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Are content creators
making greater impact
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The *influencer* takeover

Dubai-based social media personality
Nadine Abdel Aziz at Cannes Film Festival



UAE TEEN
WHO TUTORS
CHILDREN
FOR FREE

LOVELY LUNUGANGA

THE ESTATE OF FAMED ARCHITECT GEOFFREY BAWA IN BENTOTA, SRI LANKA, IS A TESTIMONY TO HIS ARCHITECTURAL BRILLIANCE

**TEXT AND PHOTOS:
BINDU GOPAL RAO**

On my recent visit to Sri Lanka, my destination was the beach resort town of Bentota. Staying at the beautiful Jetwing Saman Villas, where the web series starring Anil Kapoor *The Night Manager* was shot, I discussed possible sightseeing options with the general manager Wester Felthman. The

first place he suggested was Lunuganga. “Bentota is the home of Geoffrey Bawa and he has designed this beautiful garden that can be visited with a prior appointment.” The architecture lover in me immediately knew that I had to sign up for the tour. The estate has three guided tours at 11am, 2pm and 3pm. You need to book a slot by calling them as the tour is open for a limited group of people at a time. The place currently also doubles up as a boutique hotel.

Recycled Route

On the day I was here, the morning slot was full. So, I reached promptly for the 2pm slot and was lucky to be the only one on the tour. One of the guides, Krishna, met me at the entrance and explained that this piece of land was bought by Bawa in 1948. The name behind several well-known hotels in Sri Lanka, he studied to be a lawyer but realised he loved architecture and honed his skills in that field. The

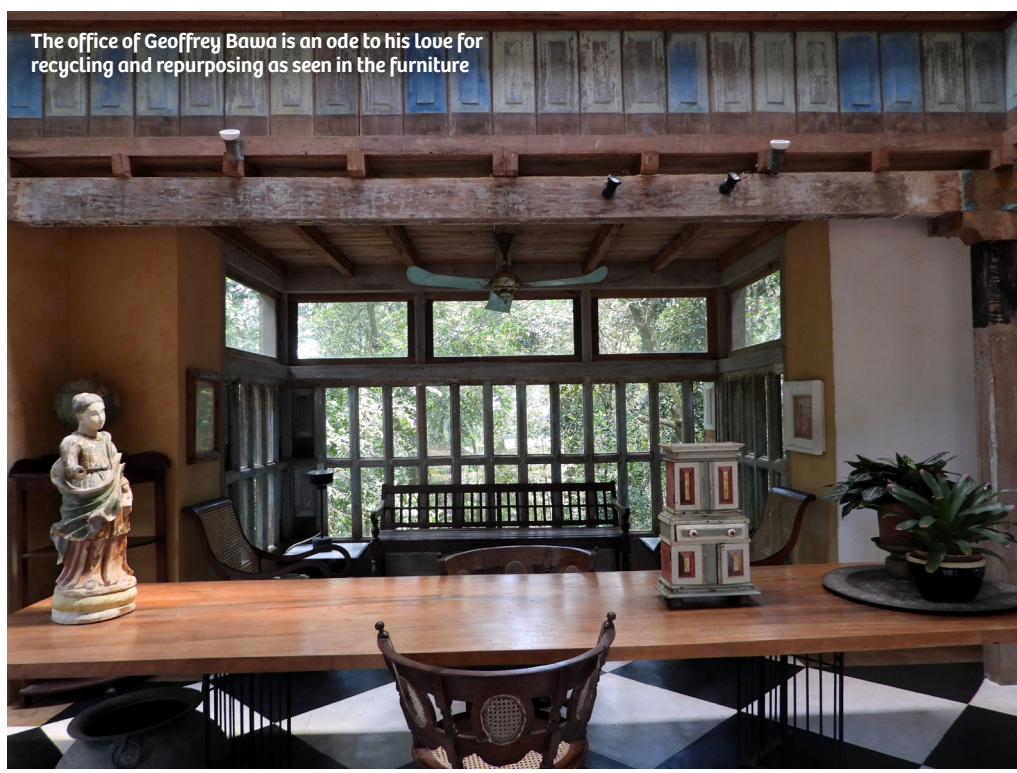


In Geoffrey Bawa's estate Lunuganga, there are large pots from China that date back to the 16th century



