

PANCHO GUEDES, AN ALTERNATIVE MODERNIST

30 September 2007 to 20 January 2008
S AM - Swiss Architecture Museum, Basel

A quarter of a century after he has been shown at the Architectural Association, in London, Pancho Guedes is now revisited at the SAM, Swiss Architecture Museum, in what can be regarded as the first critical and curatorial approach to the eccentric oeuvre that this architect realised in Africa during the Fifties and Sixties.

Coinciding with the presentation of a major retrospective of Le Corbusier at the nearby Vitra Museum, this new show will provide visitors with a portrayal of an architect who, as Corbusier, also transformed his deep involvement with the visual and plastic arts into a powerful drive for architectural imagination.

This legendary Mozambican architect - who built an outstanding reputation within the most inner circles of the early sixties architectural milieu - offers today the historical perspective of an alternative modernity in which the rationale of the International Style is first contrasted with a truly multicultural vision. Contrary to most colonial architecture, Pancho's work is justly referential because of his active engagement with local cultural contexts and references, while still producing unique and appealing architectural images and forms.

Against the hegemony of the single modernist manner, Pancho Guedes is one of the first architects to playfully introduce a plethora of styles that respond to different cultural circumstances, various types of clients and even the most adverse economic conditions. A lover and collector of African artistic and cultural artefacts, he was also a pioneer in experimenting with cross-cultural and symbolical references without ever missing the creative and logical edge of the modern architect.

Drawn in close collaboration with the architect - now aged 82 - and drawing from his vast unpublished archive, the current exhibition will provide the visitors with five perspectives on the work of Pancho Guedes, which range from the development of some of his most personal organic styles - true ante-visions of the Pop architecture of the Sixties -, to his contributions towards the construction of the modern city, and down to his experimentations with the scarce resources of so-called bush architecture.

The show will thus reveal previously unreleased material for projects such as the Smiling Lion, the Saipal Bakery, or the Airplane House - works of architecture which, although built in a rather remote location, were certainly ahead of their time both for their symbolic sculptural qualities, and also for their use of organic geometry, unexpected materials, local forms of ornament, or even rare and bold spatial solutions.

Also part of the exhibition are the architect's sculptures, paintings, murals and, most importantly, a selection of his extensive collection of sketches that show his vivid imagination at work, either in visions of a rare space-age African architecture or of an almost surrealistic and naïf portrayal of local cultural realities.

A recent artist's film or interviews with Pancho Guedes and his contemporaries also help to recreate and evoke a specific context that reveals the stern contrasts of the African metropolis now and then.

(Pedro Gadanho, Curator, June 2007)

INVITATION

Press Conference on Friday, 28 September 07, at 10am
Vernissage on Saturday, 29 September 07, at 7pm

Swiss Architecture Museum
Steinenberg 7
CH - 4051 Basel

Tue, Wed, Fri 11am - 6pm
Thu 11am - 8.30pm
Sat, Sun 11am - 5pm

Please contact us for further information:

S AM - Swiss Architecture Museum
Steinenberg 7
Postfach 911
CH - 4001 Basel
Tel +41 61 261 14 13
Fax +41 61 261 14 28

press@sam-basel.org / www.sam-basel.org