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The MMCA Sri Lanka and Selyn Introduce a Limited Edition Series of Fabrics

- The sarong and scarves drawing inspiration from two George Keyt paintings are must-have pieces for all art lovers!

The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka (MMCA Sri Lanka) has collaborated with the Design for Impact initiative by Selyn to create a set of fabrics that respond to two paintings by George Keyt (1901–1993). The limited edition sarong and two scarves have been produced using the design and elements of the paintings titled ‘The Kandyan Bride’ (1951) and ‘The Offering’ (1948). Both paintings were on display in Rotation 3 of ‘Encounters’, the second exhibition by the MMCA Sri Lanka which closed in March 2023.

The collaboration came about when Sharmini Pereira, Chief Curator of MMCA Sri Lanka approached Selyna Peiris, Director of Selyn with an invitation to create a unique Selyn fabric in response to the two paintings. Speaking about the partnership Pereira said, “We are delighted with the outcome of this initiative with Selyn because it demonstrates how contemporary designers can help us look at the work of modern artists anew. The Selyn designers produced items that are not only exquisitely made but conceptually rooted in the stories that are part of this country’s art histories. Their agility to move from commercial large-scale products to limited edition collectables is something to be celebrated and definitely continued.”

After visiting the MMCA Sri Lanka to look at the two paintings by George Keyt, the designers from Selyn were able to identify the distinctive fabrics that Keyt was referencing in both paintings, specifically in relation to the osariya or Kandyan sari worn by the female figure in ‘The Kandyan Bride’ (1951). From here, they went away to research the fabrics in more depth, and over the next three months, they developed three distinctive handloom fabric designs that responded to each of the paintings. The intricate detailing and colours used by the designers Seemanthani Wanduragala, Jola Hauschild, and Lakshani

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Jayathilake not only responded to the colour palette used by Keyt but also explored the content of each painting conceptually.

For example, the fabric that responded to Keyt's painting 'The Offering' (1948) combines the attires of the two figures in the painting into one fabric. The scarf is hence made up of green and purple stripes that borrow from the plaid clothing worn by the left-hand figure, which sits next to a contrasting panel of stripes that are drawn from the attire of the figure on the right-hand side of the painting. Like Keyt's work, the scarf has a distinctive geometrical composition to it, alluding to the two figures and their symmetrical positioning on either side of the painting. Inspired by the ambiguity that surrounds the relationship between the two figures, the Selyn design team have created a scarf that can be worn by anyone, regardless of their gender identity. The other two fabrics take inspiration from 'The Kandyan Bride' (1951), drawing from the osariya worn by the female figure in the painting.

Selyn's handwoven fabric stems from a 2500-year history of handloom weaving in Sri Lanka. All fabrics are fair trade, vegan, cruelty-free, and handwoven by Selyn's artisans based in their Wanduragala workshop.

Speaking on the partnership with the MMCA Sri Lanka, Selyna Peiris from Selyn said, "We are pleased to partner with the MMCA Sri Lanka to create this limited edition sarongs and scarves that celebrate how the familiar can be reimaged in the hands of other artists and designers. By wearing and gifting these products you are supporting the Selyn Foundation and the MMCA Sri Lanka." She added that, "These fabrics have been produced under Selyn's Design for Impact programme which is a joint initiative between Selyn and the Selyn Foundation, to collaborate with the world's leading designers, brands, universities, and organisations to raise awareness about, revive, and sustain Sri Lanka's craft industry, and its artisans who are mainly women. We are happy to collaborate with an organisation like the MMCA Sri Lanka which also provides cultural entrepreneurship, leadership development, and financial management skills and opportunities to women."

To order your limited edition scarf or sarong, send a direct message on the MMCA Sri Lanka Instagram page [instagram.com/mmcasrilanka/](https://www.instagram.com/mmcasrilanka/) or Facebook page [facebook.com/mmcasrilanka/](https://www.facebook.com/mmcasrilanka/)