

January 2024

### **MMCA Sri Lanka announces the launch of ‘Second Volume’**

The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka (MMCA Sri Lanka) is pleased to announce its upcoming publication ‘Second Volume’ conceived to accompany their current exhibition ‘88 Acres: The Watapuluwa Housing Scheme by Minnette De Silva’. The exhibition focuses on the groundbreaking social housing project that was designed with the active participation of its users, heralding a new era in affordable accommodation for a diverse ethno-religious community of government public servants in Sri Lanka.

Published by the MMCA Sri Lanka, ‘Second Volume’ is the museum’s first research publication and is supported by World Monuments Fund, British Council, Art South Asia Project, and Vitra Design Foundation. ‘Second Volume’ will be launched on 10 February 2024 at the MMCA Sri Lanka, located on the ground floor of Crescat Boulevard, Colombo 3. Copies of ‘Second Volume’ will be available for pre-order from 1 February 2024. To pre-order or purchase the publication, please visit the museum's Facebook page at [facebook.com/mmcasrilanka](https://facebook.com/mmcasrilanka) or Instagram page at [instagram.com/mmcasrilanka/](https://instagram.com/mmcasrilanka/). All proceeds will go towards supporting education and public programmes for ‘88 Acres’, and the MMCA Sri Lanka’s continued research on De Silva’s work.

Speaking about the launch of ‘Second Volume’, Sharmini Pereira, Chief Curator, MMCA Sri Lanka and Editor of ‘Second Volume’ said that, “Minnette De Silva is considered the first woman architect in Sri Lanka, and was a pioneering modern architect. Her work deserves to be looked at in much closer detail, which is why we have compiled our research, to date, in a book format so that it can be shared more widely.” Speaking of their support towards the publication, John Darlington, Director of Projects at World Monuments Fund said that, “Minnette De Silva deserves international recognition. Her legacy of buildings and her approach to architecture have a real resonance today. Minnette’s ideas on consultation, her use of local materials, craftspeople and artists, and her mission to root architecture in place are themes which are increasingly relevant well beyond her native Sri Lanka.” He added that, “World Monuments Fund is

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delighted to support the MMCA Sri Lanka in the publication of ‘Second Volume’. More people should hear about Minnette, and this publication will help spread the word – ensuring her legacy lives on.”

‘Second Volume’ brings together primary research and previously unpublished archival materials, including a transcript of the animated documentary ‘is this an architectural documentary?’ (2023) by contemporary artists Irushi Tennekoon, Sumedha Kelegama, and Sumudu Athukorala. It also includes a specially commissioned essay by Pereira, along with measured drawings of De Silva’s five house typologies for the Watapuluwa Housing Scheme by architects Kelegama and Athukorala. ‘Second Volume’ also contains a special supplement of De Silva’s seminal essay ‘Experiments in Modern Regional Architecture in Ceylon 1950 to 1960’ (1965–1966), first published by the Ceylon Institute of Architects in 1966.

Orlando Edwards, Country Director, British Council Sri Lanka said that, “We are very pleased to support ‘Second Volume’, the MMCA Sri Lanka’s first research publication accompanying the current ‘88 Acres’ exhibition. The work of Minnette De Silva was ahead of its time, and she has inspired and influenced generations of architects.” He added that, “We hope that this publication will inform and encourage the next generation of Sri Lankan architects to continue in the tradition of responsible, considered, and sympathetic design. This publication invites architects, art enthusiasts, scholars, and the public to celebrate the enduring legacy of one of Sri Lanka’s architects.”

‘Second Volume’ continues the archival process begun by De Silva with her posthumously published autobiography ‘The Life and Work of an Asian Woman Architect Vol. 1’ (1998). Similar in size, this publication, by contrast, focuses on a single project - The Watapuluwa Housing Scheme, opening up the prospect of future ‘volumes’ that would in turn look at her seminal practice one project at a time. ‘Second Volume’ is printed on locally available paper stock without any paper wastage highlighting the vital importance De Silva placed on using local materials, nearly 70 years ahead of her time.

Nour Aslam, Executive Director of Art South Asia Project (ASAP) said that, “Art South Asia Project is proud to have partially funded the publication ‘Second Volume’. Not only is MMCA Sri Lanka the first Sri Lankan grant partner for ASAP, but this is also the first museum publication we have supported. For us, literature and publications are key factors in contributing to the field of modern and contemporary South Asian art.” She further said that, “We are very fortunate to have received this project from the wonderful team at the MMCA Sri Lanka, especially under the vision of Sharmini Pereira, who has been pivotal in the field to further voice the Sri Lankan art historical narrative.”

‘Second Volume’ has been designed by Bangalore-based Nia Thandapani, and printed in Sri Lanka. The book has been edited by Pereira, and assisted by Kaumadi Jayaweera, Editorial Assistant at the MMCA Sri Lanka.

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.