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### **The Growing Team of Museum Professionals at the MMCA Sri Lanka**

Training young museum professionals by introducing them to new learning paths, is an important part of the work of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka (MMCA Sri Lanka). The museum is committed towards encouraging students to explore careers in the arts, culture, and heritage sector before, during, and after completing their studies, through which the MMCA Sri Lanka hopes to support in building capacity in the arts and culture sector of Sri Lanka.

The approach taken by the MMCA Sri Lanka towards these learning and training efforts includes the Visitor Educator (VE) programme at the museum. Working primarily in and around the museum gallery, VEs perform a range of tasks including visitor engagement, artwork security, and supporting the smooth running of public programmes. Mineli Karunaratne was a Visitor Educator at the MMCA Sri Lanka from April to September 2023, and then went on to join the museum team as Coordinator of Education and Public Programmes from October 2023 to August 2024. While her experience and training as a VE nourished her new role, she also developed an interest in art history which she decided to pursue as a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History at the University of Essex in the UK.

The content of Karunaratne's course is based on the history of visual culture, which she believes nourishes her fascination with new forms of contemporary art being created across the world today. "My time at the MMCA Sri Lanka has given me a great training in appreciating these spaces and noticing how they work," said Karunaratne. She added that visits to these places are giving her the kind of experience that she would like to bring back to Sri Lanka upon her return to working in the arts and culture sector here.

Thinal Sajeewa, Assistant Curator at the MMCA Sri Lanka is another example of the museum's efforts towards encouraging young professionals of diverse academic and training backgrounds to join the museum sector. He is one of the curators of the museum's current exhibition 'Total Landscaping', a challenging

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yet rewarding feat for Sajeewa who is also pursuing his Bachelor of Arts degree in Graphic Design at AMDT School of Creativity in Colombo, affiliated with Falmouth University in the UK. Strongly believing that a formal education in design would strengthen his curatorial practice, as his studies explore visual communication across different mediums, including art history, typography, branding — all of which play an important role in exhibition-making.

“The museum was a vital part of helping me realize what I wanted to do professionally,” says Sajeewa, adding that “Once I graduate, I hope to pursue a Master’s in the arts and continue contributing to Sri Lanka’s art scene as a Curator to help shape how exhibitions of modern and contemporary art engage with audiences.”

Working at the first museum of modern and contemporary art in Sri Lanka has certainly been an eye-opening experience for Nimaya Harris, Project Curator at the MMCA Sri Lanka, who completed a Master of Studies degree in World Literature from the University of Oxford in 2024. “This master's programme included studying book history, archival theory and manuscripts. It nourished my multi-disciplinary research interests in the museum and heritage sector,” noted Harris. By having her as a part of the curatorial team, the museum is opening up their curatorial approach to further embrace humanities disciplines while acknowledging the importance of research in fulfilling the MMCA Sri Lanka’s mission.

By rendering continuous support towards realising their academic, training, and professional expectations, the MMCA Sri Lanka is committed to nurturing young museum professionals in Sri Lanka’s arts and culture sector. More information about the museum, and its exhibitions and public programmes can be found via their website [www.mmca-srilanka.org](http://www.mmca-srilanka.org), or on Facebook at [facebook.com/mmcasrilanka](https://facebook.com/mmcasrilanka) and Instagram at [instagram.com/mmcasrilanka/](https://instagram.com/mmcasrilanka/).