

Interview with Pancho Guedes at Alfama House, by Pedro Baía (Lisbon, 7 November 2007)

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There are several Team 10's.

There are a lot of Team 10's. There is a Team 10 that says Team 10 was already Team 10 before it was Team 10. It was a piece of CIAM that started to disagree with the things happening at CIAM. There was a CIAM dominated by Dr. Gropius [Walter Gropius], who was very important at Harvard, and by Sigfried Giedion, the Secretary General, giving lectures and saying that the Modern Movement started with some things that Gropius had done before the World War II with the Bauhaus and after World War II. In CIAM there are very interesting things happening simultaneously with Team 10. There was a small group with a lady, [Jaqueline] Tyrwhitt, who writes. I have some of these books, also from CIAM, that nobody talks about. There was Aldo van Eyck, who arranged many conflicts and said some truths that made him extremely unpleasant and who spoke and wrote extraordinarily well. And then there was [Jaap] Bakema, who worked in a very large office, a well-respected office, who maintained the communication around Team 10. But who later invented another separate Team 10 were the Smithsons. And then there was even another Team 10, still separate, just from Alison Smithson. Aldo got a lot from the Smithsons. There was a great rivalry between them. The Smithsons were very fond of Aldo, but Aldo was immensely fickle, not only in his family relationships, with his wife, but with everyone else. Then there was also a French Team 10.

This French Team 10 is interesting because it is closely linked to Le Corbusier.

Well, [Georges] Candilis and Shadrach Woods are in charge of the Marseille *Unité d'Habitation*. Then they get away and go to North Africa to do some things. At one point, Shadrach, Candilis and the other Polish, [Alexis] Josic, set up a big office with a lot of people. Candilis, at one point, is Pompidou's architect for housing. And so they make housing for the employees of the huge Mirails factory in Toulouse. Shadrach was an engineer who studied literature and philosophy. He could not draw. Candilis said he had been in the Greek Air Force and had come to Paris to work with Le Corbusier. Candilis was a fantastic talker, a guy with a very, very large organizational capacity. Josic was more of urbanism than anything. Then there were those who had worked for Le Corbusier. The only one I knew well was Jullian de la Fuente, who did the Harvard project with Le Corbusier.

There is still the other Team 10, Giancarlo de Carlo's.

Giancarlo de Carlo went to Otterlo. I don't know if you've read the book published by Bakema, it's the transcript of what happens in Otterlo.¹

The book must be interesting because most of the books I read are always written and edited by Alison Smithson. And it is well known that Alison writes in her own way, omitting some people, some stories.

Everyone writes their interpretation in their own way. Just like these editors [pointing to the book “Team 10 - In Search of a Utopia of the Present”,² edited by Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel]. Because these editors, at some point, I don’t know where the letters are... I can look for them but I don’t know if I can find them... These editors, at one point, asked me how I thought a Team 10 exhibition could be made. For me, as one of the ways to do a Team 10 exhibition, it would be important to separate the architects who had large ateliers and the architects who worked at home. Aldo worked at home. The Smithsons always worked at home. Aldo, at the end of his life, worked outside his home and disgraced himself. Giancarlo worked at home, and then made a big office. It’s good to read what happened to Giancarlo in Otterlo, where he was reprimanded for framing horizontal windows in some tiled houses. Alison gave him a huge disapproval, which wasn’t much discussed because the big discussion in Otterlo was about [Ernesto] Rogers. Rogers was the editor of *Casabella* and made the Velasca Tower. It is a tower close to the American glazed box but which then pokes its bones out, exhibiting the structure and differentiating the offices from the apartments. The apartments give the tower a medieval look. Down below, they fumble a bit, they don’t know how the building will hit the ground and bury itself on the floor below. Rogers presented the building in Otterlo as the future. But the future had not yet come.

The Smithsons had great power of intervention. Was this power exercised by their argumentative discourse or from the network they had created?

This was what they themselves felt, it was extremely genuine. They had done their first major work, Hunstanton, a school that is a Mies reinterpretation. But it is a much more organized and much more apparently functional and neoclassical Mies. At the same time it is brutalist, with the exposed pipes, seeing how it works.

