

AMANCIO d'ALPOIM MIRANDA GUEDES

Professor Amancio d'Alpoim Miranda ('Pancho') Guedes, who held the Chair of Architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand from 1975 until 1990 is recognised internationally for his contribution to modern architecture, for alerting the international architectural community to the importance of African architecture and for his unique way of integrating architecture with painting and sculpture. His famous dictum, 'I claim for architects the rights and liberties that painters and poets have held for so long', has inspired subsequent generations of architects around the world.

Pancho Guedes was born in 1925 in Lisbon, the son of a doctor in the Portuguese colonial service. His father's postings took the family to the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe in the Gulf of Guinea and later to Manjacaze in southern Mozambique where he spent most of his youth. He completed his education at Marist Brothers in Johannesburg and graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture degree from this University in 1949.

Upon graduation, Professor Guedes returned to the then Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) and began a prolific architectural career, building over a period of two-and-a-half decades most of modern Maputo. His oeuvre, there and elsewhere, exceeds six hundred projects. Public buildings, factories, apartment blocks, hotels and private houses all bear his unique stamp, which interpreted the motifs, shapes and colours of the world around him into a distinct African modernism. Famous among his works are the Saipal Bakery in Maputo, the Waterford School in Swaziland, and an apartment block in Maputo, named the 'Smiling Lion' after a little lion executed by Guedes in cement at the entrance to the building.

In the face of the austerity of many European modernists, Prof Guedes used humour, decoration and sculptured expressionism in the development of his unique aesthetic. This brought him acclaim from the international community. In the late 1950s, he was the only African invited to become a member of Team 10, an international architectural forum of ten young rebels who sought to rework with more humanist intent the canons of the Modern Movement in architecture.

Architects, confronted with the social failure of many of the grand schemes of the post-World War II reconstruction of European cities, turned elsewhere for new models for their work. Professor Guedes provided inspiration for them. His synthesis of the universal and the culturally particular, the sophisticated and the naïve, into a place-bound humanist aesthetic paved the way for a new direction for modern architecture.

Pancho Guedes is one of a select group of architects working in southern Africa who have gained international recognition for their work. In this respect, his only peers are Sir Herbert Baker and Dr Rex Martienssen. He was awarded the South African Institute of Architects Gold Medal for Architecture in 1979 and was honoured with the Comendador da Ordem Santiago e Espada presented by the President of Portugal in 1979 and in 1996 received the Portuguese Ministro da Cultura prize (Seccao

portuguesa de criticos de Arte) for his architectural adventures in Mozambique. In 1998, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Pretoria.

In 1975 Professor Guedes was appointed head of the Architecture Department at Wits. Although, under his leadership, the department regained the international standing it had previously enjoyed under Professor Rex Martienssen during the 1930s, his tenure was also marked by controversy. He was not a person toward whom it was possible to be neutral. His unorthodox proposals for the campus always provoked heated debate.

His combination of mischievousness and total dedication to his discipline profoundly influenced a generation of architects. While some rejected his views, all grew through interaction with Professor Guedes. Many, now scattered around the world and recognised in their own right for their contributions to architecture and to society, acknowledge their debt to him and bear testimony to his profound, lasting and varied influence.

Professor Guedes retired from the University in 1990 and returned to Portugal, where he and his wife, Dorrie, now live. His inordinate energy shows little sign of abating. He has remained active – drawing, painting, sculpting, and building. He holds positions at several universities in Portugal and Spain, continuing to share his unique creative genius and extraordinary knowledge of architecture with young people. His life and work speak to the creative impulse in all of us, challenging us to defy established values, mediocrity and the passage of time to make our mark in the modern world.

It is with great pride and pleasure that the University confers on Amancio d'Alpoim Miranda Guedes the degree of Doctor of Architecture *honoris causa*.