

language is migrant
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COLOMBOSCOPE 2022

Language is Migrant

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'If you really think about it, we were all raised inside a giant dictionary. Society as we know it is simply a collection of shared definitions. Who is normal? What is beauty? Who is a criminal? What is a woman? What is a man? What is good love? What is sex? What is fair? Who is holy? What is evil? The more you agree with the definitions you've been given, the more you belong. The more you belong, the farther away you are from punishment.'

- Elghosa Osunde

Festival Introduction

SINCE THE CONCEPTION of the Colomboscope's seventh edition—Language is Migrant—and the platform's expanded activities held across the island, the world has transformed in more and less profound ways. Amidst the great uncertainties that persist for us as a planetary community, with caution and eagerness, we are finally inching closer to launching the festival. Attentive to the fluctuating pressures and exigencies of artist communities we hold dear, our endeavour has been to remain responsive in sustaining creative conversations locally and globally, as well as attune to the improvised synergies shared by cultural producers around South Asia despite systemic collapse. Embarking from the words of poet-artist Cecilia Vicuña, Language is Migrant maps hybrid belonging, diasporic lineages, and coerced dislocation through artistic and literary contributions. This edition explores how language relations form our selfhood and

affinities that outweigh the boundedness of nationhood and citizenship. It observes how words transit, mutate, dissolve, and are buried between people and societies. In the counterpoints of stillness and motion we situate practices that critically explore emancipatory and forced mobility—for we cannot deny that the world as we know it is composed of movement at galactic, human, and atomic levels.

The forthcoming pages include insights into over fifty artistic commissions, performances, film works, and publications that unfold in six chapters across venues in Colombo. 'Between the Lines' centres the live acts, talks, tandem residencies, and outreach initiatives that have been organized over the past two years and extended our festival community. The section 'Compositions' invites reflection pieces from authors who have followed the itinerant sojourns and anchorings

of this Colomboscope edition. At the Colombo Public Library, a series of artists' works bring together international and local collaborators. These have evolved through dialogue and sociality to foreground collective pedagogies, body movement, and choreography in everyday life, as well as community archives. Artistic productions treat translation as a vehicle that takes different routes in the long journey toward understanding. Knowledge exchange is carried out in displays of anecdotal narrations, marginalia, hand illustrated scrolls, and diagrams, adding to the official memory of Sri Lanka's largest library.

Returning to the Rio Complex, *Language is Migrant* brings to this legendary building several artists participating in Colomboscope for the first time. Their propositions treat its scarred architecture as a sonic chamber where a multitude of voices, accents, chants, confessions, and whispers flow together like a river. Each room invites forms of recording, bearing witness, time travel, and interventions to mark registrations of collective belonging amidst pain and pleasure. Projects delve into botanical memory, culinary legacies, aesthetics of sacred life as well as enduring resonances of warfare and incarceration. *Language is Migrant* engages ways of listening for gaps and crossings between fearless expression, vocabularies of resistance, and

regimes of power enforcing silence. The W A Silva Museum and Printing Press led by the Akuru Collective in the former home of best-selling author of Sinhalese literature, W A Silva, showcases a complete traditional letterpress and a collection of wood and metal types. Hosting the Institute of Typography Sri Lanka, it also houses an archive of books, ephemera, and printed resources dating from the nineteenth-century. Here, artistic presentations include site-responsive works that are in dialogue with the transforming role of print culture and its relation across virtual and analogue systems of staging literature. Contemporary practices challenge the universalism that majoritarian tongues pronounce as the only possible truth. Instead, they assemble statements that are playful, subversive, and investigative acts of reportage.

Biographical experiences are vivid forms of history telling. Joan Didion reminds us, 'We tell ourselves stories in order to live.' At Barefoot Gallery, artists use textile and collage as mediums to release visual chronicles. The thread and pixel replace the pen in composing storylines, evoking fields of aspirational movement, desire, disability, and displacement. Where language falters in the blurring of memory—intergenerational accounts, heritage objects, and sites that have been the grounds of losing and making homes—rekindle ways of remembering.

The Lakhmahal Community Library is envisioned as a space of rest and refuge for autonomous learning, the activation of feminist vocabularies, and artist-led publishing that challenges the linear codes of reading and hierarchical dissemination in the publishing industry. This specially conceived reading room is titled Reading in Tongues, borrowing from queer Chicana poet, writer, and feminist theorist, Gloria Anzaldúa's text 'Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to 3rd World Women Writers.' The spatial design is composed by ADM Architects, keeping in view the generous ambience of a historic household and garden. It also acts as a counterpoint to the Colombo Public Library by bringing oral cultures on par with the published word; making room for sharing literature in privacy and in kinship; immersing in multilingual poetry and Zine making, which reorient our relationship with the book as a multifold body. Addressing the intimacy and hardship of writing as a 'Third World Woman', Anzaldúa encourages us in this cataclysmic present to remain open and courageous in using our languages as an embrace of the world: May 'we continue to swim fearless with the length of our own bodies, in a sea of words'.

language is migrant

The seventh edition of Colomboscope journeys from a poem-manifesto by Chilean artist and poet Cecilia Vicuña titled *Language is Migrant*. She writes:

'Words move from language to language, from culture to culture, from mouth to mouth. Our bodies are migrants; cells and bacteria are migrants too. Even galaxies migrate.'

Artists compose, decipher, and perform as vital travellers and storytellers of our times, often repairing relations by drawing material articulations from deep losses, silence, and erasures while inventing language forms as bridges between communal narratives, official records, and submerged histories.

The festival brings together intergenerational cultural practices from across Sri Lanka, South Asia, and varied international contexts, fostering global dialogue. Curated by Anushka Rajendran, with artistic director Natasha Ginwala, several commissioned artworks and long-term projects will mobilize acts of transmission that embrace collective synergies and refuse parochial attitudes that are on the rise while dwelling in place. Instead, the channeling of sonic frequencies, live acts, and spaces of reading become elemental instruments that sustain the traffic of creative processes, biographical timekeeping, engaged listening, and senses of diasporic belonging.

Circulation is primordial to all forms of life, yet we don't often consider the ways linguistic bodies traverse geographies and shape social worlds composed of polyphonic tongues and fragmented memory fields. Since mobility and immobility are the common condition of planetary existence, we ask, mindful of the historical error of forced movement: Can we consider radical mobility across political and economic barriers today as a unifying feature of animated life forces? As the world has been composed of itinerant flows beyond human experience—tectonic shifts, nomadic species, to oceanic drifts—may listening to such amorphous languages too pave migrant futures that embrace pluralistic currents sustained against great odds?

The tides of social alienation and weaponized language leave us hungry for a lexicon toward generative life. Poet and novelist Ocean Vuong remarks, 'You are a participant in the future of language.' This notion slices open the potential for stepping into the river of past chronicles, conceiving new structures of 'schooling' beyond administered curricula, and rescuing the body as an agent of self-determination. *Language is Migrant* invites embodied narratives that are written into lived rhythms and evidence framed by the senses; restorative forms of correspondence amidst estranged kin; the muscular task of learning a foreign language; song lines leaking over border zones; and losing one's mother tongue while crossing an ocean. In the mode of a pitchfork, such encounters emerge from states of witnessing and testimony, they are relational pursuits that flow into each other, for we realize, one ceases to be without the other.

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කලමිබුස්කෝප්හි හත් වන අදියර විලී ජාතික කිවිදියක හා දෘශ්‍ය කලාකාරිනියක වන සිසිලියා වික්‍රමාගේ භාෂාව සංක්‍රමණිකයි (ලැන්ග්වේජ් ඉස් මයිගරන්ට්) නමැති පද්‍ය-ප්‍රකාශනයෙන් ආරම්භ වේ. "වචන භාෂාවෙන් භාෂාවට, සංස්කෘතියෙන් සංස්කෘතියට, කටෙන් කටට, සංක්‍රමණය වෙනවා. අපේ ශරීර සංක්‍රමණිකය; සෛල සහ බැක්ටීරියාත් සංක්‍රමණිකයි. වක්‍රාවාට පවා සංක්‍රමණය වෙනවා." බරපතල අභිමිච්චි, නිශ්ශබ්දතාවය සහ මකාදැමීම හි දැඩි බලපෑම් වලින් සිය අමුද්‍රව්‍ය උකහා ගනිමින් සබඳතා යළි අලුත්වැඩියා කරන අතර, සාමාජීය ආධ්‍යාන, නිල වාර්තා, සහ යට ගැහුණු ඉතිහාස අතර පාලමක් ලෙස භාෂා ස්වරූප අභිනවයෙන් සකසමින්, අපේ කාලයේ අනිවාර්ය සංචාරකයෝ සහ කතාකාරයෝ ලෙස, කලාකරුවෝ නිර්මාණකරණය, අර්ථ සම්පාදනය, එමෙන්ම රඟ දැක්වීම යනාදියේ නිරත වෙති.

මෙම උළෙල ශ්‍රී ලංකාව, දකුණු ආසියාව සහ විවිධ වූ ජාත්‍යන්තර සංදර්භ ඔස්සේ අන්තර්*පරම්පරාමය සංස්කෘතික ක්‍රියාකාරකම් පරාසයක්

එක්තැන් කරන්නේ ගෝලීය සංවාදයක් අවුලුවාලමිනි. අනුෂ්ඨා රාමෝද්‍රන්ගේ අභිරක්ෂණයෙන් සහ නටාශා ගිත්වාලාගේ කලාත්මක අධ්‍යක්ෂණයෙන්, කලින් පවරා නිර්මාණය කරනු ලබන කලා ව්‍යාපෘති සහ දීර්ඝකාලීන ව්‍යාපෘති කීපයක් ඔස්සේ සාමූහිකව කටයුතු කිරීමේ ශක්‍යතාවන් මෙම න් වැළඳ ගන්නේ උත්සන්න වෙමින් පවතින ප්‍රාදේශීය ඇවතුම් සහ ඒකීය හුගෙ ර්ලිය වපසරියක සිරවී සිටීම ප්‍රතික්ෂේප කරමිනි. නිර්මාණ ක්‍රියාවලියේ අඛණ්ඩ ගලායාම සඳහා, ශ්‍රවණය වූ දේ, සජීවී සම්බන්ධකම්, කියවීම සඳහා වූ අවකාශය, වර්තාපදානමය කාලගණනය, නිමග්නව අසාසිටීම සහ ඩයස්පෝරාවේ කොටස්කරුවෙක් වීම, වැනි තත්වයන් මූලික වෙයි.

වක්‍රීය පැවැත්ම සෑම ජීවියෙකුටම පොදු බව අප හඳුනාගත්තද, වාග්විද්‍යාත්මක දේහ හුගෝලීය සන්දර්භ හරහා ගමන් කරමින් බහුශාබ්දික භාෂා විශේෂ වලින් සුසැදි සමාජ ජාලා සහ විසිරුණු ස්මරණ කලාප විපරිවර්තනය කරන ආකාරය අප බොහෝවිට සලකා බලන්නේ නැත. පෘථිවිය තුළ අපගේ සාමාන්‍ය පැවැත්ම, වලනය සහ නිශ්චලත්වය

වටා ගොනු වන අතර, බලහත්කාරයෙන් කෙරෙන එහාමෙහා කිරීම් පිළිබඳ ඓතිහාසික වැරද්ද සිහියට ගනිමින් අප අසන්නේ: දේශපාලන සහ ආර්ථික සම්බාධක අතික්‍රමණය කරමින් විප්ලවීය ලෙස සිදුකරන සංක්‍රමණය, සක්‍රීය ජන කොට්ටාශ එක්ව කටයුතු කිරීමේ අවස්ථාවක් සනිටුහන් කරයිද? පෘථිවියේ පැවැත්ම, හු වලන විපර්යාස, වලවාසී සත්ව වර්ගයා, සමුද්‍ර ප්‍රවාහ වැනි මනුෂ්‍ය අත්දැකීම් වලට එපිටින් වූ සංක්‍රමණික ප්‍රවාහ වලින් ද සමන්විත හෙයින්, සංවලනයෙන් යුතු භාෂා ස්වරූප වලට සවන්දීම මගින් ඉතා වෙහෙස මහන්සියෙන් දිනා ගත් බහුවිධ ප්‍රවාහ වැලඳගැනීමට අවස්ථාව සැලසේද?

සමාජ හුදෙකලාභාවයේ සහ ප්‍රභාරාත්මක භාෂා රටාවල අහිතකර බලපෑම නිසා පිබිදුණු ජීවිතයක් සඳහා උවැසි වචනකෝෂයක් නිර්මාණය කිරීමේ දැඩි අවශ්‍යතාවයක් අපට ඇති කෙරේ. කවියෙක් සහ නවකතාකාරයෙක් වන ඕනෑම වොං සඳහන් කරන්නේ, 'ඔබ භාෂාවේ අනාගතයේ කොටස්කරුවෙක්' යනුවෙනි. මෙම කියවීම ඔස්සේ පුරාකතාදාම වලට ඇතුල්වීමේ ඉඩකඩ විවෘත

කෙරෙනවා මෙන්ම, විධිමත 'අධ්‍යාපන' අධිකාරිය විසින් නිශ්චය කරන විෂයපථයට පරිබාහිර නව ආකෘති ගොඩනැගීමටත්, ස්ව-කැමැත්ත මත පිහිටුවා සිටීමට යොමු කිරීමටත් හැකි වේ. ජීවන පැවැත්මේ රිද්මයන්ට ලියවුණු, අන්තර්ග්‍රහණය වූ ආධ්‍යාන, පංචේන්ද්‍රියෙන් රාමු වුණු සාක්ෂි, පලුදු වුණු සම්බන්ධතා සහිත හවුල්කරුවන් අතර නැවත දලලා වැඩෙන සබඳතා, විදේශීය භාෂාවක් ඉගෙනීමේ දැවැන්ත කර්තව්‍ය, (රාජ්‍ය) මායිම්හිතර හරහා පෙරි එන ගීපද වැල් සහ සාගර තරණයේදී සිය මව් භාෂාව ගිලිහීයාම වැනි ආධ්‍යාන වලට භාෂාව සංක්‍රමණිකයී විසින් ආරාධනා කෙරේ. එසේ වන්නේ, සාක්ෂිකරු සහ සාක්ෂි යන ද්වි* පාර්ශවික ස්වභාවය ඔස්සේ මතු වී එන, එකිනෙක හා බැඳුණු එවැනි සබඳතා, එකිනෙකා මත රැකෙමින් මිස පැවැත්මක් ලබා නොගන්නා බව අප පසක් කරගන්නා හෙයින්.

மொழி ஒரு புலம்பெயர்

சிலிநாட்டைச் சேர்ந்த கலைஞரும், கவிஞருமாகிய சிசிலியா விசுயூனாவின் (Cecilia Vicuña) 'மொழி ஒரு புலம்பெயர்' எனத்தலைப்பிடப்பட்ட கொள்கைப் பிரகடனக் கவிதையிலிருந்து கொழும்பு ஸ்கோப்பின் (Colomboscope) ஏழாவது தொகுப்பு பயணஞ் செய்கிறது.. 'சொற்கள் ஒரு மொழியிலிருந்து இன்னொரு மொழிக்கும், ஒரு கலாசாரத்திலிருந்து இன்னொரு கலாசாரத்திற்கும், வாயிலிருந்து வாய்க்கும் செல்கின்றது. எமது உடல்கள் புலம்பெயரிகள், கலங்களும், பக்ரீறியாக்களும் கூட புலம்பெயரிகள்தான். விண்மீன் மண்டலங்கள் கூடப் புலம்பெயருகின்றன.' என அவர் எழுதுகிறார். கலைஞர்கள், இன்றியமையாத பயணிகளாகவும் எமது காலகட்டத்தின்

கதைசொல்லிகளாகவும், இயற்றுவதிலும். அர்த்தங்களை அவிழ்ப்பதிலும் ஆற்றுகையிலும் ஈடுபடுகின்றனர். பெரும்பாலான வேளைகளில், இனமுரண்பாட்டுக் கதையாடல்கள், உத்தியோகபூர்வ ஆவணங்கள் மற்றும் மூழ்கிப்போன வரலாறுகள் ஆகியவற்றுக்கிடையில் பாலமாகின்ற மொழிகளைக் கண்டுபிடிக்கும் வேளையில் ஆழ்ந்த இழப்புக்களிலிருந்தும் மெளனத்திலிருந்தும், அழிப்புக்களிலிருந்தும் பௌதீக ரீதியான வெளிப்பாடுகளைப் பெறுவதன் மூலம் உறவுநிலைகளை அவர்கள் திருத்தியமைக்கின்றனர்.

இந்தக் கலைப்பெருவிழா இலங்கை, தெற்காசியா மற்றும் பல்வேறுபட்ட சர்வதேச சூழமைவுகளிலிருந்து

வெவ்வேறு கலாசாரப் பயில்வுகள் தொடர்பாக உலகளாவியதோர் உரையாடலை வளர்க்கும் வகையில் ஒன்றிணைக்கப்படுகிறது. எடுத்தாளுனரான அனுஷ்கா இராஜேந்திரன் கலைசார் நெறியாளரான நட்ராஷா கின்வாலவுடன் இணைந்து தெரிவுதேர்ந்தெடுக்கப்பட்ட பல்வேறு பணிக்கப்பட்ட கலைப்படைப்புக்க ளுடன் (commissioned works), நீண்டகாலக் கலைத்திட்டங்கள் ஆகியனவற்றின் நிலை மாற்றச் செயற்பாடாக ஒன்றிணைக்கப்படுகின்ற அவை கூட்டிணைவைத் தழுவிக்கொள்கின்ற, வாழிடங்களில் அதிகரிக்கின்ற குறுகிய மனபான்மை கொண்ட நடத்தைகளை மறுக்கின்ற , அதற்குப் பதிலாக ஒலிசார் அலைவரிசைகளைத் தொடர்புற வைத்தல், நேர்ச்

செயற்பாடுகள் (live acts) மற்றும் வாசிப்பின் வெளிகள் என்பனவற்றை ஆரம்பக் கருவிகளாக்கி அவற்றினூடாக படைப்பாக்கப் படிமுறையின் அசைவியக்கத்தைத் தக்கவைப்பதாகவும், வாழ்க்கைவரலாற்றுக் காலத்தையும், கேட்டலில் ஈடுபட்டிருத்தல் மற்றும் புலம்பெயர் உரித்துணர்வையும் நீடிக்கச்செய்கின்ற இன்றியமையாத கருவிகளாகின்றன.

