

December 2022

**The European Union Partners to Support 'Encounters' by the  
Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka**

In February 2022, the European Union (EU) entered a partnership with the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka's (MMCA Sri Lanka) second exhibition titled 'Encounters' which opened on 11 February 2022.

Acknowledging the support extended by the EU to 'Encounters', Sharmini Pereira, Chief Curator of the MMCA Sri Lanka said, "The EU's support of the 'Encounters' exhibition made it possible for the MMCA Sri Lanka to offer a six month free public programming. Many of these programmes were offered during the aragalya, which saw people across the island protesting against the extreme hardships inflicted by the economic and political situation in the country." In spite of the difficulties in the country, the MMCA Sri Lanka continued to attract visitors. Speaking about audience attendance, Pereira states that "Those who attended group events like puzzle days or discussion-based events during this time were higher than expected. This indicates how vital it is for museums like ours to prioritise public engagement, and open up our doors more consciously to the societies in which we are located."

Through this grant, the EU generously supported the delivery of 61 free, public programmes which saw 1,087 participants. These included 11 workshops which engaged the participants with the artworks on display through hands-on experiences. "These workshops, curated alongside thematics related to the exhibition, have allowed participants to engage in a variety of interests ranging from reading history from stamps, storytelling, botanical drawing, visual journaling, sewing and embroidery, and origami to eco-friendly living," noted Pramodha Weerasekara, Assistant Curator of Education and Public Programming, MMCA Sri Lanka. Elaborating on the educational aspect of these workshops, Weerasekara said, "Participants engage in these learning

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experiences within the context of the museum and the exhibition. They leave with not only the knowledge they gained from the workshop but hopefully, a renewed interest in Sri Lankan modern and contemporary art.”

At the beginning of each rotation of ‘Encounters’, the MMCA Sri Lanka hosted private previews for educators connected with the museum through its outreach programmes. This is another initiative which the EU’s support enabled, encouraging the educational endeavours of the MMCA Sri Lanka. At the beginning of Rotation 1 and 2 of ‘Encounters’ two such events were held on 10 February and 22 June 2022, attended by a total of 34 teachers. “As an education-led museum, providing learning experiences for our audiences is a priority for us,” stated Weerasekera, adding that “we are therefore extremely grateful for the continued support of the European Union towards Public Programmes related to 'Encounters'.”

The MMCA Sri Lanka invites a diverse range of people, including artists, architects, and designers amongst others, to facilitate their public programmes. The EU grant made it possible to work with and support 103 such resource persons for various workshops, gallery talks, and other public events. In addition, the grant supported the recruitment of 25 Visitor Educators (VEs) to the museum. As the first points of contact between visitors, and the exhibitions and programmes, VEs are present in the MMCA Sri Lanka’s galleries to engage with audiences of all levels.

Speaking on this partnership, Anne Vaugier-Chatterjee, International Relations Officer for Politics, Trade, and Economics Relations- Sri Lanka and the Maldives said, “It was a pleasure for the EU Delegation to support the innovative approach of the MMCA Sri Lanka and its Chief Curator Sharmini Pereira. As well as repositories of the past, museums should be living experiences and this was achieved in a very successful way with the current exhibition ‘Encounters’.” Addressing the socio-political significance of the exhibition, Vaugier-Chatterjee noted that, “‘Encounters provides a new window into the country’s modern and contemporary art, while also reflecting socio-political developments of significance,” adding that “We trust that it will continue to attract a very diverse audience of young and old, cutting across class and age groups in an inclusive outreach.”

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 [facebook.com/mmcasrilanka](https://facebook.com/mmcasrilanka) and Instagram at [instagram.com/mmcasrilanka/](https://instagram.com/mmcasrilanka/)