The landscape is lush with tropical trees

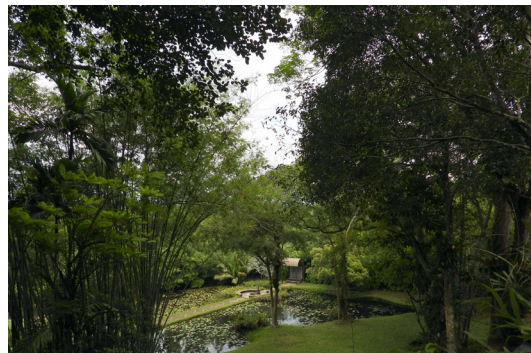
first stop on the tour is his office, which he would visit on the weekends, and is an ode to his love for recycling. The materials used to build this office have been largely with recycled wood and the bench has been bought from the railway station. The flooring has a monochrome pattern and is an ode to his love for black and white. Spend some time in the office and you will learn many lessons on repurposing and recycling work in real life. The other buildings were



The office of Geoffrey Bawa is an ode to his love for recycling and repurposing as seen in the furniture



A Roman head sculpture in Lunuganga



(Above) The lush greenery is a sight for sore eyes; (right) A large statue overlooking the garden is visible from most places when you walk around

built in 1972 and 1983 and were used by his friends when they visited him. There is also a structure here that is a model of the parliament building.

Green Oasis

As you walk along the space, it is the landscape that is the hero. There are several seating areas that the guide will show you where Bawa sat to work while enjoying the views. Most of the seating areas have

bells – in fact, there are 14 bells in all here and, interestingly, each of them has a varied gong that he used to alert his associates. The garden itself is on the banks of the Dedduwa Lake and merges Italian Renaissance gardens, English landscaping, Japanese garden art, and the water gardens of ancient Sri Lanka to create a compelling lesson in landscaping. In fact, the name Lunuganga comes from Lunu, meaning salty, and Ganga, meaning river. The arte-

facts have also been carefully chosen from the 16th century Chinese pots that were almost discarded. There are recycled doors as well as a gallery of furniture that has been designed by Bawa on the way. Do not miss the ship buoy that doubles up as a light.

Nooks and Corners

One of the most favourite spots of Bawa is a stone seating space where he spent

hours thinking of new ideas. The spot is scenic as it overlooks a butterfly pond filled with blue lillies. A sun dial is also installed here and was used to check the time in the past in the winter months. A windmill tower has also been built by Bawa here. A statue of the leopard frames a paddy and reed-filled field and, in the season, you can also see the different colours of the plants that add to the visual impact of the landscape. The frangipani tree is a constant and it is said that it was Bawa who planted it outside temple compounds where they are typically found in the country. The twisted jamun trees add their own charm to this area. In fact, Bawa would always plant two trees of one kind to be sure that if one did not survive, the other would. The 25-acre space is dotted with several statues that have been gifted by his architect and designer friends. When here, you can also see the Balsa trees, whose wood is light and is used to make the famed Sri Lankan face masks.

Built Architecture

As you walk along, you can also see the original building where Bawa lived. Take note of the black and white door that has been created from a study table. In fact, there is a road that passes through the property that Bawa has concealed using landscaping. The Cinnamon Hill on the southern part of the garden has a water tank. There is a beautiful painting of Greek soldiers in one of the spaces here done by artist Laki Senanayake, that also finds its way in the Jetwing Lighthouse hotel in Galle. The gardens also have a memorial of his last remains as well as one for his nanny. There are large tables with leaf motifs as well as several chairs that he has designed. Every seating point that Bawa designed has its own kind of magnificent view that speaks volumes for this brilliant sense of aesthetics. As I was walking away, I saw a bed of jacaranda flowers and stopped to admire the colour contrast of the purple flowers on the green grass. "Mr Bawa always insisted that the flowers must never be swept away, he loved seeing them here," said Krishna. Clearly, he was a man who loved his views with a dash of colour. **W**

For more details check

www.lunuganga.com

wknd@khaleejtimes.com



An old steam fan in the office of Geoffrey Bawa



(Above) The jamun trees grow near the water body