மொழியியல் உடல்கள் புவியியல் எல்லைகள் கடந்து, பல நாடுகள் மற்றும் நினைவுத் துண்டங்களது புலங்களால் ஆன சமூக உலகங்களை வடிவமைக்கின்ற முறைமைகளை இன்னும் நாங்கள் பெரும்பாலும் கருத்திற் கொள்ளுவதில்லை. அசையுந்தன்மையும், அசையாத்தன்மையும் பூகோள

மொழி ஒரு புலம்பெயர்

இருத்தலின் பொது விதிமுறையாக இருப்பதால், வற்புறுத்தப்பட்ட அசைவியக்கத்தின் வரலாற்று வழக்களை மனதிலிருத்திக் கொள்ளுமாறு நாங்கள் தங்களைக் கேட்கிறோம். இன்றைய அரசியல் மற்றும் பொருளாதார தடைகளைத் தாண்டிய கலகத்தனமான அசைவியக்கமானது வாழ்க்கை சக்திகளை ஒன்றிணைக்கும் உயிரியக்கமுடையதாக்கப்பட்ட (animated) ஓரம்சமாக நாம் கருத முடியுமா? அடிப்படையில் மனித அனுபவத்திற்கு அப்பாற்பட்ட கண்டத்தட்டுக்களது நகர்வு, நாடோடி இனங்களில் இருந்து நீரோட்டக் காற்று அழுத்தங்கள் வரையான பயண ஓட்டங்களால் உலகம் உருவாக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது என்பதுடன் உருவற்ற அவ்வாறான மொழிகளை

செவிமடுப்பதுகூட பாரிய முரண்களுக்கு எதிராகத் தக்கவைக்கப்பட்ட பன்மைத்துவ ஓட்டங்களைத் தழுவிக்கொள்கின்ற புலம்பெயர் எதிர்காலங்களுக்கு இட்டுச்செல்லுமா? சமூக அந்நியமாதல், ஆயுதமயமாக்கப்பட்டமொழி என்பனவற்றின் பெருக்கம் வாழ்வை நோக்கியதான பேரகரமுதலி ஒன்றிற்கான பசியுடன் எம்மை விட்டுச்செல்கின்ற, 'மொழியின் எதிர்காலத்தில் நீங்களும் பங்குகொள்பவர்கள் ஆகின்றீர்கள்' எனக் கவிஞரும் நாவலாசிரியருமான ஓசன்வு யொங்க் குறிப்பிடுகின்றார். இந்தக் கருத்தமைவு நிர்வகிக்கப்படுகின்ற பாடத்திட்டத்திற்கு அப்பால் புதிய கட்டமைப்புகளை

உருக்கொள்கின்ற, சுயநிர்ணய
உரிமையின் முகவரான உடலை
மீட்டெடுத்துக் கடந்தகால
வரன்முறைக் கதையென்ற
ஆற்றினுள் நுழைவதற்கான
இயலாற்றலை வெட்டித்
திறக்கின்றது. வாழ்ந்த
லயத்தினுள் எழுதப்பட்ட
கதையாடல் உருக்களையும்
புலன்களால் சட்டகமாக்கப்பட்ட
அத்தாட்சிகளையும் 'மொழி ஒரு
புலம் பெயரி' அழைக்கின்றது.
அவை உறவு முறிவடைந்த
உறவுகளுக்கிடையேயான
தொடர்புகளை மீளுருவாக்கும்
வடிவங்களாகவும் ஓர்
அந்நியமொழியைக்
கற்றுக்கொள்ளும் கடினமான
உழைப்பார்ந்த செயலாகவும்
எல்லை வலயங்களில் வழியும்
பாடல் வரிகளாகவும்.
சமுத்திரத்தைக் கடக்கையில்
ஒருவரால் இழக்கப்படுகின்ற

தாய்மொழியாகவும் இருப்பவை.
கவர்முள் இசைக்கருவியின்
பாங்கில் அவ்வாறான
சந்திப்புகள் பார்த்திருத்தல்,
சான்றுபகிர்தல்
நிலைகளிலிருந்து வெளிக்
கிளம்புகின்றன. அவை
ஒன்றிலிருந்து மற்றொன்றை
நோக்கி ஒருகின்ற,
ஒன்றில்லாமல் மற்றையதால்
பிழைத்திருக்க முடியாத
உறவுநிலை நாட்டங்கள் ஆகும்.

Language is Migrant

Cecilia Vicuña

Language is migrant. Words move from language to language, from culture to culture, from mouth to mouth. Our bodies are migrants; cells and bacteria are migrants too. Even galaxies migrate.

What then is this talk against migrants?
It can only be talk against ourselves, against life itself.

Twenty years ago, I opened up the word 'migrant', seeing in it a dangerous mix of Latin and Germanic roots. I imagined 'migrant' was probably composed of *mei*, Latin for 'to change or move', and *gra*, 'heart' from the Germanic *kerd*. Thus, 'migrant' became 'changed heart',

a heart in pain,
changing the heart of the earth.

The word 'immigrant' says, 'grant me life'.

'Grant' means 'to allow, to have', and is related to an ancient Proto-Indo-European root: *dhe*, the mother of 'deed' and 'law'. So too, *sacerdos*, performer of sacred rites.

What is the rite performed by millions of people displaced and seeking safe havens around the world? Letting us see our own indifference, our complicity in the ongoing wars?

Is their pain powerful enough to allow us to change our hearts?
To see our part in it?

I 'wounder', said Margarita, my immigrant friend, mixing up wondering and wounding, a perfect embodiment of our true condition!

Vicente Huidobro said, 'Open your mouth to receive the host of the wounded word.'

The wound is an eye. Can we look into its eyes?

my specialty is not feeling, just
looking, so I say:
(the word is a hard look.)
—Rosario Castellanos

I don't see with my eyes: words
are my eyes.
—Octavio Paz

In 1980, I was in exile in Bogotá, where I was working on my 'Palabrarmas' project, a way of opening words to see what they have to say. My early life as a poet was guided by a line from Novalis: 'Poetry is the original religion of mankind.' Living in the violent city of Bogotá, I wanted to see if anybody shared this view, so I set out with a camera and a team of volunteers to interview people in the street. I asked everybody I met, 'What is Poetry to you?' and I got great answers from beggars, prostitutes, and policemen alike. But the best was, 'Que prosiga', 'That it may go on'—how can I translate the subjunctive, the most beautiful tiempo verbal (time inside the verb) of the Spanish language? 'Subjunctive' means 'next to' but under the power of the unknown. It is a future potential subjected to unforeseen conditions, and that matches exactly the quantum definition of emergent properties.

If you google the subjunctive you will find it described as a 'mood', as if a verbal tense could feel: 'The subjunctive mood is the verb form used to express a wish, a suggestion, a command, or a condition that is contrary to fact. Or the "present" subjunctive is the bare form of a verb (that is, a verb with no ending).'

I loved that! A never-ending image of a naked verb! The man who passed by as a shadow in my film saying 'Que prosiga' was on camera only for a second, yet he expressed in two words the utter precision of Indigenous oral culture.



People watching the film today can't believe it was not scripted, because in thirty-six years we seem to have forgotten the art of complex conversation. In the film, people in the street improvise responses on the spot, displaying an awareness of language that seems to be missing today. I wonder, how did it change? And my heart says it must be fear, the ocean of lies we live in, under a continuous stream of doublespeak by the violent powers that rule us. Living under dictatorship, the first thing that disappears is playful speech, the fun and freedom of saying what you really think. Complex public conversation goes extinct, and along with it, the many species we are causing to disappear as we speak.

The word 'species' comes from the Latin species, 'a seeing'. Maybe we are losing species and languages, our joy, because we don't wish to see what we are doing.

Not seeing the seeing in words, we numb our senses.

I hear a 'low continuous humming sound' of 'unmanned aerial vehicles,' the drones we send out into the world carrying our killing thoughts.

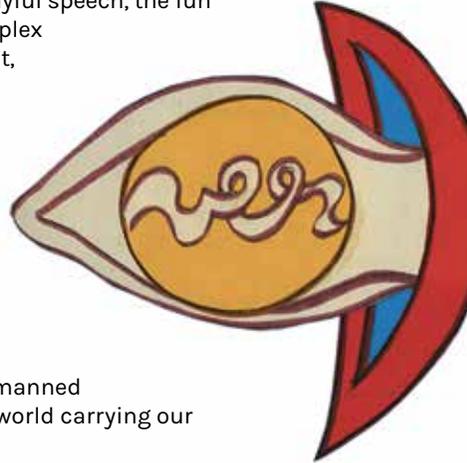
Drones are the ultimate expression of our disconnect with words, our ability to speak without feeling the effect or consequences of our words.

'Words are acts,' said Paz.

Our words are becoming drones, flying robots. Are we becoming desensitized by not feeling them as acts? I am thinking not just of the victims but also of the perpetrators, the drone operators. Tonje Hessen Schei, director of the film *Drone*, speaks of how children are being trained to kill by video games: 'War is made to look fun, killing is made to look cool. ... I think this 'militainmen' has a huge cost,' not just for the young soldiers who operate them but for society as a whole. Her trailer opens with these words by a former aide to Colin Powell in the Bush/Cheney administration:

OUR POTENTIAL COLLECTIVE FUTURE. WATCH IT AND WEEP FOR US.
OR WATCH IT AND DETERMINE TO CHANGE THAT FUTURE
—Lawrence Wilkerson, Colonel U.S. Army (retired)

In *Astro Noise*, the exhibition by Laura Poitras at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the language of surveillance migrates into poetry and art. We lie in a collective bed watching the night sky crisscrossed by drones. The search for matching patterns, the algorithms used to liquidate humanity with drones, is



turned around to reveal the workings of the system. And, we are being surveyed as we survey the show!

A new kind of visual poetry connecting our bodies to the real fight for the soul of this Earth emerges, and we come out wondering: Are we going to dehumanize ourselves to the point where Earth itself will dream our end?

The fight is on everywhere, and this may be the only beauty of our times. The Quechua speakers of Peru say, 'beauty is the struggle.'

Maybe darkness will become the source of light. (Life regenerates in the dark.)

I see the poet/translator as the person who goes into the dark, seeking the 'other' in him/herself, what we don't wish to see, as if this act could reveal what the world keeps hidden.

Eduardo Kohn, in his book 'How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human' notes the creation of a new verb by the Quichua speakers of Ecuador: *riparana* means 'darse cuenta', 'to realize or to be aware'. The verb is a Quichuan transfiguration of the Spanish *reparar*, 'to observe, sense, and repair'. As if awareness itself, the simple act of observing, had the power to heal.

I see the invention of such verbs as true poetry, as a possible path or a way out of the destruction we are causing.

When I am asked about the role of the poet in our times, I only question: Are we a 'listening post', composing an impossible 'survival guide', as Paul Chan has said? Or are we going silent in the face of our own destruction?

Subcomandante Marcos, the Zapatista guerrilla, transcribes the words of El Viejo Antonio, an Indian sage: 'The gods went looking for silence to reorient themselves, but found it nowhere.' That nowhere is our place now, that's why we need to translate language into itself so that IT sees our awareness.

Language is the translator. Could it translate us to a place within where we cease to tolerate injustice and the destruction of life?

Life is language. 'When we speak, life speaks,' says the Kaushitaki Upanishad.

Awareness creates itself looking at itself.

It is transient and eternal at the same time.

Todo migra. Let's migrate to the 'wonderment' of our lives, to poetry itself.



Colombo Public Library

Vijitharan Maryathevathas
Jagath Weerasinghe
Rupaneethan Pakkiyarajah
Hanusha Somasundaram
Lavkant Chaudhary
Shailesh BR
We Are From Here
Mariah Lookman
Cecilia Vicuña
Mounira Al Solh
Pangrok Sulap
Liz Fernando
Marinella Senatore
A Thousand Channels
Packiyathan Ahilan
Slavs and Tatars
Rajni Perera

language is migrant;

භාෂාව සංක්‍රමණිකයි

මொழි ඉඳු පුලංමට්ටම



EXHIBITION VENUE



Vijitharan Maryathevathas

Vijitharan Maryathevathas's drawings stage colossal and challenging realities in miniature form. He finds nuanced ways of illustrating from lived experiences surrounding him while choosing a surrealist and ironic approach. It is rare for a young artist to take up such a characteristic language of image-building such that encounters of pain and survival veer away from the hyperreal, only to visually chart from successive layers of consciousness and draw upon modes of endurance that oppressed communities configure to retain hope. In 2009, Maryathevathas was forced to leave his home in Killinochi and move into a refugee camp. Forced migration and displacement are figured in his work through renditions that carry viewers between land, air, and sea. This involuntary transportation becomes a technique to view details of his compositions as though from an aerial, 'eye in the sky' perspective. In his response to *Language is Migrant*, the artist reflects on how his relations who now belong to the vast Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora struggle to remain close to their familial lineage, cultural and linguistic inheritances. He posits what is passed on between generations and the aftermath of severed ties.

Symbolic motifs circulate in the latest series that Maryathevathas has realised. They converge the utilitarian with the menacing to explore ideas of homeland as a familiar, destructive, and alien place. In some sculptural and paper works, rural ecology, labouring bodies, and agrarian terrains alert the urban dweller of a figurative distance from the cosmopolis and foreign lands. Another striking feature is the use of found materials from a loudspeaker to discarded artillery shells to assemble sculptures that gesture to the everyday life of violence.

Supported by Warehouse421 Project Revival Fund



Untitled, 2017. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, 2016. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy of the artist

Jagath Weerasinghe

Jagath Weerasinghe's practice is foundational to the 1990s wave of art practices in Sri Lanka, which marked a departure from what preceded it, for its scathing critique of the political and social context in the country at the time—torn apart by extreme sectarian and majoritarian movements—and a crisis in collective and spiritual identity. Along with his peers, he initiated regional exchanges from Sri Lanka among artist-run networks in South Asia and within the Global South, and continues to engage with younger practitioners in his context as mentor and educator. His background in archaeology informs his suspicion of dominant historical narratives in his artworks, and the series of drawings presented as part of *Language is Migrant* blurs the boundaries between archaeology, art, note-making, and doodling. Working compulsively and intuitively on almost any surface that he finds, these works extend the notion of a studio-based practice to everyday encounters with materials, and what that may inspire through processes of folding, cutting, and wrapping them in each other. The surfaces include scraps of paper that he finds around his home, copies of official documents, and notices. Scribbled on them are reminders for meetings and appointments, phone numbers, titles of books, and notes on what he was reading at the time. These quick sketches and entries as a form of 'visual philosophy', are a continuous and daily practice. They foreground how artmaking and memory production is integral to how Weerasinghe makes sense of the world around him. Together, they reveal intimate insights into the artist's thought process interlaced with his travels around the island as part of his archaeological and community research, reminding us of how we communicate with ourselves—in fragments, drifting between languages, and imagined forms. Furthermore, by refusing to impose distinctions between forms of knowledge such as theoretical writing, image, archaeology, and journaling, these works at the Colombo Public Library reinstate the impossible divides between art, life, and politics.

Untitled II, 2008 (detail).
Mixed media on paper bag.
Courtesy of the artist



Untitled, 2020. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy of the artist

Rupaneethan Pakkiyarajah

Rupaneethan Pakkiyarajah experiments with natural and found materials to craft symbolic forms engaging the dramaturgy of violence, minority histories, and civic struggles as emotional cartography. While examining how the post-war subject may inhabit public domains without fear, Pakkiyarajah illustrates the failures that ensue as military codes continue to restrain both human agents and ecological life.

Working from a studio in Batticaloa, in his recent sculptures the malleability of rubber and shells takes on dual references to both skin and landscape as carriers of memory and social identity. Personal experiences of displacement and terrestrial conflict emerge in the artist's works as sutures and craters that interrelate how the body, foliage, and landforms endure currents of oppression. The artist's drawings are microcosms entwining human-made infrastructures, housing, and sacred sites with the island's diverse environment and botanical species.

Across different series, Pakkiyarajah reflects on societal vulnerability and capitalism's impact on the planet. Through his field visits during the Colomboscope residency in Jaffna, the memory of water, coral walls of Jaffna fort, the pandemic's forced stillness, and transforming coastal landscape are set as motifs and dimensional reliefs.

Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka and EUNIC

*Connections and Lands I. 2021
(detail), Brush and ink on paper.
Courtesy of the artist*







Land, Waves, People and Me, 2020. Ink and brush on stone.
Connections and Lands IV, 2021. Ink and brush on paper.
Extension I, 2021. Mixed media. All images courtesy of the artist



Connections and Lands II, 2021. Ink and brush on paper. Courtesy of the artist

Hanusha Somasundaram

Hanusha Somasundaram's works for Language is Migrant emerge from experiences in her early childhood in the tea estates of Nuwara Eliya, where her mother and grandmother who raised her worked. The colonial and tourist imaginaries of the region's landscape are called into question in her practice based on the circumstances of the estate workers, and by addressing the relay between conditions of production and consumption of tea through the juxtaposition of materials related to labour, such as wage receipts, with ephemera used in the brewing of tea such as sieves and tea bags. In this new body of work, Somasunderam examines her matrilineal lingual inheritances that she finds herself passing on to her children. The spoken dialect of her region threads together sensorial and material memories from the age of four to six when she was dropped off by her mother at the daycare facilities attached to the line houses – dedicated housing for the estate workers. The sarongs that cradled her as a baby and the baskets that were used to collect the leaves plucked by her mother intertwine with the smells of the daycare facility. Language learning processes that are traditionally introduced at that age were absent during this part of her schooling, which made it hard for her to speak the more literary version of the Tamil language with its prescribed pronunciations. She was only able to start her education at a later age than her own children, leaving her to learn songs and rhymes of kindergarten along with them for the first time. She also unconsciously passes on to them her inherited tongue, which is a carrier of her history and context, even when they have the opportunity to learn standardized Tamil. These fragile associations in her intimate relationships are depicted through drawings and sculptures which also carry with them traces of tea and objects associated with the beverage.



