

museum of modern and contemporary art sri lanka

Quarterly Newsletter #7 – April 2024

We are excited to announce that ‘88 Acres: The Watapuluwa Housing Scheme by Minnette De Silva’ has welcomed over 8,000 visitors. This includes 699 students from schools and higher educational institutes across the country, who have visited us since the exhibition opened on 30 November 2023.

More than 804 visitors have participated in 45 public programmes, which include Gallery Talks, Workshops, Curator’s Tours, and Artists’ Tours curated alongside ‘88 Acres’. If you are in the vicinity, make sure to drop by the MMCA Sri Lanka located at Crescat Boulevard, Colombo 3. To keep up to date with our programmes and events, sign up for our newsletter or follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

We are also happy to share that ‘88 Acres’ was reviewed by Mrinmayee Bhoot for STIR World in February, whilst in the same month Sharmini Pereira, our Chief Curator, spoke to Ishara Jayawardane for Daily News on the future of museums in Sri Lanka. In March, the exhibition was featured in the newsletter ‘Mind the Gap’ by Namita Bhandare for Hindustan Times, and our Chief Curator spoke to Shailendree Wickrama Adittiya of The Morning on the importance of recognising contemporary artists as researchers.

On 11 February we launched our first research publication ‘Second Volume: The Watapuluwa Housing Scheme by Minnette De Silva’. The publication brings together primary research and previously unpublished archival materials, including a transcript of the animated documentary ‘is this an architectural documentary?’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. 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 is also included at the back of the publication. ‘Second Volume’ was made possible with the generous support of World Monuments Fund, British Council, Art South Asia Project, and Vitra Design Foundation.

“Minnette De Silva deserves international recognition. Her legacy of buildings and her approach to architecture have a real resonance today. World Monuments Fund is 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.”

John Darlington, Director of Projects at World Monuments Fund

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“We are very pleased to support ‘Second Volume’, the MMCA Sri Lanka’s first research publication accompanying the current ‘88 Acres’ exhibition. 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.”

Orlando Edwards, Country Director, British Council Sri Lanka

“Art South Asia Project (ASAP) 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. 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.”

Nour Aslam, Executive Director of Art South Asia Project

Designed by Bangalore-based Nia Thandapani and edited by Sharmini Pereira and Kaumadi Jayaweera, the publication is available for purchase at the Museum and through our Instagram and Facebook. Tamil and Sinhala language versions of the publication will be available as free downloadables on our website from April 2024!

On 21 March, the MMCA Sri Lanka Founding Patrons for 2024 participated in a special reception hosted by Ajit Gunewardene, Chairperson of the Museum Committee. The evening celebrated the crucial role our Founding Patrons play in the museums’ endeavours. Founding Patrons were treated to a one-off selection of canapés, curated in response to ‘88 Acres’ and the architect Minnette De Silva, by Shavini Ruberu of Bird & Bear Kitchen.

We are also thrilled to announce ‘Arts 4 ADR’, a project led by the MMCA Sri Lanka and funded by Supporting Effective Dispute Resolution (SEDR Sri Lanka). ‘Arts 4 ADR’ aims to examine art’s potential to foster dialogue, unite communities, provoke reflection, and offer alternative pathways to reconciliation within contexts of communal conflict.

The MMCA Sri Lanka is also proud to launch the Dialogue and Civic Engagement Fellowship Programme. The Fellowships are aimed at cultural practitioners (artists, activists, writers, poets, facilitators, performers, and educators) from the Northern, Eastern, and Uva provinces of Sri Lanka interested in using art to promote civic dialogue and Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) approaches.

We wish all our subscribers a Happy Sinhala and Tamil New Year!

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