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## **Announcing the first ‘Museum Intensive’ organised by the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka**

The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka (MMCA Sri Lanka) is an education-led initiative that aims to establish a public museum dedicated to the display, research, collection and conservation of modern and contemporary art for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public, schools, and tourists. Developing a professionally qualified team with skills and knowledge for all areas of a museum’s work is among MMCA Sri Lanka’s key priorities.

To meet this challenge, in 2021, MMCA Sri Lanka conducted a study, funded by the Netherlands Embassy in Sri Lanka, that looked at the professional development landscape in Sri Lanka’s museum sector. The study highlighted several shortcomings regarding how museums interact or engage with audiences as part of the visitor experience. The research identified how exhibition design, public programmes, and social media contribute to the visitor experience but were not areas that museums were either investing in or recognising as important. The study drew attention specifically to the skills gaps and lack of professional museum expertise, particularly amongst younger professionals. As a next step, MMCA Sri Lanka is organising a series of ‘Museum Intensives’ (MI) for professionals in museums and collection-based cultural institutions in Sri Lanka. The programme aims to catalyse knowledge-sharing and professional development in under-explored areas in the sector.

Thanks to the Netherlands Embassy’s continued funding support, MMCA Sri Lanka will work with two primary partners, the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE), and the Reinwardt Academy (RA) for the first MI, which will focus on audience engagement. Key to the MI’s design and delivery, both Netherlands-based organisations bring a wealth of experience and international standards in museum training, having worked with partners internationally. The

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MI will hence strengthen cross-cultural knowledge and expertise sharing between professionally engaged learning organisations in Sri Lanka and the Netherlands, where the shift in focus is on mutual exchange rather than on a one way conversation.

Speaking about the programme, Tanja Gonggrijp, Ambassador for the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Sri Lanka, remarked, “the Embassy is proud and pleased to have partnered with MMCA Sri Lanka in this groundbreaking initiative. Sri Lanka has a rich culture in terms of history and heritage and contemporary and modern art. The MI will bring these two together, and engage Sri Lankan and Dutch professionals. It will be a unique opportunity to exchange, learn, and inspire. The project will help to strengthen the capacity of Sri Lankan museum professionals to preserve and promote their culture and to further engage current and future generations.”

The International Heritage Cooperation Programme’s mission is to create a worldwide heritage community, in which professionals connect, learn, and develop knowledge together towards finding solutions to shared challenges. Yolanda Ezendam, Head of Collections, remarked, “we hope the MI will be the start of a long term cooperation.”

Reinwardt Academy, based at the Faculty of Cultural Heritage at Amsterdam University of the Arts in the Netherlands, is the second oldest university in the world working in the international field of museum and heritage studies. Ruben Smit, Senior Lecturer and Manager International Programmes of Reinwardt Academy, remarked, “ *the MMCA Sri Lanka team has great expertise on how to run a museum for our times. Their commitment, knowledge, and energy are outstanding. I am sure that the training programme is going to be highly successful.*”

The first Museum Intensive is planned to take place in Colombo, Sri Lanka in October 2022. Sharmini Pereira, Chief Curator of MMCA Sri Lanka remarked, “*as a museum in the making, our first few years have been spent learning and looking at how we can be relevant to the societies we are located within. The chance to share our learnings with others in the cultural sector feels timely; it encourages greater inter-museum exchanges and networks across the island. MMCA Sri Lanka is tremendously grateful to the Netherlands Embassy for supporting this initiative that will usher in new conversations about museums and provide career*”

*pathways for young professionals who would never have considered the museum sector as a career option.”*

Presenting curated exhibitions and education programmes, MMCA Sri Lanka is the first publicly accessible trilingual venue of its kind in Sri Lanka. For more information, visit [www.mmca-srilanka.org](http://www.mmca-srilanka.org) or follow them on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/mmcasrilanka](https://www.facebook.com/mmcasrilanka) and Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/mmcasrilanka/> for updates. For information about the Museum Intensive in particular, write to [info@mmca-srilanka.org](mailto:info@mmca-srilanka.org).