Rotty, 2015. Tea bags and ink. Courtesy of the artist



Mother Tongue, 2016. Mixed media on tea strainers. Courtesy of the artist

Lavkant Chaudhary

Kathmandu-based artist Lavkant Chaudhary delves into personal facets, human-animal relations, and collective realities of the conflicted Terai region in Nepal. As a cultural organizer, he works as part of Artree Nepal, initiating grassroots engagement to counter divisive structures of class, caste, religion, and ecological turmoil. His works at Colomboscope are from the ongoing series *Maasinya Dastoor* (2012 -) focusing on historical marginalization of the indigenous Tharu community who continue to live along the foothills of the Himalayas even as they make up the largest number of cases of forced disappearances in Nepal. Working with pen and ink on Lokta paper, inspired by the form and technique of the traditional Godana (tattoo) culture in the community, Chaudhary's scrolls are as much about the resilience of his community as they are chronicles of enduring oppression.

Titles such as Panjekar (record keepers), Chaudhary (chiefs engaged in tax collection), and Mahato (mahouts) were designated extraneously, disregarding inherent social structures and belief systems among the Tharu community. In the 20th century, as servants to the Nepali rulers, Tharus liaised with traders of wild animals and were forced to facilitate hunts for the British Raj, on lands that they were natively custodians of. State repression as well as the Maoists forced Tharus into an armed struggle for the recognition of their rights, leading to the People's War of Nepal (1996-2006). Operation Kiloshera 2, was initiated by the state to exterminate supposed Tharu-Maoists. In the absence of inclusive official documentation of this community's struggle, the artist's layered compositions endeavour to build an informal archive and serve as commemoration based on documents and edicts (dastoors) as well as unofficial narratives reclaiming ancestral practices of the community in the face of forced Hinduization and displacement.

*Supported by Experimenter Generator co-operative Art Production Fund,
Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka and Artree Nepal*

*Maasinya Dastoor series, 2021,
(detail) Stippling drawing on
Lokta paper. Courtesy of the artist*

स्वस्ति श्रीगिरि राजघञ्जयुद्ध मारिणरनाय
 धिराजभीष्मिभीमह राज सुरैड विक्रमसाह
 आगसुधादेवलकेमध्वेसहातिसारहा
 स्वत १६२३ साल्मिति वैसाध्वदि १ गेज
 पाकोर हाल उर्दि सवाल वमोजिम
 उपासदा माटो घादा कृपाकहु दा
 द्वा सादा काकसरान स्मेतको निज
 हातिसार हातिसार का टपोद् वाट उता
 दर्माहा केस वाल वमोजिम को सितो



दिवि विधविहदा क्लीविराज मानमा नोन्न त धीम
 जङ्ग देवानो सदा समर कित भिनम्
 नाजाच निद्वै महतरिरिद्यु ताद्यपुर कचहीको
 दि १५ गेजतक् वर्ष १ को भ्रा सर्च वाट जिप्रमावा
 दा हातिसार लाइ नयाका सबान वमोजिम हाति
 मवल वमोजिम का दरवदी भन्दा धाटि सम
 ५ भयाका सबानर सदा को सलका पुर्जि
 जालात्त्र जाच कचामा हन्पा हवल्लर अम
 दफ्दर खा ना तहकिन् अडा वाट

को काम्दा का
 ओ काम्दा
 द्वाप् वाकि
 — चे
 २४ साल्
 चाको तहरी
 ति गी

ने तपुदा अरु सापटि आय
 नहि द्वाप य चमालिन्या के
 नया को दफ्दर खा
 गोजिम इस्तक सीम
 तहवि
 दाम् दाम् डोकि लिम्पु फ
 जठ कुम्



Shailesh BR

Shailesh BR's practice includes drawings and kinetic installations that emerge through oral traditions, cultural satire, and interpretative forms of knowledge transfer. Often, ideas give way to the conceiving of machines or devices that are highly imaginative and invested in generating 'operative systems' around environmental and human phenomena. The artist sees his role as committing to states of playful energy, modes of debate, and inquiry that traverse realms of the organic and the mechanical. His works remain anchored in the fluidity of processes—engaging philosophical thought, human-machine learning, and codes of ritual. Through glitch, repetition, and truisms that emanate from different schools of thought, Shailesh brings together a subversive material vocabulary of everyday objects and text illustrated drawings.

His own training in deciphering brahmanical scriptures, through rigorous repetition, and discipline - methods that are systemically inward-looking - informs his criticality towards how they have weaponized knowledge and become instrumental in erasures of a secular fabric bound by collective memory. The tensions between mechanical learning and memorization enabled by codification of information through sign systems and symbolic language use are central to Shailesh's practice.

A new suite of works for Language is Migrant reflects on the fundamental act of reading, recasting the idea of multiple types of active and passive readers as well as circuits of (mis) translation. Through these latest mechanised sculptures and drawings, the artist calls verbal rhetoric and unthinking reliability on mainstream media sources into question. Instead, he charts spaces for decoding, re-writing, and agency for forging new connections to ground understanding.

Supported by Warehouse421 and Vadehra Art Gallery



Page Turner (Uta Pulta), 2019 - 2021. Books, Arduino, stepper and servo machine, 12V power supply, Courtesy of the artist and Vadhera Art Gallery



32 Drawing Set, 2021 (detail). Pen, ink, acrylic, giftware paper, gum tape, stickers, collage on old paper. Courtesy of the artist and Vadhera Art Gallery

We Are From Here

Since *We Are From Here* was initiated in 2018 from Slave Island (Kompannavediya) in Colombo, with an interactive mural project composed as a communitarian memory building process together with residents. Several of this neighbourhood's iconic sights such as the Castle Hotel and de Soysa building have been razed to the ground or collapsed due to neglect. Malay Street and Java Lane look very different from when Colomboscope first began exhibitions, performances, and live music events in this neighbourhood. Bulldozers are perennially dotting the area and inhabitants who have sustained this multi-ethnic neighbourhood over generations – addressing one another in Tamil, Sinhala, Malay and English—live in fear of eviction notices and the scrutiny of their households by city authorities in the name of (postwar) 'redevelopment'.

Firi Rahman, Parilojithan Ramanathan, Manash Badurdeen (earlier including Vicky Shahjahan) with various collaborators have been mapping people's stories and oral histories from this neighbourhood, one lane at a time: dhobis, mechanics, actors, sportspeople and vendors who are pivotal to the street food offerings at Galle Face Green facing the Indian Ocean – all of these professionals sustain the cavernous demands of the capital city by day and night.

For the project *Ashray*, the collective has been working over two years collecting souvenirs, picture albums, heirlooms, and ephemera left behind, sold away as scrap, gifted and donated, accompanied by sound recordings with community members, and thereby, conceiving an archive that not only narrates of dispossession and displacement but also brings recognition to philosophies of pluralistic living, forgotten stories, minor historiographies, and tales of places that no longer exist. *Ashray* offers new readings through communal testimonies, challenging the hierarchical role of 'official documents' that have a menacing history in people's lives, more often used to instigate fear and discomfort than provide rights and accessibility within the city.

Supported by EUNIC

Curfew Pass collected during the
research phase of *Ashray*, 2020 - 2021.
Courtesy of *We Are From Here* Project

CURFEW PASS

Issued under EMERGENCY (CURFEW)
REGULATION of AUGUST 12, 1953,

to Mrs. Pearl On de G.
..... of Broadcasting

.....Department, who is hereby permitted
to be out of doors between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.
for the duration of the EMERGENCY

on date(s) 15/8/53

Superintendent of Police Colombo Province

Asst. Supdt. of Police Central District

Date of Issue: 15/8/53



Documentation from the research phase of Ashray, 2020 - 2021.
Courtesy of We Are From Here Project





Collective mapping exercise during Ashray: Open studio with the community, 2021.
Courtesy of We Are From Here Project



Documentation from the research phase of Ashray, 2020 - 2021. 2020 - 2021.
Courtesy of We Are From Here Project

Mariah Lookman

Mariah Lookman's film *Hayy in Serendip* is a speculative reading of the Arab philosopher and physician Ibn Tufayl's text *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* written in the 12th century based on Persian philosopher and polymath, Ibn Sinha's original text from the 10th century set on an island in the Indian Ocean. Based on maps contemporaneous to these texts that locate present-day Sri Lanka as part of maritime trade routes, Lookman proposes that the island may have been Sri Lanka, and speculates what the protagonist Hayy's experience of the universe and his process of decoding the mysteries of the natural world must have been, from locations in the island that still present traces of the idyllic context that Tufayl describes to be the cradle of civilization.

In this poetic and imaginative dialogue between video shot entirely on an iPhone and text scripted by Lookman, the artist engages with the Arab philosophical tradition on the subject of the freedom of human reason to decenter the European Age of Enlightenment and its colonial legacy through rationalist approaches to philosophical enquiry in a non-western context, alienated from human civilization and based on the wisdom proposed by the protagonist's non-human companions in the wilderness. Hayy's eventual return to the forest, where he was raised by a gazelle, discontent with civilizational progress, and development that he encountered in the human world, also frames a comment on our modern past, including its technological advancements, ecological ruination, and civil unrest.

Supported by National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts



Hay in Serendip, 2021. Video, with colour and sound. Courtesy of the artist

Cecilia Vicuña

‘We propose to slow down fast, a toda raja, before it is too late.’

Chilean artist, poet, filmmaker, and activist Cecilia Vicuña made her first documentary while residing in Colombia after the 1973 coup d'état. Through this fundamental inquiry: ‘Qué es para usted la poesía? / What is poetry to you?’ Vicuña unravels the role and substance of poetry in people’s lives. Speaking with school children, street performers, policemen, sex workers, fellow artists, and a scientist, the all-embracing character of poetry emerges – its transformative role in personal relations, as a basis of oral history and the revolutionary imagination.

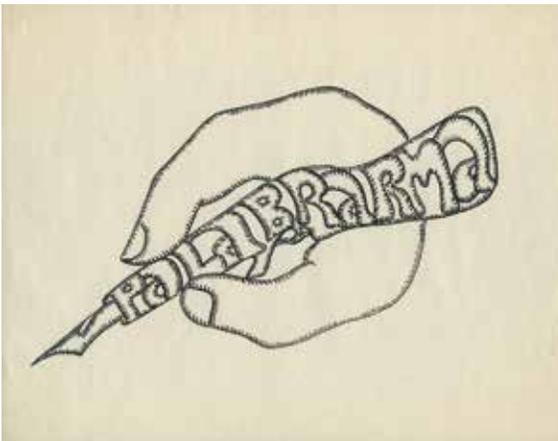
From the field of utterances, Vicuña brings together facets of collective performance, ritual inspired by Andean philosophy, as well as assemblage that centres feminist processes, healing, and memory-keeping. Her oeuvre vividly addresses pressing concerns of the modern world, including ecological devastation, militarization, and cultural homogenization. She notes: ‘My work is really multilingual, and it includes languages I don’t even know myself—meaning languages I feel. I sense they exist because I hear them as a murmur, a sound, a concept. They’re unknown. They may have existed already, or maybe they will in the future.’

Alongside several of Vicuña’s books of poetry in the Reading in Tongues segment of Colomboscope, the display will include new productions as part of the ongoing series, *Palabramas*. These visual poems compose a symbolic language-space—breaking open to fully embrace the sentient quality of words—while also inventing a grammar of creative resistance. These have been conceived by the artist-poet since the 1970s and denote her experiences of exile and community building. Curator Dieter Roelstraete writes, ‘The titular neologism is a contraction of palabras (words) and armas (weapons), a nod to the spirit of militancy, infusing so much progressive Latin American art in the era of juntas. Vicuña’s *Palabramas*, however, are also eruptions of colour and sensuous pleasure—words as weapons that are also, more innocently, words to live by.’

Supported by Ishara Art Foundation and Foundation for Arts Initiatives



Lava Quipu, 2020. Site-specific performance organized as part of *Seehearing the Enlightened Failure*, MUAC, Mexico City. Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Hong Kong, Seoul, and London. Photo: University Museum Contemporary Art, CDMX



AMAZone PALABRAMAS, 1977-78. Ink drawing. Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Hong Kong, Seoul, and London

Mounira al Solh

Mounira al Solh's work spans performance, painting, video, and textile-based installations often drawing upon various mother tongues to bring together fiction, biography, and collective narration addressing experiences of displacement, wartime, linguistic affinity, and refugeehood. Al Solh lives between the Netherlands and Beirut; her own relations to these disparate geographies, the aftermath of Lebanon's civil war, and her family's flight from Beirut to Damascus in 1989, are latent scripts in her creative compass.

Two instances from Mounira Al Solh's expanded practice will be present at Language is Migrant. The first is an ongoing collaborative project, 'In Blood In Love' (دم دلاب تبح لواب), that involves groups of women across Sri Lanka, treating as its starting point, fifty words that relate to love, compiled by Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya, a thirteenth-century Islamic theologian and writer who was born in Damascus, and translated from Arabic into French by Moroccan feminist author and thinker Fatima Mernissi. For the Colomscope iteration of this project, these expressions were translated to Tamil and Sinhala and shared with a group of 24 women. For many of them, embroidery is an everyday domestic and creative activity. Al Solh's collaborators responded to this lexicon of love in a dialogical production process. Some of them chose to contribute their own words as an addendum to the original list. During a precarious year with intermittent lockdowns and severe economic challenges in Sri Lanka, the participants in this project embroidered pieces on found and acquired fabrics, contemplating from their domestic realms around the manifestations of intimacy and tenderness that sustained them through these months, and formed a virtual community for exchanges around companionship and creative solace.

Mounira al Solh's collaborators for this project are as follows: Aparna Samarakoon, Catharina Danial, Chandrani Perera, Daisy De Silva, Duminda Kumarasinghe, Irene Karunadasa, Kanchana Manohari, Kema Kodikara, Kitty Ritig, Maya Kellegama, Mrs. Selvanayagi,





In Love, In Blood, 2019-ongoing, Charcoal on wall and embroidery on fabric, Courtesy of the artist

Nadhuni, Nawka Siriwardena, Neela Kumarasinghe, Nusrath Abdul Aziz, Preethi Vijayasiri, Priyangani Silva, Ramani Siriwardena, Sabeen Omar, Sameena Abdul Aziz, Saumya Vijayasiri, Seema Omar, Shahdia Jamaldeen, Sriyani Weerakoon.

In 2008, Al Solh co-initiated NOA (Not Only Arabic) Magazine as a response to the 2006 war in Lebanon, the politically motivated mass circulation of hate speech in the public domain, and to compose safe spaces for feminist literatures of dissent. For each edition of the magazine, she forges collaborations that result in limited copies of the publication, such that its circulation is a performative experience, which readers can access by appointment at a designated venue. The fourth edition of NOA, co-edited by Nada Ghosn, will be on view as part of Reading in Tongues, Colomboscope's reading room at the Lakmahal Community Library.

Supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

أهم الحركة النسوية
في العالم العربي
في القرن التاسع عشر



الإنجازات الراهقة ،
والاعتراف بقدرات جميع النساء

صدى شعراوي



رجال وصفوا النساء صاحبات
بأنهن يمتعن بقدرات خاصة، ليتجنبن

Pangrok Sulap

Pangrok Sulap, a collective of artists, musicians, and activists based in Sabah, Malaysia, works with woodcut printing as a slow, performative, and process-based form of resistance to the rapidity of digital methods and circulation of information in the present-day. The word Pangrok is derived from the local slang for 'punk rock', embracing the DIY politics of the movement, and energetic live musical performances with a political message as part of their practice. Sulap refers to resting places for farmers in Sabah, also associating the collective with agrarian movements, and the politics of labour locally. Their works usually emerge from immersed engagement with the context they are responding to, especially when their practice takes them outside of Malaysia, and extensive conversations with local communities.

Their project for Colomboscope involved dialogue for several months leading up to the festival and collaborative research with the Sri Lankan music group The Soul, exchanging thoughts on the movement of people from the Malay archipelago to Sri Lanka since 200 BC, and simultaneities between the 1983 riots in Sri Lanka based on ethnic differences and the politics of Malay supremacy entrenched in the Malaysian constitution. The work also remains self-aware of the virtual exchanges between Pangrok Sulap and The Soul during the pandemic, and the limitations of such forms of communication, by foregrounding telepathy, intuition, empathy, love, and care as sensorial and embodied forms of language. The woodcut print produced and sent by Pangrok Sulap to Colombo based on these exchanges will be presented with a concert performance by The Soul at the Colombo Public Library.

Supported by A+ Works of Art



Artwork Reveal: the printing process of the Sabah Tanah Airku artwork with Ranau community, 2017. Courtesy of Srap Design



All nations are created special, 2021 (detail). Woodcut print on fabric. Courtesy of Pangrok Sulap. Photo credit: Colomboscope





All nations are created special, 2021 (detail).
Woodcut print on fabric. Courtesy of Pangrok Sulap. Photo credit: Colomboscope

Liz Fernando

Liz Fernando treats Hannah Arendt's text, *We Refugees* (1943), as a point of reference while contemplating intergenerational experiences of migration. Three chapters from the ongoing project at Colomboscope derive from the artist's own memories of her formative years in Germany, interlinked with those of her parents, and also others she encountered in recent years who share experiences of the lasting impact of displacement and making a home in an alien context. Visual representations of memories carry with them stories of loss and survival, subterfuge, and intimate encounters with history.

