UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

November 8, 2022
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Homage to the Writer

When Jorge de Sena was alive and well and teaching at UC Santa Barbara during the 1970s, scholarly peers ranked him among the finest Portuguese writers.

Today, those accolades persist. To honor Sena's legacy, the Center for Portuguese Studies recently unveiled a plaque commemorating his time as chair of the departments of Spanish and Portuguese and of comparative literature.

Spearheaded by professor Élide Valarini Oliver, who serves as director of the center, the unveiling was attended by Chancellor Henry Yang; Pedro Pinto, the General Consul of Portugal; and UCSB professor emeritus Harvey Sharrer, among others.

The plaque was unveiled during a two-part international colloquium on campus to celebrate 16th-century Portuguese poet Luis de Camões and the 100-year anniversary of Brazil's Modernizmo, an arts and literature movement against the country's prevailing culture rooted in colonialism.

Born in Lisbon in 1919, Sena fled to Brazil in 1959 in self-exile during the dictatorship of António Oliveira Salazar. As a writer, professor and critic in São Paulo, he protested the fascism growing in Portugal and, in 1964, during Brazil's military coup.

In 1965, he accepted a position at the University of Wisconsin and moved his family to Madison. Academic opportunity in 1970 brought him to UCSB, where he was a professor of Portuguese and comparative literature until he succumbed to lung cancer in 1978.

“Although the academic side of Jorge de Sena is very important, what attracted us, what touched us all and made us love him, was his great spirit. No one had so many friends, and the reason is simple: no one knew how to be a friend better than he,” Sharrer co-wrote in 1979 in an obituary about his friend and colleague. “His door was always open.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.