Did you already know the Smithsons?

I met the Smithsons in 1960 in London. I went to London because of a trip I made with my son. Dori [my wife] and Pedro [my son] went to London because I was going to start a multi-month trip across Europe. I was going to pick up a natural-leather silver Jaguar, that was the only way I could get to be paid for an apartment project I did for a guy who had a Jaguar agency. [laughs] The silver was the color of Rolls Royce Phantom. So the night we went to meet the Smithsons, we were with the Jaguar. And Peter Smithson thought the car was like me, it was *art nouveau*, it was curvy. He liked it a lot. Then we went to a bar to drink a beer. Then, when I saw them again, they invited me to go to Royaumont.

The first time I was in London I met Reyner Banham. Banham was an engineer who later went on to pursue a doctorate with [Nikolaus] Pevsner. He was the first who began to doubt the consistency and solidity of the Modern Movement. It was he who began to discover that there were other architects.

We were talking about the various Team 10's inside Team 10: the Italian Team 10 with Giancarlo, the French, the British or the Dutch.

Giancarlo became a politician, a huge politician, maneuvering, traveling, doing some giant things with a huge studio.

You and Coderch are both protagonists who participate a lot and make an important contribution in the meetings of Team 10. But you are completely different from each other.

Coderch had a very little participation inside Team 10. He was very disillusioned. He survived the civil war in Barcelona, the worst possible place for someone with a conservative base and a rich family. During the war, Barcelona was the center of the greatest conflict between anarchists and communists. The power of the communists completely dominated the city. There is a George Orwell book, "Salute to Catalonia", where Orwell fight in an English anarchist battalion.

Was Coderch a very reserved person?

It was a *señorito*. I met Coderch in 1953, in Barcelona. I remember when I went to Casa Milà with a tiny Bakelit Kodak. I gave money to the Casa Milà doorman and went to the penthouse to take some pictures. As I left the building, I found Coderch, who took my machine from me because he was making laundry rooms. So I said to him: "Look, I don't photograph these little wire-seat chairs. I just wanted to photograph the Gaudi's chimneys. Give me back the machine." And then he handed me back the machine. He thought I was going to photograph his things. They were finishing the tiny apartments he was making.³

So in that moment you didn't know each other?

No, we didn't know each other.

But you met a few years later.

In Royaumont, in 1962. [laughs]

You have been to several Team 10 meetings. Who do you think came out more enriched, more influenced? Was it you or the rest of the Team 10 group?

I came from a completely different world. I had a completely different practice. The only ones who came to Lourenço Marques to see what I was doing were Peter and Alison.

You went to the meetings to show a new world, with all the possibilities to build, with all your experience. Was it therefore more enriching for them?

What they were doing was a huge limitation because they worked in a Europe of the great builders, the great politicians who deliver the works, the great economic forces that dominate everything.

You said you would organize an exhibition about Team 10 by distinguishing between home-based architects and those who worked in large offices. What characterizes an architect who works at home?

A home-based architect works for himself, works with his family, has a small office, can do much more personal service than an architect who is playing golf or selling bananas, who is into business, playing on the stock exchange and having a big influence inside construction companies.

So what was the motivation of these two groups being together in Team 10 and meeting several times over the years? What makes these two so different groups discuss architecture and present their projects to each other? To see their work legitimized before others?

All sorts of things. I have an idea that the fascination around those meetings was a kind of seeing what the others, the home-based architects, were doing.

Why did home-based architects have more freedom to experiment?

They had more freedom, but they did not have such great economic freedom. The others, who worked in large offices, were stuck in a repetitive system, a system of one thing that they wanted to repeat and preserve and sell a number of times. They made sausages. [laughs]

But Jaap Bakema had a big office. Did he also sell sausages?

When Bakema had work for which he was really interested, he would work in his small office with one or two employees.

So Bakema would also be included in this group?

Bakema is in-between, despite being a large office.

In a way, it was he who kept the whole group together. The Team 10 mailbox was located in his office.