The first chapter presents glimpses into Fernando's parents' feelings of belonging experienced in the company of their first friend in Germany, Akhtar Syed Kamal, while sharing food, hope, and optimism, as well as a collective lingual code, in a city still divided by the Cold War. Another chapter recounts the experience of a little girl from Belarus, who crossed the border to West Germany in 1947 after the Second World War, hiding inside the Silesian frock of an older woman she met along her journey after she got separated from her family and lost her way. The third chapter includes excerpts from a personal photo archive of an acquaintance of the artist who was born in Lahore to parents from East Turkmenistan and spent the later part of her childhood in Kazakhstan before moving to Cologne, Germany in 1982 at the age of 18. In times of mass movements against authoritarian majoritarianism across many parts of the world, these representations that bear the weight of testimonies encountered by the artist, come together to form rebellious lingual narratives that offer glimpses of arduous journeys away from home.

Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka



One Last Night: Chapter 2 - The Silesian Frock, 2021. Photographic print. Courtesy of the artist, private archives and general archival imagery (open source)



One Last Night: Chapter 1 - The story of Akhtar Syed Kamal, 2021. Photographic print. Courtesy of the artist, private archives and general archival imagery (open source)

Marinella Senatore

with Hasanthi Niriella and Ashley Fagnoli

Marinella Senatore's ongoing collaborative project since 2012, *The School of Narrative Dance*, is a nomadic platform that has been already hosted by several cities around the world, and explores the potential of choreography, dance, and movement towards non-hierarchical learning and storytelling. Like many of Senatore's projects, it involves close collaboration between the artist and her team of choreographers, working alongside local choreographers and dancers to develop performances and exercises in response to the context and the space that hosts the project. This is then further workshopped with participants invited via an open call distributed at various public spaces around the city.

Performative methods make way for an embodied, universal, inclusive, and emancipatory language to share experiences, learn new skills, and enact citizenship and belonging. As a way to continue the transformative potential of the project during the isolation of the pandemic to address restrictions to sociality and the absence of communal feeling and general well-being, the artist devised a series of tutorials in collaboration with participants of former editions of *The School of Narrative Dance* that can be circulated as instructional-format videos. These tutorials were activated through virtual workshops with various groups of people across Sri Lanka by performance artists and educators Hasanthi Niriella and Ashley Fagnoli. Documentation from these exercises, short performances by the participants, and documentation from previous editions of *The School of Narrative Dance*, will be on view at the festival. Also on view will be drawings and collages by Marinella Senatore that relate to the spirit of togetherness, resistance, mass movements, and vernacular forms that draw from various editions of *The School of Narrative Dance*.

Supported by Embassy of Italy Sri Lanka



MAKE IT SHINE #6, 2021. Collage and mixed media on Epson Hot Press Paper.
Courtesy of Mazzoleni London-Turin



The School of Narrative Dance:
Venice Parade. 2015.
Courtesy of the artist

Packiyathan Ahilan

Art historian and poet Packiyathan Ahilan's writings delve into how the modern human experience, especially in postcolonial Sri Lanka, is shaped by the intersection of collective trauma, survival, commemoration, love, and loss. The contours of suffering and desolation that exceed the limits of utilitarian speech find articulation in his verses. Moving away from grand narratives and mythologization of the past, Ahilan examines how language, architecture, and living traditions perform as a multitudinous common ground of the Tamil experience. Among his influences are the Russian modernist Anna Akhmatova, the Kirghiz writer Chingiz Aitmatov and the Indian Tamil poet Sukumaran.

The works on view at Language is Migrant are, in his words, 'poetry installations.' *Layers* (2021) and *Muted Speakers* (2021) were first conceived as part of the exhibition 'One & Many - Forms of Words and Silence' organized by Kālam, a Space for Cultural Encounters in Jaffna. These works extend the corporeality of poetry from the sphere of thought into modes of civic address. Ahilan lends figuration to the silencing of speech and redressal through earth as a healing force, while gesturing to the stirring nature of human effects that refuse oblivion.

Collaborating with poet and translator Geetha Sukumaran, Ahilan has spent a long time addressing the complex terrain of literary translation as a philosophical and political quest. His recent books of poetry 'Then There Were No Witnesses' and 'Tea: A Concoction of Dissonance' will be part of Reading in Tongues, Colomboscope's reading room at the Lakmahal Community Library.

Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka



(left) *Layers*, 2021. Wooden plank, glass, roots, mud, ash, concrete (of demolished building) and printed (poetry) stickers.

(overleaf) *Muted Speakers*, 2021. Aluminum horn speakers and printed (poetry) stickers. Courtesy of Kālam

செம்மணி III

உப்பு வயல்களின் கீழே
துரதிர்ஷ்டமான அந்த மனிதர்களை
அவர்களின் தேகத்தை உலரவிடாது
பெருகும் நேசர்களின் கண்ணீரை
கரிய நீர் புற்களின் மேலே விடாது காயும்
பயங்கர நாட்களின் சாம்பலை
தீண்டுவார் யாருமில்லை.

விளம்பரப் பதாகைகளின் கீழே
மறத்தலின் விளிம்பிலிருந்தன அவர்தம் நினைவுகள்...

கல்லாலல்ல ,
நீராலுமல்ல ,
வளியாற் கட்டுகிறேன்
விடாது பின்தொடருமொரு ஒலியால்
அவர்களிற்கொரு நினைவிடம்.

Semmani 03

There is no one to touch
the ashes of
those terrible days—
where grass
does not sprout from
the blackened water
in the salty fields,
the tears of the bereaved
do not dry the bodies
of those wretched humans.

Under the billboards
their memories
sit on the edge of oblivion.

I am building a memorial,
not with stone,
not with water,
but with air,
the sound
that trails me forever.





தாயுரை III

முடிவடையாத நள்ளிரவுகளில்
கிழிந்து பிளந்த நிலங்கள்
உதிரம் காண்கின்றன
கேவல்களின் சதுப்புக் கூடாரங்களில்
யாருக்காகக் காத்திருக்கின்றன குழந்தைகள்

தனயரில்,லை.
தந்தையரில்லை
முற்றுப்பெறவில்லை எதுவும்

பாதமற்ற கால்களால்
வாழ்வைக் கடந்து செல்கிறார்கள் நாதியற்ற
மனிதர்கள்

முன்னரிங்கிருந்தன வீடுகள்
முன்னரிங்கிருந்தன கிராமங்கள்

வரலாற்றின் மௌனத்துக்கு முன்னால்
கடல் கொண்டதே ஒரு யுகம்.

A Mother's Words III

In the endless nights,
the split open earth
witnesses blood;
Who are the children waiting for
in camps mired by sobs?

No son,
no father,
nothing ends.

The desolate
walk their life
with footless legs.

Once, there were houses here,
there were villages here.
An aeon deluged by the sea
in the silence of history.

Slavs and Tatars

"If history is written by the victors, will the future be written by the defeated?"

- Slavs and Tatars

The collective Slavs and Tatars envision polemical and multi-genre forms of address between art, politics, and design—contextualizing historiographies, literary corpuses, and current realities of Eurasia, from the east of the former Berlin Wall to the west of the Great Wall of China. Across their practice, text is released from the traditional role as a descriptive instrument and rather appears as a central protagonist giving flight to language histories, the evolution of loan words, playful transliteration, and double entendres through artist books, performance lectures, video works, prayer rugs, posters, T shirts, and book sculptures.

Slavs and Tatars' presence at Language is Migrant is four-fold. The takht (bed, or what they call a 'RiverBed' in honour of its ideal location by a water source), emerging from vernacular structures placed in spaces ranging from shrines to tea houses in Central Asia and Iran, now made in a new iteration at the Lakhmahal Community Library. The installation will be activated as a space for Sufi thought and queer poesis by cultural anthropologist and author Omar Kasmani. Also present is the multilingual publication 79.89.09, in English, Sinhala, and Tamil, that draws from the collective's first lecture performance of the same name. This work treats the years 1979, 1989, and 2009 as bookends of contemporary histories of communism, twenty-first century Islam, Fall of the Berlin Wall, Polish-Iranian Solidarity reimagined, and new lessons of the revolutions of 1979 and 1989. A virtual dialogue *Hurufis and the Materiality of Language* is led by Shahzad Bashir, scholar of Islamic Humanities with Slavs and Tatars. The video work, *Hamdami*, exhibited at the Colombo Public Library, proposes a resuscitation of history as 'the rearguard rather than the avant-garde' inferring from the visual metaphor of Nasreddin Hoja facing backwards while riding on his donkey, stumbling forth.

Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka, ifa, and Ishara Art Foundation



Our Solidarity and Patience will Secure our Victory, 2011. Installation view. Courtesy of the artists



Hamdami, 2016. Video. Installation view. Courtesy of the artists

Rajni Perera

‘Moving is all our blood knows about. Transition and trajectory become like different ends of the same instruments’ numerous facets in a slow dance with many arms,’ writes Rajni Perera in her recent visual essay ‘A primordial culture’ (2020). Her practice is ‘tentacular’ and often unravels scenes from invented futures while conceiving hybrid characters that allude to ancestors, divinity, and monsters. Perera assembles, camouflages, and collages elements of sacred iconography, goddess cults, and popular mythology from South Asia to craft a subversive aesthetic and summons multiform dimensions of female representation and diasporic lived experience such that her work operates as a restorative and imaginative force.

Perera’s projects, including *(M)otherworld* (2018), query the rampant threats of toxicity and ask what sort of avatars we might mutate into as the planet reaches its carrying capacity. She wonders what the aftermath will be once the old world is gone, while circling codependent models of life found in indigenous cultures, civilizational records, and mythological fabulation. Her work at Colomboscope emerges from a residency experimenting with studio pottery, inspired by utilitarian clay vessels found across the island, as well as dynamic forms such as cones and spheres that have long been associated with cosmographic tableaus and Yantras—sacred energy diagrams related to Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. Similar to explorations in her series *Dancers* (2018), she outlines fluid contours as colourful beings in rhythm and animated shapeshifters. The artist considers these abstract figures as sign systems indicative of matrilineal relationality and rebellious futurity, while also observing science fiction’s form-giving capacity in dialogue with traditional craftsmanship.

Supported by Warehouse421 Project Revival Fund and Canada Council for the Arts



Hand with Ring, 2020. Polymer clay, bronze, textile, leather
Traveller 5, 2020. Mixed media on paper



Storm, Mixed media on paper
Courtesy of Patel Brown Gallery



Bust, 2020. Polymer clay, jute, leather, bubble wrap, textile
Banner 2, 2020. Textile, wood, paint, steel
Courtesy of the artist

Rio Complex

Mano Prashath
Sundharam Anojan
Thisath Thoradeniya
Danushka Marasinghe
Sharika Navamani
M. T. F. Rukshana
Hanusha Somasundaram
Palash Bhattacharjee
Aziz Hazara
Baaraan Ijlal
Omer Wasim
Pallavi Paul
Elin Mår Øyen Vister
Pınar Öğrenci
Lawrence Abu Hamdan
Omar Kasmani
Iffath Neetha Uthumalebbe

language is migrant;
භාෂාව සංක්‍රමණිකයි
மொழி ஒரு புலம்பெயர்



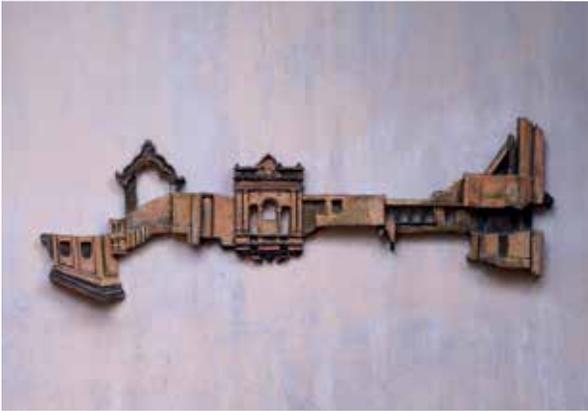
EXHIBITION VENUE



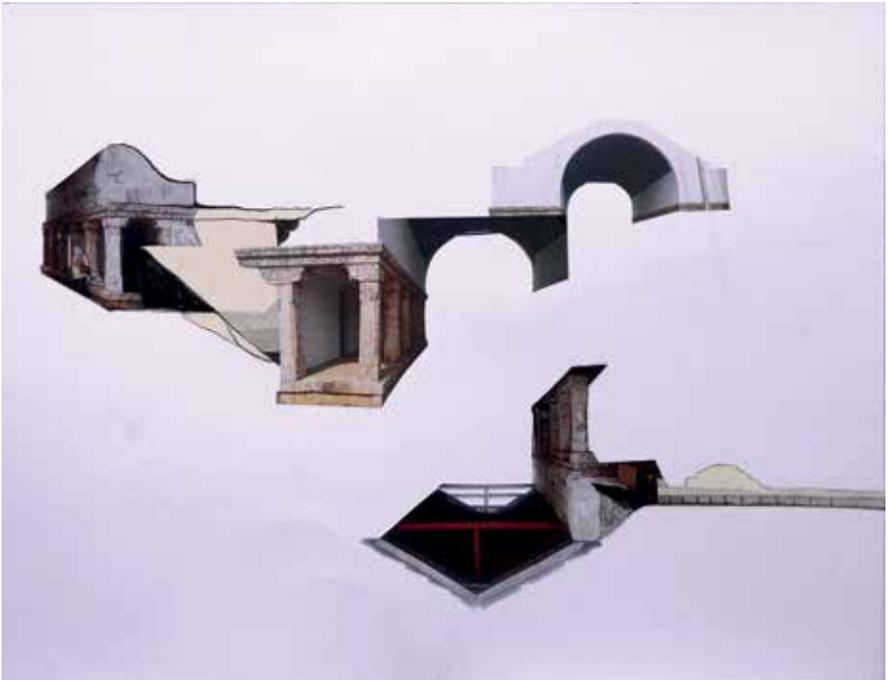
Mano Prashath

Mano Prashath is a practising artist based in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Working with collage and drawings on paper, as well as sculptural murals cast in fibreglass, he reimagines and completes in his works what exist as ruins of colonial and pre-war buildings, also taking into account the repairs and additions made to them in the postwar period in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. Informed by photographic documentation of the facades of buildings, collected over a decade, he explores the social and political impetus behind what he identifies as recurring transformations of the region's architecture. Various architectural styles and designs inherently inscribe the aspirations and political inclinations of the people who create them, marking generational changes to the history and demographics of their context.

The ruinous landscape left behind by the 30-year-long civil war that severely affected the Northern Province included partially demolished buildings, several of which were carriers of the diverse historical influences in the region, and others that were of personal significance, imbued with the lives and stories of the people who inhabited them. The rapid infrastructural additions in the postwar period realigned the facades to reflect shifts not only in the apparatus of power but also the developmental desires of the people who imagined its aesthetics. For Mano Prashath, the shape-shifting force of history leaves indelible impressions on the architectural formations of its time, and in his works, he presents these shifts as a composite, as if peering through time in one frame.



Distressed Wall, 2021. Collage on art board. Courtesy of the artist



Tale of a Migrant City II, 2021. Mixed media. Courtesy of the artist

Suntharam Anojan

Suntharam Anojan's artworks are cathartic revisitations highlighting the textured browns, ochres, and greens in the landscape of the Vanni in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, where the artist's home is located. Through a painterly imagination, Anojan considers war atrocities through what the ground, humans, and other living species have simultaneously witnessed. His abstract notations consider what it means to compose a ruin that is a composite of toxic environs bearing the remnants of explosives, flattened homes, and burnt forest areas.

These works are therefore timecycles of instantaneous and slow accrual of violence through decades of civil war. They exist beyond what spoken language may offer, gently calling forth what remains in the unconscious, hushed and repressed.

Anojan's compositions are resonant as urgent reminders of what is entailed in rescuing shared traumatic memories from enforced amnesia. And furthermore, how colour fields are potent in narrating experiences of horror. When looking at a detail, one might notice how the signification of a blast imposes itself upon motifs of greenery, not as if it was perceived from afar, but rather so blindingly close that it often disappears into white nothingness.

For *Language is Migrant*, the artist presents a 20-foot-long canvas that undulates and spreads across the space, charting amorphous forms. It immerses the visitor, even if only for a few moments, in vignettes of mass destruction that marked the landscape of his childhood. The distortion and mobile contours of this work are indicative of living without a permanent residence for years, moving from shelter to shelter amidst dangerous terrains.

Supported by Foundation for Arts Initiatives



Hidden Path, 2021 (detail). Acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of the artist





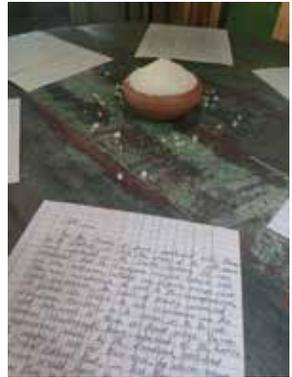
Suntharam Anojan, *Hidden Path*, 2021 (detail). Acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of the artist

Thisath Thoradeniya

Thisath Thoradeniya's two-decade-long artistic practice belongs to the aesthetic and ideological leanings of a generation of artists who started working in the 1990s and responded to political and social transformations in Sri Lanka at the time. For his project featured at Colomboscope, the artist delves into his family archives dating back to the 17th century, and the historical context that informed their migration within the island due to Portuguese control of businesses in coastal areas.

