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## **Promising Young Professionals Team Up at 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 Sri Lankan modern and contemporary art for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public, schools, and tourists. During a time when most other museums around the world were downsizing, a dynamic group of young professionals have been driving this much needed initiative forward. Since it launched in 2019, the team behind MMCA Sri Lanka has grown from a four to a 12 person full-time team. This growing team of professionals includes Pramodha Weerasekera, Assistant Curator, Education and Public Programming, Sanuja Goonetilleke, Curator, Learning and Training, and Thinal Sajeewa, Research Assistant. These promising young professionals have shared their thoughts on their journeys at the MMCA Sri Lanka.

### **1. What are the highlights of your time at the MMCA Sri Lanka?**

**Pramodha:** Since joining in 2019 as part of the founding team at the MMCA Sri Lanka, the main highlight for me was our first exhibition ‘one hundred thousand small tales’. I enjoyed supporting the curatorial process behind all the public programmes and the school/university visits we organised. A school visit I will always remember was a special field visit we organised for 60 preschool children on Valentine’s Day, 2020.

**Sanuja:** Seeing our Visitor Educators receive positive feedback from visitors, and hearing an intern indicate an interest in a long-term career path in this field are always moments of highlight for me. A highlight from just last year has to be the completion of the Museum Intensive, our first collaborative international training program, after a year of online research and planning.

**Thinal:** One of the highlights was the opportunity to intern with the museum, which ultimately led to my full-time position. I am grateful for the open-minded

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and supportive work environment, as well as the guidance and mentorship provided by my line managers. These factors have contributed significantly to my personal and professional growth since joining the MMCA Sri Lanka.

## **2. How have your responsibilities within the team evolved since joining?**

**Pramodha:** In the first year my work involved researching the educational landscape of Sri Lanka and greater Colombo, and curating the museum's Outreach programme. As our second exhibition 'Encounters' came into being, my work evolved with the growing approach to public programmes. I was soon working with a significant number of resource persons to curate and execute public programmes for all target audiences.

**Sanuja:** I applied to and joined the MMCA Sri Lanka in mid-2021 as its first Assistant Curator of Learning and Training. I was promoted to Curator of Learning and Training in early 2022. My role entails research, management, and evaluation of all our training activities. In addition, I've increasingly begun to ideate new, longer term programs.

**Thinal:** Upon joining the MMCA Sri Lanka as a Visitor Educator, my initial responsibilities included facilitating interactions with visitors and assisting public programmes. During my internship, I had the opportunity to engage further with the artworks during production. In my current full-time position, I am responsible for conducting research and cataloguing a collection, which I think reflects the evolution and increasing seriousness of my responsibilities at the museum.

## **3. Why do you want to work at the MMCA Sri Lanka?**

### **Pramodha:**

My values related to art align very closely with the museum's approach. I have always believed in the museum's larger mission of establishing a museum of modern and contemporary art in Sri Lanka, and especially the drive of the core team and its founders to face this challenge. I am also driven by my passion to give back to the communities of students, art educators, children, intellectuals, and artists through knowledge sharing and learning experiences.

### **Sanuja:**

Museum-based learning and creative placemaking are stubbornly tangible phenomena in an increasingly digital-obsessed world. I like that. My current role in Learning and Training often looks to the future. Therefore, I value contributing to the MMCA Sri Lanka's journey to being such a culturally and economically symbolic organisation in time.

### **Thinal:**

I was not initially interested in art, but upon receiving an opportunity to work at the museum, I realised the potential for personal growth in this field. As such, I am motivated to develop my skills and eventually become a curator at the museum.