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Public Programmes at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka

Public programmes allow the general public to experience museums beyond what is offered in walk-in visits, by welcoming visitors to engage in creative, reflective, and recreational activities in response to what is offered on exhibition and gallery spaces. The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka (MMCA Sri Lanka) opened in December 2019, and has facilitated public programmes for its visitors since its inception. These free programmes are curated alongside the museum's exhibitions, as part of its efforts to engage the public with the artworks on display, while welcoming educational and recreational opportunities for the participants.

The museum's public programmes include and are not limited to Gallery Talks, Workshops, Performances, Poetry Readings, a Poetry Club, Curator's Tours, Exhibition Tours, and Puzzle Days. They provide opportunities for the public to receive art-related education, acquire further knowledge on socio-cultural and political discourses related to art and culture, and enjoy themselves in the rejuvenating context of the country's first museum of modern and contemporary art.

Sharmini Pereira, Chief Curator at the MMCA Sri Lanka said that, "Other than being free, our Public Programmes are geared towards providing more access to modern and contemporary art because beyond having commercial value, it provides such a stimulating means to reflect on the societies we live in. As such, we also recognise that modern and contemporary art can also be baffling to some audiences, which is why our public programmes are key." Pereira added that, "Building audiences for our planned permanent facility is part of this exercise, and we have seen our audience widen and multiply since our inception."

The free public programmes by the MMCA Sri Lanka are led by its Education Department, and curated by Pramodha Weerasekera, Assistant Curator of Education and Public Programmes. Weerasekera noted that, "These programmes are learning experiences for all audiences, often revolving around

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the themes of our exhibitions. Our aim is to ensure that everyone leaves an event with a better understanding and awareness about Sri Lankan modern and contemporary art, relevant thematics, discourses, skills, and much more.” She further added that “Resource persons who collaborate with us on Public Programmes are experts who work with a sensibility about art, and we are grateful to have worked with more than a 100 of them so far.”

A host of new and exciting free public programmes await the museum’s audiences with its new exhibition titled ‘The Foreigners’, which will be on display until 22 October 2023 at its premises on the ground floor of Crescat Boulevard, Colombo 3. ‘The Foreigners’ brings together the works of 15 contemporary artists, who use varying media to address the entangled ways in which foreignness is inscribed onto them, marking them as strangers, outsiders, or transgressors. Public programmes during ‘The Foreigners’ will include Gallery Talks with artists and experts of the ideas and disciplines related to the artworks, along with performances, workshops, and more. The programming will also introduce a new series of Reading Groups that will critically read literary texts alongside the artworks on display.

All public programmes are made possible with the generous support of the European Union, whilst ‘The Foreigners’ exhibition is kindly supported by Anojie Amerasinghe, Hugues Marchand, Radhika Chopra, and Rajan Anandan, with additional support from the MMCA Sri Lanka’s Founding Patrons, the British Council, and Lite87. Generous support is also provided by the museum’s major benefactors and funders: John Keells Foundation, Nations Trust Bank, and Fairfirst Insurance.

The museum is open daily from 10am to 6pm (except on Poya days and public holidays) at the ground floor of Crescat Boulevard, Colombo 3, and entrance to the museum and all its public programmes is free. Information about the museum, and its exhibitions and public programmes can be found via their website www.mmca-srilanka.org, or on Facebook at facebook.com/mmcasrilanka and Instagram at instagram.com/mmcasrilanka/.