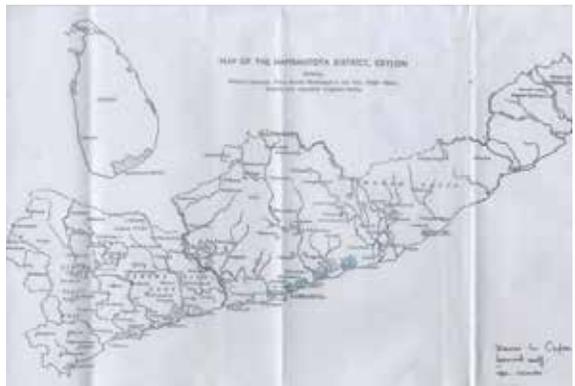
The maternal side of Thoradeniya's family moved to Kandy, which was still ruled by the local king, and were engaged in the construction of the now historical Kandy Lake, an artificial lake in the heart of the city. In the inland region at the time, salt was a scarce commodity, as a result of extreme taxation and restricted movement of goods from the Portuguese territories. Though they were in support of the ruler, as migrant workers, they were denied the procurement of salt, which was reserved for those who were native to the hill kingdom. Memories of recipes that attempted to surpass the lack of perhaps the most essential culinary commodity still survive in his family and archival documents that remain confirm this. While collecting anecdotes from his relations, the artist notes that one of the ways by which communities managed to overcome the artificial scarcity of salt was by collecting their own sweat as they laboured. Thoradeniya's sculpture operates as a reminder to us of this alienating chapter in history and culinary politics through mechanical and performative evocations of a mnemonic field.

Supported by EUNIC and Goethe-Institut, Sri Lanka



Images from open studio, Colomboscope Tandem Artists' Residency, April 2021

Map of the Hambantota District, Ceylon, Diaries in Ceylon, Leonard Woolf, 1962. Colomboscope Tandem Artists' Residency, April 2021



Danushka Marasinghe

Danushka Marasinghe's moving image practice has consistently maintained an interest in surveillance culture, histories of violence, and the spectacle economy. Sculptural and sonic elements are crucial to his expressionist vocabulary. In his most recent project for Colomboscope, *Dance in the Darkness*, Marasinghe conducts a filmic archaeology of surveillance mechanisms linked to current power relations and colonial-era documentation. He examines the role of photography as a tool in the scientific, anthropological, administrative, and missionary work of imperial forces, securing their subjugation of colonized subjects. Using light, which is instrumental to photo-making as a counterpoint to the 'darkness' attributed to occupied territories, Marasinghe critiques the notion of enlightenment-led ethnography and the dominant lens as an objective source.

The artist corresponds with the dual power of images across spheres of recognition and self-affirmation on the one hand, and control and racial profiling on the other. Playing upon the word 'shoot' to highlight the violent deployment of photographic methods in the interest of maintaining status quo in hegemonic structures, Marasinghe fashions target stands in his own likeness, with a scattering of holes in them shaped like eyes, reminiscent of bullet holes, through which 'light' shines, ironically situating the Western gaze, and the cost of enforcing so-called 'progressive' values across the British Empire. A video collage of colonial era footage, international films shot in Sri Lanka, and newsreels is projected onto the silhouette of the artist, implying the dissonant narratives that are cast upon a postcolonial subject. Through these acts, the artist invites us to open up to spaces of reflexivity and self-determination in an image-saturated world.

Supported by Foundation for Arts Initiatives

Lucent Monologues, 2021-2022. Video, colour, sound, rear projection on transparent fibreglass, silhouette target stand. Courtesy of the artist



Sharika Navamani

The Act has Passed 0010835 is a speculative and biographical reading, in an expanded form, of extensive archival research by Sharika Navamani and Mauran Muralitharan (collaborator until April 2021) on the Prevention of Terrorism Act (1979), based on perspectives gleaned from official documents on the experience of the youngest political prisoner to ever be arrested under this act at the age of seventeen, Sellappillai Mahendiran. Mahendiran passed away in 2020 in captivity at the age of 43 due to lack of access to medical facilities. The semi-fictional narrative is partly informed by interviews conducted with Mahendiran, where he refers to the officer questioning him—representing the institution that has held him captive without legal recourse—as *anna*, which means older brother in Tamil. The layers of linguistic barriers between Mahendiran, as a Tamil speaker, and the Sinhalese-dominant state, includes not just the differences in their spoken tongues, mediated and paraphrased by translators, but also the language burdens borne by bureaucracy, as well as convoluted processes of recording and transcribing, mediated in the interests of state power. Mahendiran's experience manifests in this installation as an intimate entry point into the experiences of several other undertrials and prisoners who were arrested under this draconian law. They find representation through elements such as newspaper accounts and digital records, which endeavour to construct a bricolage narrative in their own tenor. In the exhibition space, audiences are addressed with a fictional dialogue between an unnamed detainee and his older brother. This account traces the affective contours of vulnerability and composes an evidentiary form that surfaces from relation-building, while remaining in tense engagement with media-generated perspectives around the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

துண்டுப் பிரசுரங்களை அச்சடிப்போர் கவனத்துக்கு!

தகுதிவாய்ந்த அதிகாரியின்

(யாழ்ப்பாணம்)

யாழ் மாவட்டத்தில் தற்போது அமூகி செய்யப்பட்டுள்ள அவசரகாலச் சட்டத்தின்கீழ் இனத்துவேஷத்தைத் தூண்டக்கூடியதாகவோ அரசாங்கத்தைக் கவிழ்ப்பதற்கு நேரடியாவோ அகற்றி மறைமுகமாகவோ முயலக்கூடிய எந்தவித துண்டுப் பிரசுரங்களையும் யாழ் மாவட்டத்தில் உண்டாக்க எந்த அச்சமும் அச்சிடமுடியாது.

வேறுவகையில் அச்சிடப்படும் பிரசுரங்களில் சந்தேகம் இருப்பின் அவற்றைத் தகுதிவாய்ந்த அதிகாரியிடம் காண்பித்து தணிக்கைசெய்து சலுகை அளிக்காரம் பெற்ற பின்னரே அச்சிட்டு வெளியிட முடியும்.

யாழ் மாவட்டத்தின் தகுதி

அறிவுறுத்தல்

வாய்ந்த அதிகாரி திரு யோகேந்திரா துரைசுவாமி, துண்டுப் பிரசுரங்கள், தனிப்பிரசுரங்கள் போன்றவற்றை யாழ்ப்பாணத்தில் உண்டாக்க அச்சுறுத்தும் அச்சிடும்போது கடைப்பிடிக்க வேண்டிய விதங்களை பற்றி கீழ்க்கண்ட அறிவித்தலிலேயே மேற்கண்டவாறு தெரிவித்துள்ளார். மேற்கறப்பட்ட விதங்களை கடுமையாக அமூகி செய்யப்படும் என்றும் தகுதிவாய்ந்த அதிகாரி தெரிவித்துள்ளார்.

யாழ் மாவட்டத்திலுள்ள சகல அச்சகங்களுக்கும் மேற்கறிய விதங்களை கருதித்தொண்டு நடவடிக்கைகளை மேற்கொள்ளவேண்டும் என்றும் அந்த அறிவித்தலில் தெரிவிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. [5]

M T F Rukshana

M T F Rukshana creates organic sculptures and intricate weavings made with paper, starting from a personal exploration of the legal paradigms surrounding feminine agency, and rituals of marriage and divorce. Through repetitive figuration and patterning, the live dynamics of subjugation and objectification of women through male custodianship are assessed in visual terms. The artist observes that the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act of Sri Lanka has not been revised since 1951, to take into consideration women's consent in matrimonial arrangements, proprietorship, and to tackle the complexities of unconditional divorce (talaq) procedures.

In her earlier works that take an autobiographical and therapeutic turn, Rukshana plots the 'infestation' of patriarchy in metaphorical ways, represented by vermin replicating and crawling while symbolically eating away at the page that holds them. In this way she astutely remarks on its self-destructive nature. Paper as a material susceptible to burns, stains, and tears, embodying fragility and precariousness, denotes not only loss but also feminine strength and survival. The artist's ongoing works, created during her MFA at Beaconhouse, Lahore, examine structural tensions between varying densities of paper assembled together, reflecting upon the lack of balance and disproportionate privileges between genders. These compositions open into familial and social sites, outlining a calligraphic style to blur the distinction between the written word and the woman's body. In essence, they convey how corporeal experience is shaped through externalised 'scripts' of legitimacy, social codes, and obligation.

Rukshana often draws from her confidential dialogues with women who share their experience. While protecting their identity, the artist composes a testimonial record of the scars that remain from violent divorces, sexual repression, and child marriage.

Supported by Foundation for Arts Initiatives

The Black Dress, 2019. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy of the artist





The Black Dress, 2017. Mix media on paper. Courtesy of the artist



The Black Dress II, 2019. Mix media on paper. Courtesy of the artist

Palash Bhattacharjee

Palash Bhattacharjee is a Chittagong-based artist evolving photo and video installations as well as site-responsive performances investigating linguistic expression, embodied memory, and non-linear time. The water ecology and ancient seaport surrounding his home play an active role in his practice. His experimental videos are often developed from his performative work, and include repetitive actions, gestures, or footage that evoke a sense of the absurd. Such repetition upon subject matter that relates to his geopolitical and cultural context recalls the errors and slippages of larger historical processes.

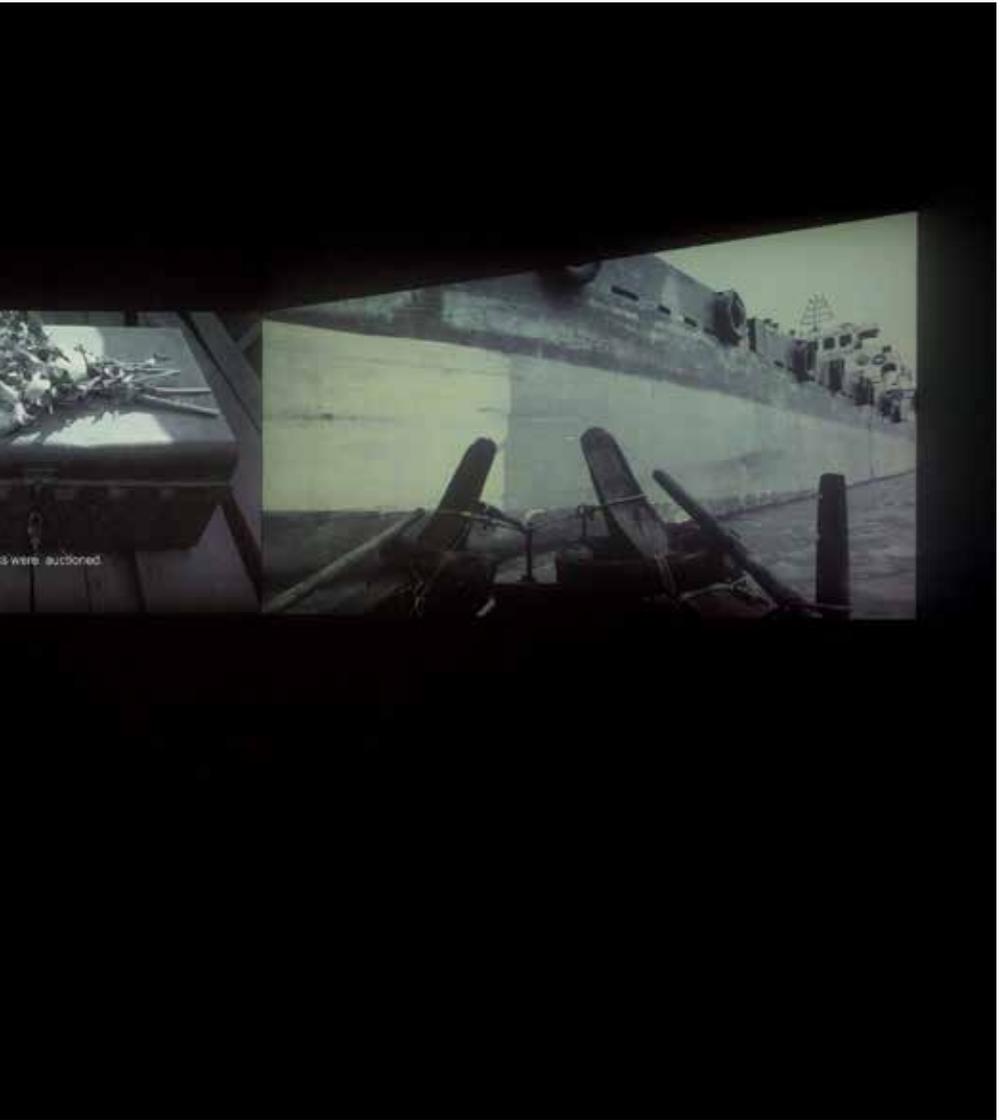
Bhattacharjee's multi-channel video installation *Link Road* developed for Language is Migrant sits at the crossroads of personal ties, communal history, and political chronicles. The artist explores his spoken dialect, formed at the confluence of various currents, on the river Karnaphuli, which flows through Chattogram. Within the boundedness of the Chittagonian language and river unfold efforts to envision existences that are near and remote, marginal and unknown, relying on remembered fragments and detached assertions from the artist's perspectives as a child. This work is informed by familial relationships and friendships articulated via personal and spiritual attachments pervasive among marginalized groups and coastal life in the border region of India and Myanmar. Bhattacharjee notes, 'There is no evidence or actual shape of the regional map in *Link Road*. It seems to be the shape of collective spirits.' The meanderings of language and identity are juxtaposed with a boat adrift on the river, leading to sporadic recollections of coming to terms with 'otherness' as what lies within the self and not without.

*Supported by Warehouse421 Project Revival Fund
and Goethe-Institut Bangladesh*

Link Road, 2021. Video still, Three-channel video installation with sound. Courtesy of the artist







Link Road, 2021. Video still, Three channel video installation with sound. Courtesy of Chobi Mela

Aziz Hazara

Aziz Hazara's work plots the tension built into image-making, acknowledging absence as traces of presence. As film historian Nicole Brenez notes, 'In cinema, only the presumption of figures exists.' Hazara thus grapples with the figurative wildness of power and unstable grip of memory. While some of his photographic and moving image works confront the ambit of visual technologies of war and surveillance mechanisms used in Afghanistan over decades since the Soviet Invasion to the US and NATO-led war, he remains equally committed to the private sphere of life-making—connected to growing up in sublime, convivial, and hazardous ways as part of 'the 9/11 generation' around Kabul.

The mountainous landscape has been formative to his vantage point; aesthetically and socially it plays into the setting of scenes and the making of a peripatetic studio amidst the involvement of friends and family members. Rehearsals may carry on over weeks and surreptitiously captured footage while on a stroll may be sequenced into an edit. The temporality of making is therefore purposefully uneven and untethered. The multi-channel video *Bow Echo* (2019) unfolds in this terrain. As five boys take to climbing and stabilizing themselves atop a large rock amidst strong winds, a haunting sonic environment is produced through the insistent resonance of plastic bugles and roaring helicopters, while an impossible feat is pursued.

Relating with earlier works such as *Camouflage* and the video installation *Dialectic* (both 2016) that observe night vision and surveillance blimps as weaponized seeing; *nightfall* sets the mood for the artist's latest video installation *Takbir* (2021). The night is a space of bold intrigue, escape, and terror. What is the shade of darkness when the lights go out in the entire valley during a regime change? Receding light enables fugitivity, while power brokers operate in full visibility. In the distortions of light across footage shot in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and suburban Paris, Hazara traces blindspots of night raids, newfound complicities, media 'fog', and the blur of overnight displacement. He turns to *matam* as a primal act of remembrance and circuit of mourning traversing from the individual into the communal fold. Yet, that gesture too ironically encapsulates the viciousness of the global development aid industry and a pervasive 'saviour complex'.

Produced and commissioned by Between Art and Film Foundation with generous support from Künstlerhaus Bethanien, KFW Stiftung, EUNIC, Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka, and Kālam



Takbir, 2021. Video stills, video with sound and colour. Courtesy of the artist





Takbir, 2021. Video still, video with sound and colour. Courtesy of the artist

Baaraan Ijlal

Change Room is an archival project that first emerged as an extension of the interest that Baaraan Ijlal's practice maintains in oral testimonies collected anonymously that relate to larger historical and political processes, to create a permanent home for lived accounts that dominant, official narratives often overlook. The project marks an ongoing process for Ijlal and since 2018 the archive has grown to include over a thousand voices. The project also foregrounds the power of anonymity, especially when testimonies emerge from subject positions that are illegible to apparatuses of power and the state, or from perspectives that threaten the agency of such institutions.

Ijlal lends herself as a witness to anyone who is willing to share their fears, apprehensions, and desires in a safe space where they will not be silenced, in the hope that as the archive travels, their stories too could reach more listeners who could choose to forge solidarities with them from afar. So far she has recorded with diverse communities across South Asia and beyond, including sex workers, hijras, migrants displaced from their homes, nomads, victims of the Bhopal gas disaster, lawyers, officegoers, and ousted forest dwellers. At each presentation of the archive, the artist also creates a designated recording space where visitors can choose to leave testimonies from their own experience or responses to the voices that they encounter. At Colomscope, a selection of recordings from *Change Room* that relate to the conversations nurtured by the conceptual framework of *Language is Migrant* and gender justice will be presented and expand the archive via recordings made by the artist on-site.

Supported by Shrine Empire

Transcriptions by Salomi Christie

Sound editing by Mir Ijlal Shaani

Change Room, 2018 (at TENT Art Space Kolkata, India). Sound installation. Courtesy of the artist







Change Room, 2019 (at India Art Fair). Sound installation. Courtesy of the artist

Omer Wasim

Omer Wasim's practice queers space, subverting the frames of development and progress that shape human relationships to the city and nature. His work bears witness to the relentless erasure, violence, and destruction of our times by staying with queer bodies as they hold space and enact desire. This line of inquiry in his works, based on queer kinship and worldmaking, continued during a month-long residency in Sri Lanka, when he travelled across the island to meet with historians and healers, and learn about medicinal botanicals and flowering plants such as periwinkle, gotu kola, and jasmine that are interlinked with memory capacity, rituals of repair, and adornment, and other flora that are engaged with unfurling legacies of conflict and conviviality. Wasim often creates works that are living, transforming, and ephemeral.

