

November 2022

### **The MMCA Sri Lanka concludes its first Museum Intensive training programme**

The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA Sri Lanka) successfully held its first Museum Intensive (MI) from 24–28 October 2022 as a five-day museum training programme. The training was conducted at the MMCA Sri Lanka premises and the John Keells X co-working and accelerator space. The MI programme was the culmination of a year-long collaboration between the MMCA Sri Lanka, the Reinwardt Academy at the Amsterdam University of the Arts, and the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, with the support of the Netherlands Embassy in Sri Lanka.

Acknowledging the support extended by the Netherlands Embassy in Sri Lanka, H.E. Bonnie Horbach, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Sri Lanka said, “This initiative not only strengthens the capacity of Sri Lankan professionals, it also preserves and promotes Sri Lankan culture by involving current and future generations. Knowledge exchange and creating professional networks amongst young professionals working in the museum sector is more important than ever. The sector has a lot of potential in Sri Lanka. We are very honoured to be supporting this major initiative, the first of its kind in Sri Lanka.”

Twenty two full-time participants and nine part-time participants representing over 19 cultural organisations in Sri Lanka joined the programme. Together, they took part in four lectures, six workshops and group activities, five field visits to the MMCA Sri Lanka, eight guided discussions, and final group presentations. The field visits to the gallery space of the MMCA Sri Lanka provided a case study for the participants. “Having no academic background in gallery or museum studies,” noted one participant, “I learned the important basics that are applied to this area which has helped me immensely to better understand my visitors and

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customers.” Echoing the sentiments of many participants, one claimed that “Building networks and learning from different institutions” was one of the perks of joining this training programme.

Museum training can take many forms, and the Museum Intensive is a pilot programme that aims to build capacity in the museum sector in Sri Lanka. The programme involved a range of activities which aimed to help these professionals think about how their audiences engage with their work. Speaking about the training programme, Sharmini Pereira, Chief Curator, MMCA Sri Lanka, remarked “We debunked many ideas about what a museum should be in order to think out loud about the many ways a museum might be experienced if the rule book about how audiences engage with art was re-written. The Museum Intensive gave rise to five stimulating days of conversations and role play, where the participants sang happy birthday, answered 50 questions about a can of sprite, tied knots in a piece of string, and displaced the word ‘audience’ with a list of other terms. They connected the importance of objects to storytelling from the small stories to the bigger issues that surround and inform all the work that they do. It was intense for good reason. Audience engagement is where we need to think together and build better museum experiences.”

At the closing event of the programme, participants were presented with certificates of participation. They were presented by H.E. Bonnie Horbach, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Sri Lanka; Yolanda Ezendam, Head of Collections, Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands; Ruben Smit, Senior Lecturer and Manager of International Programmes, Reinwardt Academy of the Amsterdam University of the Arts and Sharmini Pereira, Chief Curator, MMCA Sri Lanka.

For more information on the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka, 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/>