

February 2023

MMCA Sri Lanka launches ‘Second Volume’

The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka (MMCA Sri Lanka) announces the launch of its first research publication ‘Second Volume: The Watapuluwa Housing Scheme by Minnette De Silva’. Edited by Sharmini Pereira and Kaumadi Jayaweera, the publication explores the groundbreaking work of architect Minnette De Silva (1918–1998) within the context of the Watapuluwa Housing Scheme, Kandy (1958).

‘Second Volume’ accompanies the MMCA Sri Lanka’s current exhibition ‘88 Acres: The Watapuluwa Housing Scheme by Minnette De Silva’, offering readers unparalleled access to primary research and previously unpublished archival materials. Among the highlights of this publication is a transcript of the animated documentary ‘is this an architectural documentary?’ (2023) by contemporary artists Irushi Tennekoon, Sumedha Kelegama, and Sumudu Athukorala, which provides valuable insights into De Silva’s visionary approach.

The publication is priced at LKR 15,000 and features a specially commissioned essay by Pereira. It is complemented by measured drawings of De Silva’s five house typologies for the Watapuluwa Housing Scheme, skillfully crafted by architects Kelegama and Athukorala. A special supplement of De Silva’s seminal essay ‘Experiments in Modern Regional Architecture in Ceylon 1950 to 1960’ (1965–1966) adds depth and historical context to this research endeavour.

In line with De Silva’s ethos of sustainability and local engagement, ‘Second Volume’ is printed on locally available paper stock, minimising environmental impact and honouring her legacy of resourcefulness. Additionally, the publication extends De Silva’s archival efforts by following her posthumously published autobiography ‘The Life and Work of an Asian Woman Architect Vol. 1’ (1998). Along with the book, the MMCA Sri Lanka has created notebooks from the paper off-cuts of the book-printing process, which come in three different paper qualities—uncoated art paper, offset paper, and coated art paper—sold in a set of three at LKR 2,000 or as a single notebook at LKR 800.

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Designed by Bangalore-based Nia Thandapani and printed by Gunaratne Offset Ltd. in Sri Lanka, 'Second Volume' exemplifies MMCA Sri Lanka's commitment to education and cultural preservation. Proceeds from the sale of the publication and associated notebooks will support ongoing research on De Silva's work, and public programming at the MMCA Sri Lanka. 'Second Volume: The Watapuluwa Housing Scheme by Minnette De Silva' is now available for purchase at the MMCA Sri Lanka, and through their Facebook at facebook.com/mmcasrilanka and Instagram at instagram.com/mmcasrilanka/.

The MMCA Sri Lanka will be launching Tamil and Sinhala translations of 'Second Volume' in April 2024. They will be available on the Museum's website as free downloadables, encouraging wider accessibility and knowledge sharing.

The MMCA Sri Lanka is an education-led initiative that aims to establish a public museum dedicated to the display, research, collection, and conservation of modern and contemporary art for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public, schools, and tourists. The museum is open daily from 10 am to 6 pm (except on Poya days and public holidays) on the ground floor of Crescat Boulevard, Colombo 3, and the entrance to the museum and all its public programmes are free.