The project *Spectral Remains* brings together more than human life forms, lens-based recordings of historical markers from the margins of daily life in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, as well as sonic narratives that surpass the silences and ellipses in official archives. Plants and landscapes are evoked as carriers of sensorial testimonies reconstituting the notion of evidence away from the weight of empirical attestations. They create sites of remembrance, or anti-monuments that are rhizomatic and fragmented across the exhibition venue at the Rio Complex and remain in dialogue with its own memory of ethnic violence in Sri Lanka. As flower beds grow under sun and rain over months, the installation attunes to meandering processes of recollection and the limits of representation. This is the first iteration of a long-term undertaking for the artist, reflecting on displacement in the island from his own familial history of migration from present-day Bangladesh to Pakistan during the Liberation War (1971) and how this social memory persists in the Dhaka ghaas (grass) that grows relentlessly across Pakistan.

Supported by EUNIC, Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka and Shrine Empire





Spectral Remains, 2020-22 (in-progress). Jasmine, soil, wood. Courtesy of Thushara Nandanlal



Spectral Remains, 2020-22.
Images from fieldwork
as part of the project
publication, near Jaffna
International Airport.
Courtesy of the artist

Elin Már Øyen Vister

Soundscape Røst: The Listening Lounge is an installation that emerges from Elin Már Øyen Vister's recordings of birds in the archipelago of Røst, the outermost part of the Lofoten Islands in the Atlantic ocean. Drawing from the artist's background in audio and music production, Sápmi scholarship, and continued everyday practice of listening and foraging, this work is a permanent sonic archive of the diminishing sea bird population and natural life of Røst, as a result of pollution, climatic changes due to global warming, and overfishing. In the foyer of the installation, audiences are introduced to a map of Røst, indicating the regions where the recordings were made, with artwork by Norwegian artist Theodor Kittelsen. Presented alongside the map are the artist's voice-overs, with Tamil and Sinhala translations, including personal anecdotes and information about the life of sea birds, and facts on their declining numbers. Inside, a dedicated listening room provides a quiet and tranquil space where listeners may be transported to the natural soundscape of Røst and engage with the language of the aviatic creatures from the coastal region by appointment, to contemplate the cosmic interconnectedness between human and non-human existences as well as non-life.

From one island to another, this chapter on the ecology of Røst is grounded in the local context by another sound-based work specially commissioned for Colomboscope as part of *A Thousand Channels*, the festival's radio program led by Syma Tariq. Here, Elin Már will be in conversation with Moditha Kodikara Arachchi, a Sri Lankan seabird enthusiast, and Gayomini Panagoda, an expert on the subject, interspersed with recordings of the calls of seabirds from the island. A shared narrative between Røst and Sri Lanka on migratory life-forms whose existences and ways of living are being threatened by the climate crisis and human intervention within their eco-systems will emerge from this collaboration.

Supported by Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA)



Recording of *Soundscape Røst: The Listening Lounge* in Ellevsnyken, 2014. Courtesy of the artist

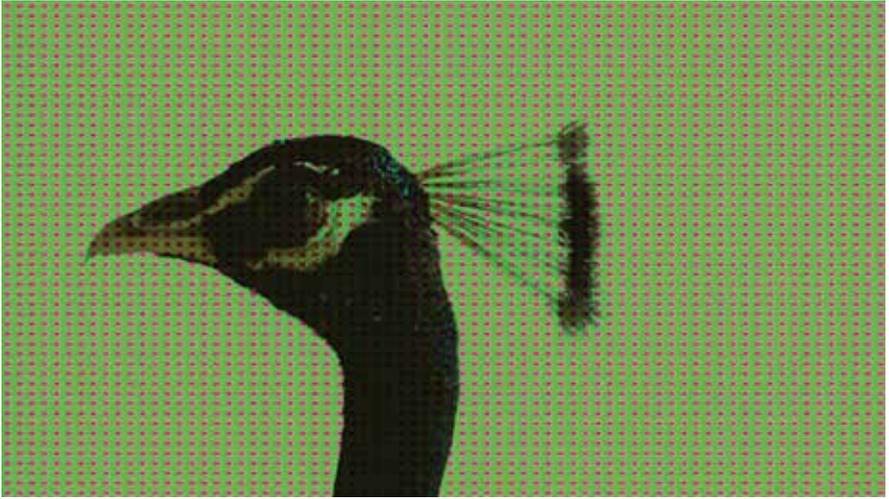
Pallavi Paul

Pallavi Paul's practice interrogates how the idea of truth and freedom is produced and imaged in public life as an imaginative civic process. She plots lines of connection between biographical modes, journalistic sources, and literature, such that the visual 'document' is understood as a collage of forms and utterances. Social history unravels through the cinematic intersections of speculation, factuality, and proof.

The virtual performance *Walking as Alibi: re-reading The Dreams of Cynthia* that premiered as part of Colomboscope, revisits her 2017 film, *The Dreams of Cynthia*. It opens up the filmic as a porous field of actions, pulling in the artist's own voice and presence. Mounted as an online experience, it punctuates the enduring grammar of 'screening', 'exhibition', and reading with a renewed address to the present while being contemporary to various orders of cinematic, geological, and industrial time.

Paul's latest film, *The Blind Rabbit*, introduces allegorical fiction to lay bare systemic oppression of political freedoms, especially during the years of Indian Emergency in the 1970s, and accounts of police brutality in her hometown, New Delhi. Through fragmentary recordings, eyewitness accounts, text and sound elements, the filmmaker continues to retell stories around those who are left most vulnerable within the spaces of state law and metropolitan survival. Ultimately, *The Blind Rabbit* conveys how official chronicles of history often paint iconic scenes that keep a majority of the protagonists hidden from view.

Supported by DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program and Ishara Art Foundation



The Blind Rabbit, 2021. Video still, video with colour and sound. Courtesy of the artist



The Blind Rabbit, 2021. Video still, video with colour and sound. Courtesy of the artist

Pinar Öğrenci

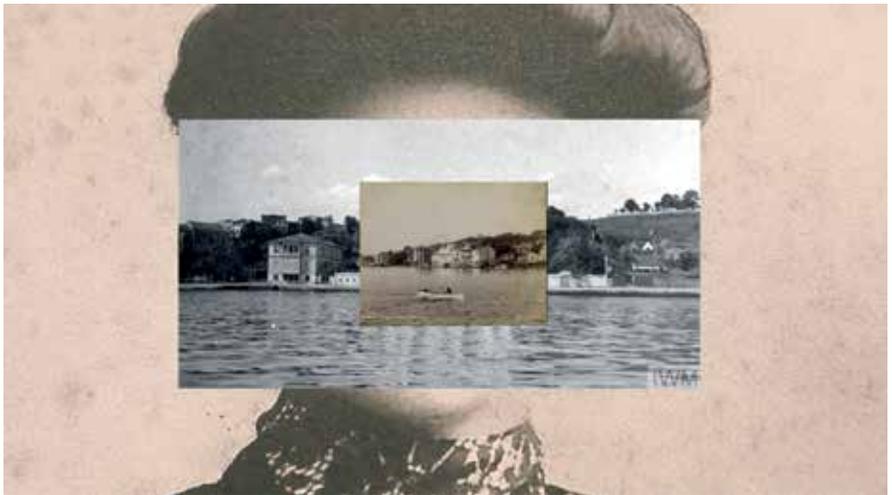
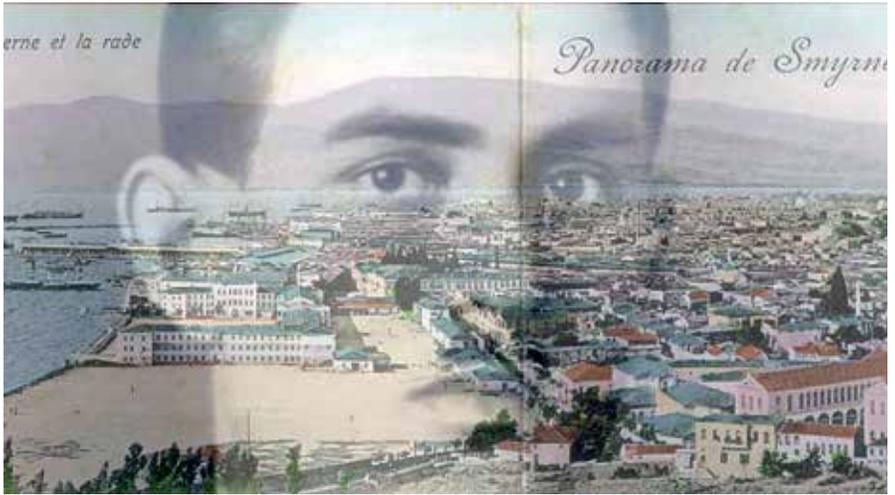
Pinar Öğrenci is an artist, writer, and filmmaker engaged with tracing material culture, feminist and communal historiographies related to forced displacement, exile and dispossession across geographies. Based in Berlin, she has a background in architecture that often plays a role in her aesthetic and social approaches toward urban and industrial built environments, vulnerable neighbourhoods, and vernacular living practices.

Recently, Öğrenci's practice has maintained interest in the cultural and economical symbols transported to Europe through the Mediterranean region from the Middle East. Her new film for Colomboscope, *Turkish Delight* follows the story of *lokum* production (Turkish Delight), one of the most symbolic emblems of Turkish culinary culture, that is far spread from Western Anatolia to Syros Island.

The links between *lokum*, war, nationalist policies, state violence, and migration as well as the effects of the separation of people that have lived together for centuries emerges in accounts of the forced displacement of famed *lokum* manufacturers in Syros, the Skoutri family with a Greek origin (Rum in Turkish) who had to flee from Izmir and Istanbul during the Turkish-Greek War. It was through the historical production and migratory passage of this delicacy served at celebrations such as weddings, birthdays and baptism ceremonies that Asia Minor immigrants were gradually welcomed by Greek locals.

The artist's long-term and itinerant research extends to numerous sites including the Ermoupoli Industrial Museum, Syros Library, the Asia Minor Archive amid traversing collective memory through familial stories, kitchens, and heirlooms. Etymological roots of *lokum*, which is produced in the entire Middle Eastern geography, stems from *rahat ul hulküm* / "the thing used to relieve throat" in Arabic and *lokum* is still known as *rahat lokum* in the Balkans today. Öğrenci adds, According to one account, *lokum* was a small dessert produced initially to mitigate the bitter taste of the opium taken by Ottoman Janissaries to calm their mind driven by the after-effects of war. *Lokum*, with a gradual passage of time, travelled to find a well-sought place as a dessert on the table spread of the palace in Istanbul and developed its present-day rich content.

Co-commissioned by Colomboscope with support from Locus Athens, individual donors from Syros and Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka



Turkish Delight, 2021-22. Video stills, video with colour and sound. Courtesy of the artist

Lawrence Abu Hamdan

Lawrence Abu Hamdan has been working on mapping the terrain of rights, the construction of speech, and acoustic testimony premised on forensic listening via the individual and collective realm of ear witnesses, truth production, and (legal, para-legal, and imaginative) advocacy through video, performance, and audio installations. Charting the materiality and shape-shifting dimensions of rhythm(s) through various interfaces—sculptural, textual, and cinematic—is a recurring feature in Abu Hamdan’s practice. His sonic approaches originate from his background as a touring musician and his earlier work in DIY music production. The expansive project called the *Aural Contract Audio Archive* (2010 - ongoing) includes recordings from state-led voice analysis, courtroom proceedings, historic tribunals, examples of racial violence, and technologies of lie detection. His installations and audio investigations explore the theatre of law, distortions of justice, and evidence gathering, engaging with surveilled citizens, asylum seekers, prisoners, and political detainees.

The video installation *Once Removed* (2019) addresses the representational challenges of testimony through paradoxes implicit in listening across time phases; taking a stand through subjective archival memory and being heard beyond the courtroom. It centres around Bassel Abi Chahine, a writer and historian who has managed to obtain the most comprehensive inventory of extremely rare objects, photographs and interviews of the People Liberation Army (PLA) and Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) militia from the Lebanese civil war. Through his research, Abi Chahine realised that his own lucid memories of a war he had not lived were because he was the reincarnation of a soldier, carrying him back to 1984 in the town of Aley. The dialogical construction and scenography of the film attempts to establish the conditions to listen to a new category of witness, one that is yet to be accepted into the production of history.



Supported by the British Council and EUNIC



Once Removed, 2019. Video stills, video with colour and sound. Courtesy of the artist

Ahilan Ratnamohan

An Australian artist from the Sri Lankan diaspora, Ahilan Ratnamohan is a polyglot whose practice encompasses his ability to pick up languages quickly while working across contexts and continents, very often with migrant communities, exploring their relationship with the languages that are dominantly spoken there. Working with atypical performative and interactive methods in his practice, his works are often based on football and language learning, treating them as a universally relatable set of codes. His participatory performances create a space for a sense of community to emerge among those whom the work engages, who are almost exclusively people without any conventional performance training. Ratnamohan, who migrated with his parents during the civil war in Sri Lanka, never learnt Tamil during his childhood in Australia. Over the past few years, he has been furthering his skills in spoken Tamil over skype conversations with his mother, where the mother and son attempt to communicate in their natal tongue for the first time. The process involves active remembering and acknowledgement of the cultural amnesia that sets in following the traumatic process of communal marginalization and forced movement. This exercise resulted in a script, *The Tamilization of Ahilan Ratnamohan*, that the artist wrote collaboratively with his mother, which will be performed at the festival. Another performative engagement by Ratnamohan at the festival, from his ongoing series *The Foreigner*, will respond to the specific linguistic and cultural fabric of Colombo through a series of language-based games. The games have been specially conceptualized to engage learners with rudimentary skills in Tamil and Sinhala who, while engaging with audiences that might be more proficient in their respective tongues, will still be able to retain mastery over the games, dismantling implicit hierarchies based on language differences.

*Supported by Australian High Commission Sri Lanka
and Warehouse421 Project Revival Fund*



Foreigner, 2017, Performance. Photo: Iveta Budrevica. Courtesy of the artist



Foreigner, 2017. Performance. Photo: Peteris Vikna. Courtesy of the artist

Aaraniyam

Aaraniyam is a collective of four contemporary performers that found each other through the choreography camps organized by Venuri Perera with the Goethe-Institut. Mentored by K. Nicholas, the dancers Srikannan, Ragaventhana, Shalini and Yalini use improvised choreography toward a movement representation of poems by Packiyannathan Ahilan, drawing from communal memory and feminist perspectives in Tamil society. Through the use of newspapers to configure distortion between bodies and information, performing amidst oil lamps, Aaraniyam's first experimental piece was held as part of Kacha Kacha in 2019, hosted by Colomboscope. Over an evening at the Rio Complex, the collective will plot visualization elements in collaboration with Lalindra Amarasekara, focusing on light and shadow as well as literary fields of loss and injustice.

Supported by Kālam – A Space for Cultural Encounters and Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka

Performances at the opening of 'One & Many: Forms of Words and Silence', Poetry Installation by P. Ahilan, 2021. Photo: Tharmapalan Tilaxan. Courtesy of Kālam



Barefoot Gallery

Areez Katki
T. Vinoja
Hema Shironi
Abdul Halik Azeez

language is migrant;
භාෂාව සංක්‍රමණිකයි
மொழி ஒரு புலம்பெயர்



EXHIBITION VENUE



Areez Katki

'Perhaps we'll find a subcontinent crammed inside your neighbour's home; a little brown cry; or a kiss between strangers; land that wasn't subdivided or annexed by oceans; bodies emerging from bodies. I thought of our various elsewheres having migrated with us, like stowaway bees in our pockets, having extracted nectar from lands that have nourished and sheltered.'

For over two years, Areez Katki has been corresponding with us from Aotearoa (New Zealand). He shared this fragment from an essay that illustrates his experience growing up in Howick, a small suburb in East Auckland, where his Zoroastrian family settled when they immigrated from the Middle East in 2002. Between lockdowns, Katki was contemplating the intense proximity to domesticity, queer desire, and the inability to cross over to a home that lies by another shore in the embrace of the Parsi Colony in Tardeo.

Across this practice the interrelation of text and textile resounds, while narrating from his identity as a Parsi-born former priest and a queer migrant body. The various craft processes include fabrication, patterning, and bead weaving, often collaboratively performed with family members, and affirm a matrilineal inheritance. For some time now, Katki has also been hand-embroidering on dust cloths as well as cotton muslin and voile handkerchiefs that are over a century old and were bequeathed to him. In a new 'quartet' *Words are Pilgrims* (2021), a set of square kerchiefs become a place of convergence and mark-making for words bearing Persian roots that have settled into the English tongue: Musk, Khaki, Algebra, and Alcohol. These words, like travelling bodies, become hybrids, and leave traces of their crossing with the four elements.

The panels, *Diu Dispersion* and *Udvada* (both 2018) revisit the moment when the first Zoroastrian refugees landed on Gujarat's shores during the 8th Century AD and early village settlements. Here, the autobiography is brought in through architectural and coastal motifs but also in the use of fragments of 200-year-old Sudreh muslin belonging to the artist's great-grandfather.

