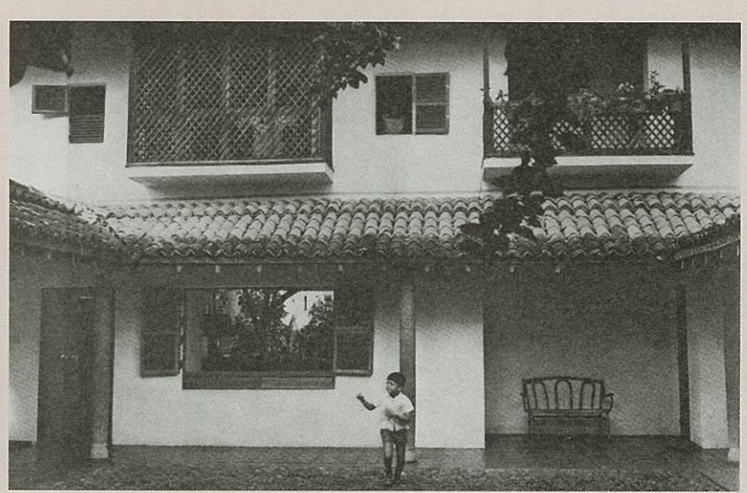
It is for him that we build – the most important thing to him at this moment is that the window cill is wide and low so that he can sit there while his thoughts flow on, and his eyes wander over people and buildings and trees that make him wish he was out there. This man is a walking world centre, it is what he sees and feels that matters, not that the building was built out of prefabricated parts.

We started with the window seat, not the crane conditions. We are now rich enough to do so.

The most wonderful buildings and towns are the ones, which are loved and cared for by those who live in them. We have solved so many things but not quite what it is in buildings that gives joy. It has something to do with each person's relation to the building, whether it stimulated his imagination, gives him the desire to use it, whether he can dream in it. Buildings are also homes for our souls. ◐

Above: Section drawing of house for Maurice and Malkanthi Perera, 1964, designed by Ulrik Plesner. Below: left, living room in Ulrik Plesner's own house in Colombo, Sri Lanka; architects: Ulrik Plesner and Geoffrey Bawa. Right, house for Dr. Chris Rafel, Colombo; architect: Geoffrey Bawa. The entrance courtyard – through the living room window one sees the garden beyond. Every room has the openings it needs, small windows to peer out of, large windows to sit in, balcony etc. The columns are of polished coconut with cut stone capital and foot as protections against termites.

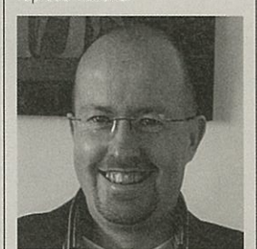




CONTRIBUTORS

Dr Robin D Jones

Robin D.Jones is the Associate Professor and Research Leader in the School of Art, Design and Fashion at Southampton Solent University, UK. Using the methods of design history, his doctoral research examined the material culture and domestic spaces of 19th century Sri Lanka. He has published and lectured widely on the landscapes, built environment, crafts, furniture, interior design and material culture of nineteenth and twentieth century Sri Lanka. His present research investigates the negotiation of modernity and history in South Asia, particularly Sri Lanka, after 1948 through examination of objects, spaces and visual representations.



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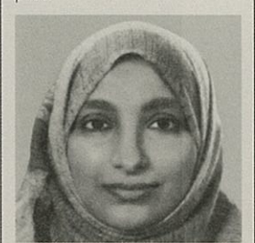
Zeena Marrikar

Zeena Marikkar obtained her Master's degree in Architecture from the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka in 1999 and gained the corporate membership of the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects, Colombo in 2002. She has worked for both State Engineering Corporation and private architectural practices. Her articles on architecture and related fields have appeared in newspapers, blog posts, Architecture magazines and the ARCASIA journal. She was the editor of the first collaborative journal of the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects, 'The Architect', from 2007 to 2009. Having taught at the City School of Architecture, Colombo, she continues to be a tutor for student dissertations. Zeena Marikkar identifies herself as a freelance architect engaging in design projects at her own pace.



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Daniela Plesner and Maya Plesner

Daniela and Maya Plesner were born in London to Israeli mother Tamar Liebes (Professor of Communication in the Hebrew university) and Danish Architect Ulrik Plesner. They graduated from the Architecture school Bezalel Academy of Art and Design of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem with honours. They joined Plesner Architects in Tel Aviv in the mid 90s, and for the past 20 years have led the firm with 14 other architects. Their expertise lies in public buildings, educational campuses, preservation and private houses. The underlying principle that Ulrik Plesner developed in Sri Lanka, of functionalism that relates to the place, people, culture, climate and local materials remains as the guiding principle for all of their projects and buildings in Israel.

www.plesnerarchitects.com

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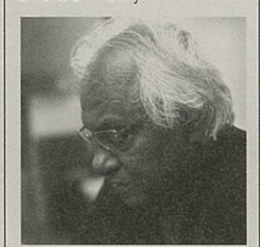
Ismeth Raheem

Born in 1941, Ismeth Raheem studied at the School of Architecture, Katubedda (Sri Lanka) and the Royal Danish Academy (Copenhagen) to graduate as an architect in 1969. An artist and a founder member of the Young Artists Group, he began his employment under Geoffrey Bawa and Ulrik Plesner at Edwards, Reid and Begg in 1963. An artist too, Ismeth Raheem has used numerous techniques and mediums in his creative expressions. Together with Pheroze Choksy, he formed his own firm in 1978. His architectural work is characterised by the modern intepretation of vernacular architecture. He is known for the work he has done to preserve Sri Lankan culture, art and heritage and has curated many exhibitions both in Sri Lanka and abroad. He has published two books that are based on his interest in Colonial art and art history.



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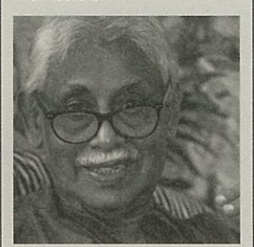
Anura Ratnavibushana

Anura Ratnavibushana completed undergraduate studes at the IPT Katubedda during 1961-63 (present day Moratuwa University) and postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen, Denmark (1966-68). He started his career at Edwards, Reid and Begg (1962–1979) and worked very closely with Architects Geoffrey Bawa, Ulrik Plesner and Dr K Poologasundaram (engineer). He worked in Nigeria for a year and upon his return joined Mihindu Keerthiratne Associates (1980–1997) and was a partner at DG5 at its inception. Since 1997, Anura Ratnavibushana has been engaged in his solo practice in Colombo. His work has been published internationally and his own house, which is by the lagoon in Moratuwa is world renowned. He lectured at the Katubedda Campus and today teaches at the City School of Architecture.



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Ulrik Plesner: In Situ

Ulrik Plesner: In Situ – An architectural memoir from Sri Lanka published by Aristo Publishing, Denmark, 2nd Edition 2013, was a key reference work for this tribute issue. Except where otherwise credited, all the photographs are sourced from In Situ with permission from Ulrik Plesner.