He was a good man. Bakema helped me solving a problem I had with my youngest son Fredo when his passport was about to expire. The Portuguese Embassy in London was not issuing new passports, except passports only valid for 15 days so he could return to Portugal. Bakema

said: "Look, tell me if you can't do that. Your son can stay in England and come visit us so we can give him a Dutch passport or a safe pass. There is no problem here."

Bakema became a true friend.

He was the one who got work to Aldo van Eyck.

There was also this side of networking and the possibility of finding commissions at these meetings. The Smithsons came to visit you in Lourenço Marques. How did it go?

They went to visit my works because they wanted to see how the windows were detailed, how the marble was placed.

Did Team 10 had any influence on your projects?

From all of Team 10's works I think there are two extremely important buildings. One of them is the Economist in London. The other is the Aldo van Eyck orphanage in Amsterdam. For me, these two buildings were the ones who spoke more with me.

Is it hard to define what Team 10 was all about?

Well, Team 10 was a group of people about the same age, extremely different. Some Americans who tried to participate in Team 10 were badly treated in Otterlo. They were terribly badly treated by Alison Smithson in Otterlo.

How was your trip to Royaumont with Fernando Távora?

He wrote to me saying that he had received an invitation to Royaumont and asking me if I had been invited as well. I replied and said that he should come to Royaumont, so there could be a metropolitan Portuguese and an African Portuguese. He went to Royaumont. Aldo van Eyck liked him very much, they understood each other very well. He listened to everyone and got disturbed with the discussions.⁴

Did Fernando Távora know about your work?

No. I did my State exam in Porto where I presented a hospital with teeth. I met Távora at the time, when I was doing the exam. At one point, he invited me to his house. He showed me the boxes he designed and I showed him the photographs of my work I had with me. We became friends, we understood each other. He was very cautious. But it had to be that way to survive in Porto.

Wasn't there curiosity in Portugal, with the people you were talking to, about what you were discussing in Team 10?

But I hardly knew anyone here. I knew Fernando Távora, I knew José Forjaz, who worked with me on vacation. At the time, the Porto School had a huge communist influence.

The reception process in Portugal of your work was always difficult. The *Arquitectura Portuguesa* magazine only published the issue *Vitruvius Mozambicanus* in 1985.⁵

It took some time for my Technical University students grew up.

Was Manuel Graça Dias one of your students?

Graça Dias is from Lourenço Marques. He lived in a building of mine when he was a kid. *Vitruvius Mozambicanus* was published by José Lamas. The book is all written in English because Lamas managed to find translators. I gave him the slides and the drawings and then he gave these elements to Graça Dias to edit and publish in *Arquitectura Portuguesa* magazine. José Lamas was the only one who had been in France and the only one who had been interested in my work.

Was Lamas your student?

No, no. He must have seen publications in France of my work and he must have heard of me. It was him.

1 → Oscar Newman (ed.), CIAM'59 in Otterlo: Documents of Modern Architecture, Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag, 1961.

2 → Dirk van den Heuvel, Max Risselada (eds.), *Team 10 – In Search of a Utopia of the Present*, Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 2005

3 → In fact, Pancho Guedes reference should be referring to the apartments Francisco Barba Corsini did between 1953 and 1954: <http://hicarquitectura.com/2017/03/barba-corsini-apartamentos-la-pedrera>

4 → Fernando Távora, “O encontro de Royaumont”, *Arquitectura*, n.79, 1963, p.1.

5 → The work of Pancho Guedes was first published in 1963, in the issue no.79 of *Arquitectura* magazine, in a non-signed article titled “Miranda Guedes, arquiteto de Lourenço Marques”. The article denounces the sculptural and formalist concerns of Pancho Guedes, as well as his unrealistic solution for a facade. Cf. Pedro Baía, “Da Recepção à Transmissão: Reflexos do Team 10 na Cultura Arquitectónica Portuguesa 1951-1981”, PhD Thesis, Coimbra University, 2014, p.189 – <https://estudogeral.sib.uc.pt/handle/10316/23824>

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