Supported by Creative New Zealand and TARQ



Dio Dispersion, 'Diaspora' series, 2018. Cotton thread hand embroidery applied over repurposed Bombay Dyeing tea towels (c. 1940) with applied 19th Century hand loomed cotton Mul fragments, Courtesy of the artist and TARQ



Algebra (or an allegory for faith), 'Words are Pilgrims' series, 2021. Cotton embroidery on khadi handkerchief. Courtesy of the artist



Khaki (upon some soil we land safely), 'Words are Pilgrims' series, 2021 (detail). Cotton embroidery on khadi handkerchief. Courtesy of the artist



Alcohol (a dance of birds as our vines ripen), 'Words are Pilgrims' series, 2021. Cotton embroidery on khadi handkerchief. Courtesy of the artist

T. Vinoja

Vinoja Tharmalingam approaches her artistic role with quiet rigour, hers is a quest to bring to the fore experiences of oppressed figures who are sidelined even within minor historiographies, memory keeping, and commemoration. Her textile art, canvases, and installations examine how objects and sites convey experiences of loss, abandonment, and shattered realities: wheelchair, bunkers, decimated homes, and Sri Lanka's landmine contamination. Drafting from a common experience, the civil war is resituated through the evidence borne in disabled bodies, the afterlives of widows, and orphans.

Living between Kilinochchi and Batticaloa, where she teaches, the artist has written her thesis on 'Persisting Effects of the End of the Sri Lankan Civil War in Mullivaikkal'. She spends time exploring how stories may be exchanged through empathetic listening, leading to an artistic archive. Vinoja is also a member of the group 'Artists for Non-Violent Living' raising public consciousness and civic activism through creative production engaging war-affected communities.

A large selection of new works from the series *Differently Able* and *Widows* is presented at *Language is Migrant*. Through meticulously placed dots, cloth patches, burns, and lines, Vinoja composes an experiential ground. Initially following a passion for dance and exposed to textile through her mother who works as a seamstress, these tableaux conflate inner landscapes and aerial views of terrains through a personal grammar of stitches. An installation made entirely of bandages yields a totemic form that reveals how pain memory is a place that may fall silent but never fully retreats.

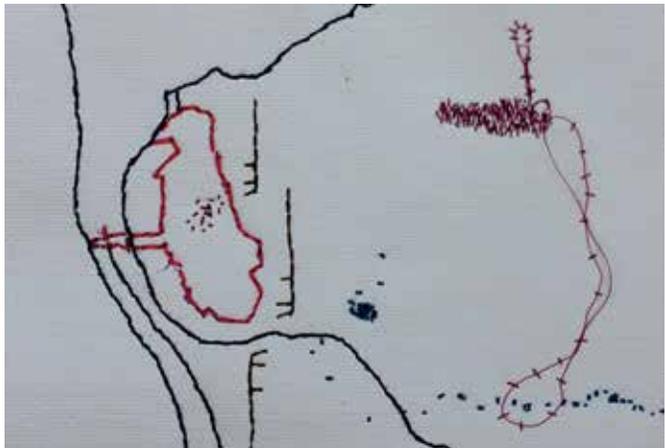
*Supported by Warehouse421 Project Revival Fund
and Foundation for Arts Initiatives*

*Differently-able VII, 2019 (detail).
Stitching on fabric.
Courtesy of the artist*

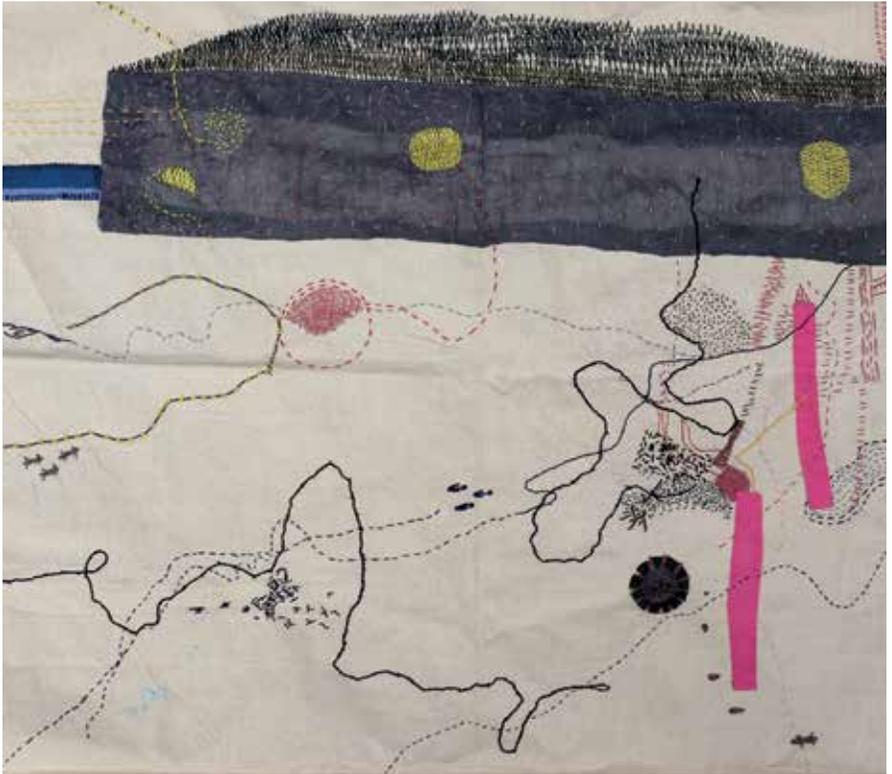




Differently-able V, 2020. Stitching on fabric. Courtesy of the artist



Differently-able VI, 2020. Stitching on fabric. Courtesy of the artist



Differently-able I, 2020. Stitching on fabric. Courtesy of the artist

Hema Shironi

Hema Shironi reflects on experiences of internal displacement and home as a state of flux. As in her series *A Bundle of Joy*, a set of embroidered cloth bundles reveals the domestic abode as a site of affect, memory-keeping and mapping life beyond linear time. Shironi frequently returns to cloth in order to address biographical narratives, tales of homecoming, eviction, and belonging. The artist gives form to itinerancy by recomposing architectural spaces from private memories onto surfaces such as fabric, paper volumes, and metal. Her use of stitching connects with maternal links as her mother and grandmother are skilled at tailoring and always kept fragments of textiles from saris and fancy prints to furnishing cloth at hand to reuse and repair, charting an interior history of use and context, appearing in Shironi's work as familial souvenirs patched together and evoking communal legacies.

Born in Matale, then moving from the mountains to Kilinochchi in the Northern Province during the civil war and traveling for her studies and work in Jaffna, Shironi intently observed the changing terrains and roadside routes during her regular commutes. Raised by an ethnically diverse and multilingual family, her previous works explore religious rituals and gender roles in daily life as well as how cartography is shaped by forces of colonialism, nationalism, and mythology in relation to the island's representations in the Indian Ocean.

In the series at Colomboscope, Shironi embarks on a range of iterative subjects from building a temporary sense of place through relationships with neighbours to grappling with the drab uniformity of post-war state housing, as well as challenges faced by relocated families during the recent lockdowns. Some of these works were made while Shironi was studying in Lahore and attending virtual classes from her hostel last year, as well as after her return to Sri Lanka. The translucent layers of her installation, *The Walking House* create a time portal in which the entrance facade of a home is intricately mapped with various household activities, heirlooms, and other than human inhabitants, including traditional chicken coops.

Supported by Foundation for Arts Initiatives

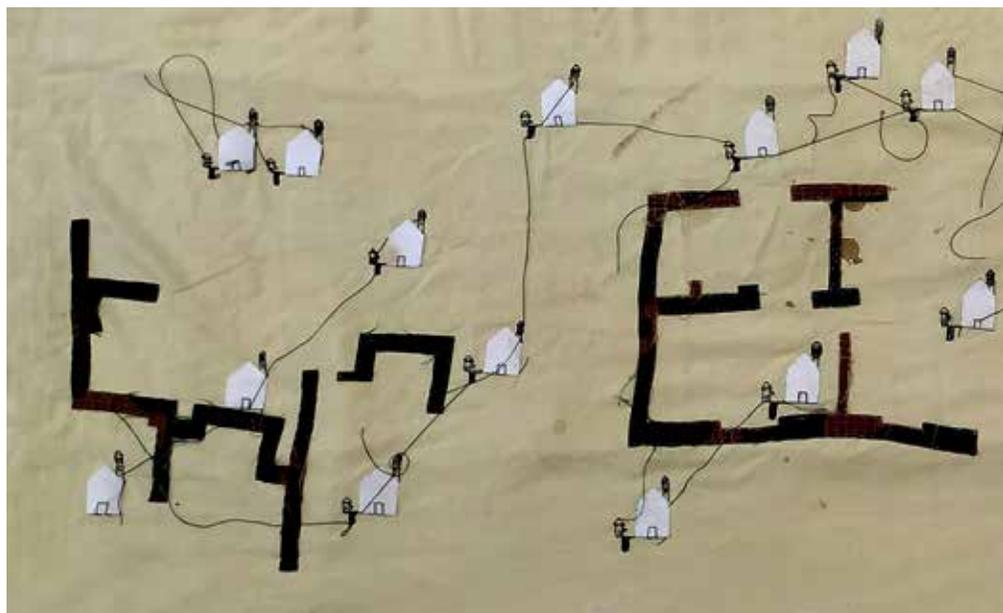




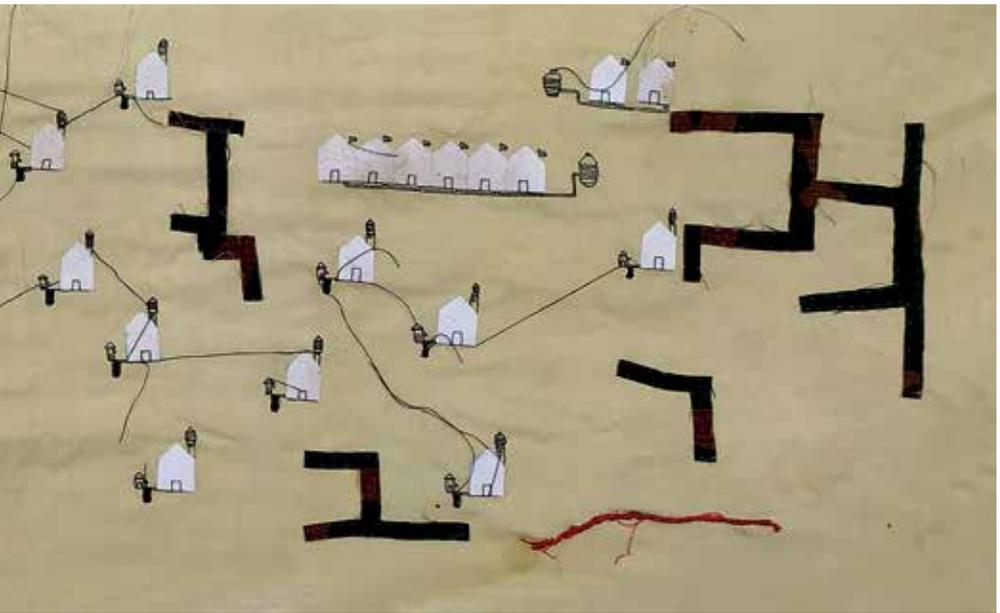
A Bundle of Joy, 2020. Stitching on fabric. Courtesy of the artist



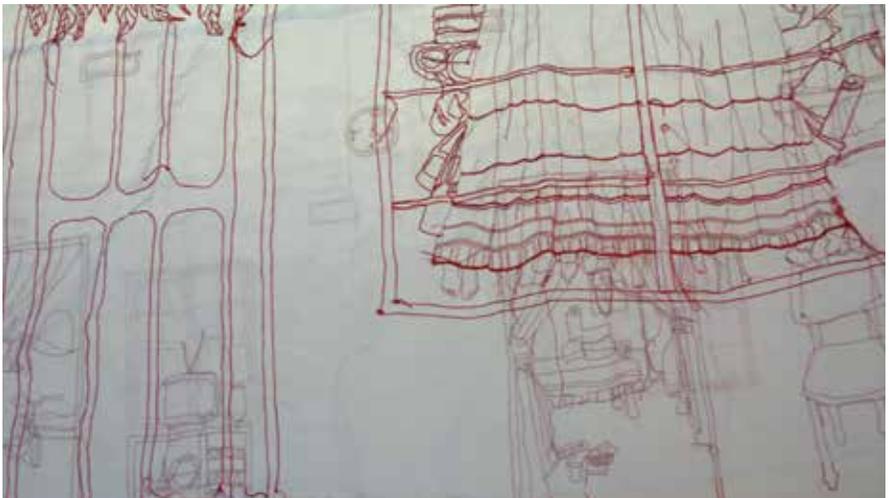
Knowing and Unknowing Memories, 2019. Stitching on fabric. Courtesy of the artist



*A Bundle of Joy, 2020 (installation view). Stitching on fabric.
Courtesy of the artist*



Blend with Surroundings, 2020. Collar stiff, camouflage fabric stitched on canvas. Courtesy of the artist



The Walking House, 2020 (detail). Stitching on fabric. Courtesy of the artist

Abdul Halik Azeez

'Pics or it didn't happen' is a buzz phrase that connects with one of Abdul Halik Azeez's video titles, but it also speaks to the visual saturation of our times that blurs the contours of human and machine memory amidst spiralling pandemic fatigue. Digital images are ceaselessly placed through filters, distortion, amplified, and in 'vanish mode'. Halik is an obsessive chronicler of the underbelly of metropolitan experience, its social debris, as well as schemes of violence and violation of personal freedoms. Furthermore, he pictures the self amid conflated realities, those embellished to thrill, and starkly dystopian. He has participated in multiple editions of Colomboscope, each time taking his lens-based projects into new directions, be it through zine-making, sonic feeds, experimenting with social media portals, reportage, or collective practices.

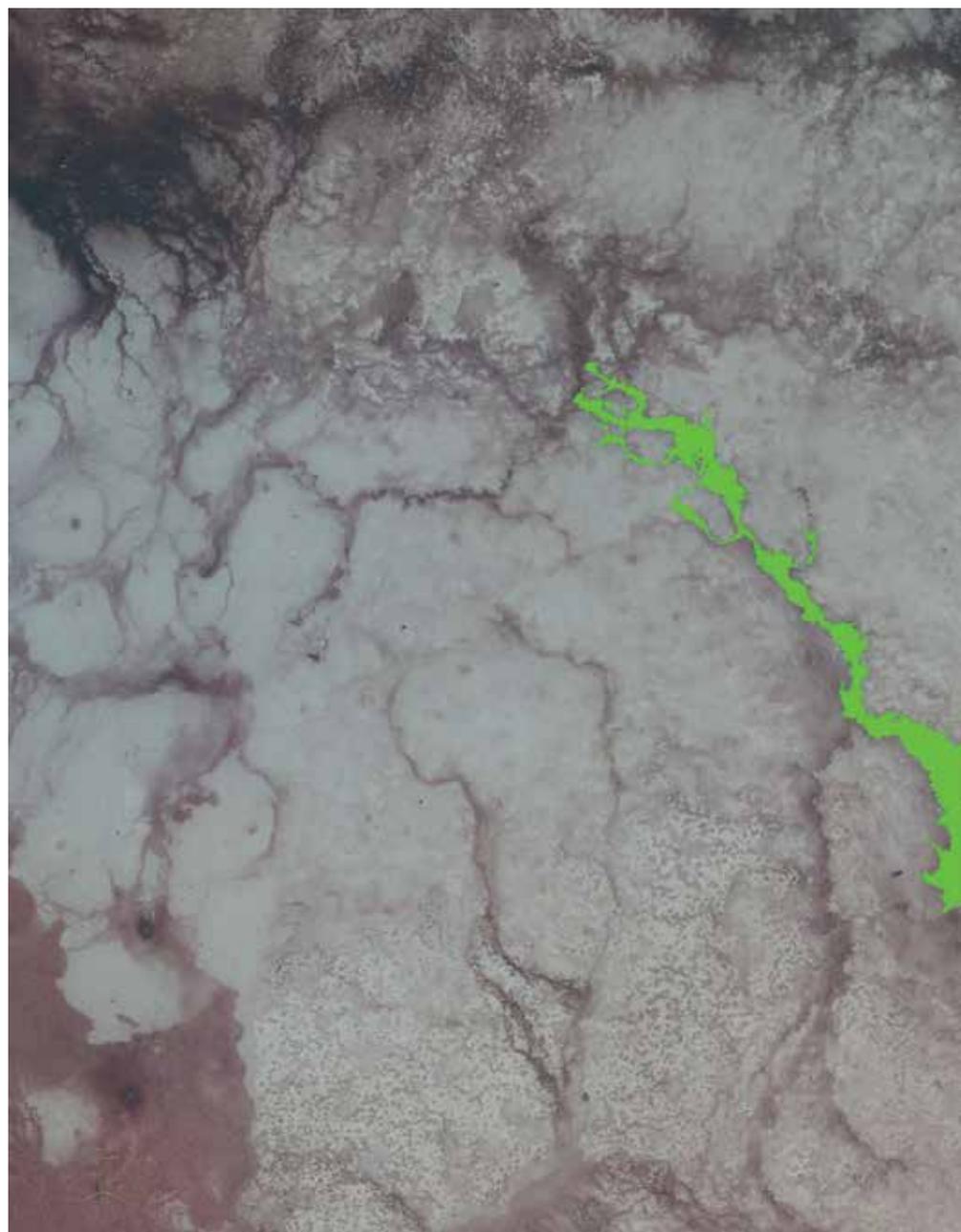
The latest project, *Desert Dreaming* at Colomboscope began with inquiring into all that is missing, yet forms one's consciousness in the family portrait and transforming spaces of a familial home. Through digging into family albums, belongings, conversations with uncles who migrated to the Middle East and cousins who stayed on, aunts who recall family lineages, and his grandmother who remembers her early childhood, the artist challenges monolithic narratives of personal history and middle class Muslim upbringing through anecdotal and intimate recollections. Through collage techniques and pixelation, images blur and mutate in the ways that remembrance is equally the space of invention, repression, and reformulation. The process is made apparent through a video loop and superimposed with intergenerational conversations, charting shifting social affinities and geo-political anchorings in the home and shores far beyond.

Material traces of Azeez's uncle's experience in Dubai as a migrant worker are rendered through objects such as soft toys or radios that he brought back for his family; high-rises in the background or other marginal ephemera from the photographs are subjected to machine-generated algorithms to create dreamscapes that carve their own spatio-temporal dimension. Supplementing these visual traces, is the soundtrack of Tamil icon MGR's popular film *Ulaham Suttrum Valibar* (Boy Who Travelled the World) about a swashbuckling world traveller, that Azeez found on a cassette tape at a flea market in Chennai. It is played, interspersed with recordings made with kin through the past year, including his father's accounts of travel through India and Pakistan to Iran in the 1970s, and meandering chats while watching television. Through these recordings and digital collages, references to *Ulaham Suttrum Valibar* (also a nickname the artist has earned in his family) emerge as a shared refrain that conveys how aspiration, personal values, taste-making, and desire lines of mobility are observed within the terrain of one's household as a noisy, multi-site story.

Supported by Foundation for Arts Initiatives



Desert Dreaming, 2021 (detail). Inkjet print on paper. Courtesy of the artist





Desert Dreaming, 2021 (detail). Inkjet print on paper. Courtesy of the artist

WA Silva Museum

Shailesh BR
T. Krishnapriya
Imaad Majeed
Saskia Pintelon
Jason Dodge



language is migrant;
භාෂාව සංක්‍රමණිකයි
மொழி ஒரு புலம்பெயர்

EXHIBITION VENUE



T. Krishnapriya

Jaffna-based artist T. Krishnapriya continues the attention her practice places on minutiae from organic life forms to ways that therapeutic methods are engaged as part of artistic deliberations. She delved into microscopic studies of bodily membranes as part of her recent work completed during her MFA at Beaconhouse National University, Lahore. The project *Collecting Impression* at Colomboscope is an intimate exploration of archives related to letterpress printing from her perspective of growing up around the machines that belonged to her father, a letterpress worker. This project also commemorates her relationship with her father, who recently passed away, as she sifts through memories of him through the material remnants from a now obsolete process whose possibilities and limitations informed the popular design aesthetics of a generation, contextualised by letterpress machines and related ephemera on view at the W A Silva Museum.

Wooden letter blocks that contain Tamil letters—some of which are no longer in use—that were imported from India at the time, along with old prints made by the artist's father and newer prints that emerged from the artist's recent experiments with the process, converge in her installation to sensorially evoke the smells, sounds, and rhythms of the wood, paper, metal, and ink in the letterpress machine. Overlaid with the objects are the repetitive sounds of the turning wheels and the pistons of the machine, along with recordings of conversations with her father from when she used to spend time with him in his workspace. The letterpress machine was one of the early transformative technologies of the mechanical age around the world, being integral to global flows of knowledge, communication, and literature for almost seven centuries. Krishnapriya's personal approach to this history also contextualises the unique visuality that it acquired and its former relevance in her local context, from its use in wedding invitations, propaganda, and devotional to advertising imagery.



From the artist's personal archive, Ink on board. Courtesy of the artist



Letterpress Print
III, Collecting
Impression Series,
2020. Ink on board.
Courtesy of the artist

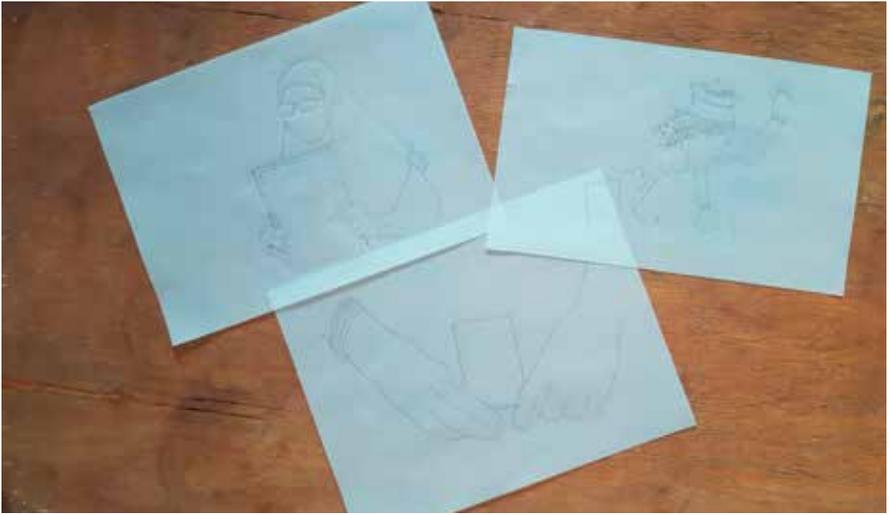
Imaad Majeed

Imaad Majeed is a poet and performance artist whose exploration of language resonates with the words of Adrienne Rich: 'The impulse to create begins - often terribly and fearfully - in a tunnel of silence. Every real poem is the breaking of an existing silence, and the first question we might ask any poem is, 'What kind of voice is breaking silence, and what kind of silence is being broken?'

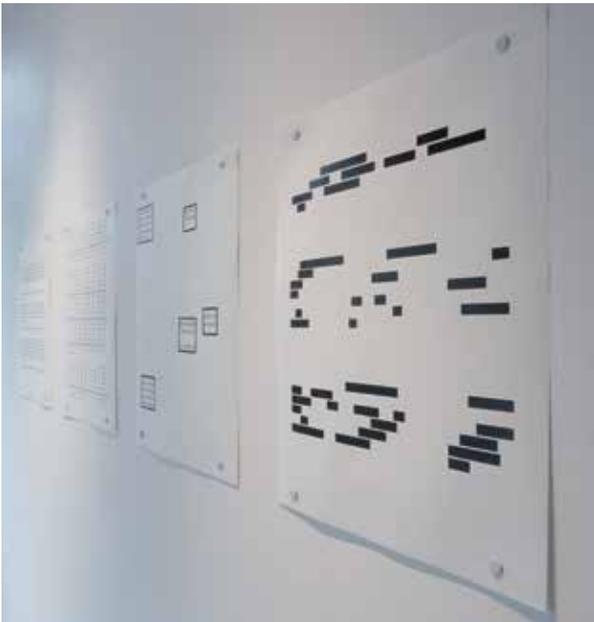
Their live work, individual and collective, engages with aspects of xenophobia, ethnoreligious divisions, sacred space, and the role of healing during late stage capitalism engulfed by health crises, systemic breakdown, and augmented intelligence. They often write about music and performance traditions in Sri Lanka. One of the formats founded and curated by Majeed is Kacha Kacha, a series of evenings staging convivial, experimental, and 'uncensored expression' including poetry, rap, lyrical debate, and various sonic genres hosted in working class bars across Colombo.

The project 'Testimony of the Disappeared' includes a chapbook, tracings, and posters that together operate as a vessel where grief and grievances, the trial of waiting, obliterated bodies of experience and information such as witness reports, official mandates, journal entries, and communal testimony coalesce to confront the limits of state law—its codes of erasure, denial, and amnesia. In wrestling with enforced disappearances, missing persons, and abductions, especially in the Northern Province during the civil war years in Sri Lanka, poethical modes claim space by accentuating slippages, repetitions, redaction and gestures in protest. While a singular language toward restorative justice faces obstacles on many fronts, as an artistic pursuit, our attention is held by the affective and volatile journeys of individuals resolute and in unresolved mourning—that which both claims and defies ink.

Supported by Chobi Mela International Festival of Photography



her endless tracings I, 2021. Pencil on tracing paper. Courtesy of the artist



Testimony of the Disappeared, 2021 (installation view). Digital print on uncoated paper. Courtesy of Chobi Mela

Saskia Pintelon

The Beginning of The End reads one of Saskia Pintelon's canvases, reminding us of the transitory nature of earthly life. She reflects on universal truths and the human condition with a sense of irony, and radical honesty. The surreal absurdities of this island do more to support her approach. Mental and physical landscapes often conflate in her works made on newspaper, canvas, found materials, and as laperellos. Subverting established canons of tradition, femininity, and so-called 'western' appropriation as part of her lived experience and immersive knowledge of art, Pintelon's creations are gripping, meditative, and liberating.

A sustained preoccupation in her work has been physiognomy and faces as windows into the soul, often made in monochromatic tones onto recycled tea packaging. Pintelon's use of mixed media is intuitive and experimental, using additive as well as subtractive strategies to compose emotional cartographies.

The Belgian-born artist has been living in Mirissa in Sri Lanka's southern coast for over 40 years—as much an observer of winds and sea currents as she is of psychic channeling from the news and stories from the heart, in her daily studio practice. The artist explores gradients and textures of charcoal and ink just as she acts as an interlocutor of linguistic syntax and visual grammar, drawing from English, Flemish, and Sinhalese news media. At Colomboscope, Pintelon displays large-scale works conversing with the history of print culture on view at the W A Silva Museum and Printing Press. These works embrace the grounds of abstraction while denoting how literary and cinematic codes shape our social imagination.



The Beginning of The End, 2010. Mixed media on fabric. Courtesy of the artist

Jason Dodge

As an artist and publisher, Jason Dodge's practice connects with the body and its sense faculties to orient toward art as worldly matter and embodied remainders. His installations often catalyse new sensibilities, movements, and responses within institutional architectures as he embeds traces of the handmade, composes assemblages, prompts collective making and intuitive formations. Dodge seems to ask: 'What does an object attuned to the substance of poethics look like?' Some of his previous works involve everyday objects such as blankets, pillows, and woven baskets directed through a conceptual time-space, economy, and functionality—each item holds traces of individual narrative and collective agency. His work emerges from a minutiae of actions such as tearing, moulding, repeating, stapling, and planting. Thus, sculptural forms are treated as organic processes, building relationships that refuse hierarchies of the mundane and the pristine while acting out as portals of connection.

The project *They lifted me into the sun again and packed my empty skull with cinnamon* has been realised in six venues around the world and may take up numerous variations. Given the limitations on movement and the need to reimagine relationships to audiences, production, and cultural spaces, Dodge has been working with artists, thinkers, and dancers to score and install exhibitions as surrogates. *They lifted me into the sun again and packed my empty skull with cinnamon* will be installed at the W A Silva Museum and Printing Press by artist and writer Imaad Majeed.

Besides his artistic practice, in 2012 Dodge founded the poetry imprint Fivehundred places which has published 25 monographic books of poems by contemporary poets such as Eileen Myles, Noelle Kocot, Jericho Brown and Alice Notley. Some of these will be part of Reading in Tongues, Colomboscope's reading room at the Lakmahal Community Library.

Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka

*They lifted me into the
sun again and packed
my skull with cinnamon,
2020 (installation
view), Mixed media.
Courtesy the artist*



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already know, Bayer is the one
advised pain reliever that's
aspirin. And the only one of their
care and a half a century of experie

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They lifted me into the sun again and packed my skull with cinnamon,
2020 (installation view).
Mixed media.
Courtesy the artist

Across the City

Dora García
Kacha Kacha



language is migrant;
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EXHIBITION VENUE



Dora García

with Jayampathi Guruge

'Fiction is a tool we use to understand reality, in fact, we have no means to understand reality unless we use fiction. It can be shared with others or be completely personal,' notes artist, educator, and researcher Dora García. Literature, experimental pedagogies, and revolutionary archetypes often pave the way for her works, emerging in formats such as publishing, installation, and socially engaged projects that destabilize given notions of artwork, place, and audience.

Her ongoing project that has manifested in different parts of the world, *The Hearing Voices Café* will be realised in Sri Lanka for the first time, in collaboration with performance artist Jayampathi Guruge, as a contextually rooted and site-responsive iteration with several contributors from the fields of literature, psychotherapy, theatre, and activism. This project draws from traditions of voice hearing and designated voice hearers in various cultural contexts to explore methods of hearing, listening, and active exchange to form communities of care and politically aware, emancipatory support groups as an alternative to pharmacological approaches in conventional psychiatry. Each evening of the festival, an open-air café in Colombo at the Viharamahadevi Park will host this project with a series of conversations, shared acts of recitation, and performances in response to which audiences are invited to engage and contribute to a newspaper that extends through the course of the festival.

A series of cahiers titled *Mad Marginal* developed by the artist since 2009, stemming from the relationship between radical politics and radical art, as well as the notion of the artist as outsider, and anti-psychiatric movements since the 1970s, will be on view as part of Reading in Tongues, Colomboscope's reading room at the Lakmahal Community Library.

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The Hearing Voices Café, a collective project initiated by Dora García. As presented in Madrid, exhibition 'Lo inconmensurable, una idea de Europa', 2016. Courtesy of the artist



Mad Marginal #5, 2020. Published by K. Verlag (Love with Obstacles/ Amor Rojo). *Mad Marginal* publication series, since 2010. Courtesy of the artist

Kacha Kacha

Kacha Kacha brings together rappers, poets, and singer-songwriters performing in Sinhala, Tamil, and English. The event is known for providing a platform for uncensored expression and multilingual, smart beat making and rapping.

Featuring artists who are socially conscious, performing their original material to an audience consisting of members from various strata of society, Kacha Kacha allows for a confluence of expressions, as each artist brings with them a different perspective to current socio-political realities. Poet and curator Imaad Majeed hosted the first Kacha Kacha as part of Colomboscope in 2015, at the Castle Hotel in Kompannavidiya. It has since been hosted in other such bars frequented by working-class communities in different parts of the city.

The latest edition, in collaboration with Colomboscope, took place at the Government Service Sports Club in Colombo and was celebrated with performance and spoken word contributions from Jaffna, Trincomalee, Colombo, Rathmalana, and Mumbai. Contributors included Priya Malik (Mumbai, India) / Kumari Kumaragamage (Colombo, Sri Lanka) / Samasthalanka Vaada Baila Shilpeenga Sangamaya (Rathmalana, Sri Lanka) / CV Laksh (Trincomalee, Sri Lanka) / Aaraniyam (Jaffna, Sri Lanka) / Imaad Majeed (Colombo, Sri Lanka).

KACHA KACHA IX brings together poets, rappers, singers, remixers and VJs. Returning to the Government Service Sports Club, participants include Owl Tree-O, The Packet X Bo Sedkid, Anar, Tashyana Handy, GaaPiNk, and Rathya.



Priya Malik performing at Kacha Kacha, 2019. Photo: Colomboscope



Kacha Kacha, 2019. At Government Sports Club. Photo: Colomboscope

*I have left my other languages to sit in
the troughs of their foreign
pens, snorting beautiful and strange
cries—to be visited some day
when I have gathered the force again
to leap beyond the white
cliffs, to crash into the sea between
island and old continent.*

- Indran Amirthanayagam

Compositions

As poet and typographer Robert Bringhurst suggests, 'Typography is to literature as musical performance is to composition.' *Type Story* addresses **Mooniak's** arrangement of letterforms across their tri-lingual title typography for Colomboscope Language is Migrant, evoking the role of letter elements in introducing dynamic motion corresponding with the evolution of typesetting and spherical characters resembling bodies and belongings mapped across distant lands and water.

Ramla Wahab-Salman elaborates on the historical relations sustained between Arabic and Tamil operating in 'complementary and rather overlapping domains' in a transnational Muslim world. The presence of Arab traders along the coast of Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu over centuries relays that the circulation of oral and scripted vocabularies have continually accompanied commercial currents, indentured labour, and the cultivation of diasporas. Lukman Harees reminds us how language identities form through currents of liberation and oppression. He notes, 'It is well known that Muslim poets and preachers from South India helped Sri Lankan Muslims keep the faith at a time when the Portuguese and the Dutch were persecuting them.'

Elsewheres and Otherworlds in the Wake of War is a visual essay by **Vindhya Buthpitiya** drawing us into the interiors of photography studios in northern Sri Lanka. Painted backdrops open windows into spaces of enchantment, homegrown dreaming, 'missing chapters' of wartime losses, and flight. Buthpitiya reflects: 'Beyond the antechambers, where apprentices busily slip photographs into stamped envelopes, we are summoned to wonder how we might fashion our unfolding present ourselves to be realised into future photographic selves by the camera.'

Our collaborator **Syma Tariq's** *Listening to Listening: A Thousand Channels* is a process and research-led piece introducing the acoustic frequencies coming alive in her radio programme. Tariq reminds us: 'Listening's power ultimately lies in showing us the world in its invisibility.'

Poet, essayist and translator **Indran Amirthanayagam** threads expressions in multiple 'languages of the migrant': English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole. Yet, it is the loss of his 'original tongues', the island's languages, that he grieves for in this personal refrain.

Through this commissioned title design, Cecilia Vicuña's poem manifesto *Language is Migrant* has been envisioned via a fluid typographic imagination. The letterforms appear to signal the ebb and flow of restless seas, as well as the fragmentation of emotions, possessions, and kin when bodies become transitory, displaced, and relocate to new environments.

Mooniak is a boutique graphic and type design studio based in Colombo, Sri Lanka, specialising in Sinhala, Tamil and Thaana script typography. Mooniak is the modern authority on Sinhala type design and has released a series of Sinhala, Tamil, and Latin fonts designed specifically for multiscript typography. The studio has worked with clients in the corporate and non-profit sector in delivering effective trilingual communications in Sri Lanka.

Mooniak is run by Pathum Egodawatta, Kosala Senvirathna and Rajitha Manamperi.

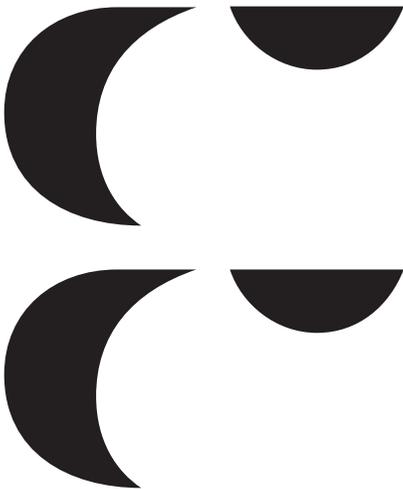




language is migrant

භාෂාව සංක්‍රමණිකයි

மொழி ஒரு புலம்பெயர்

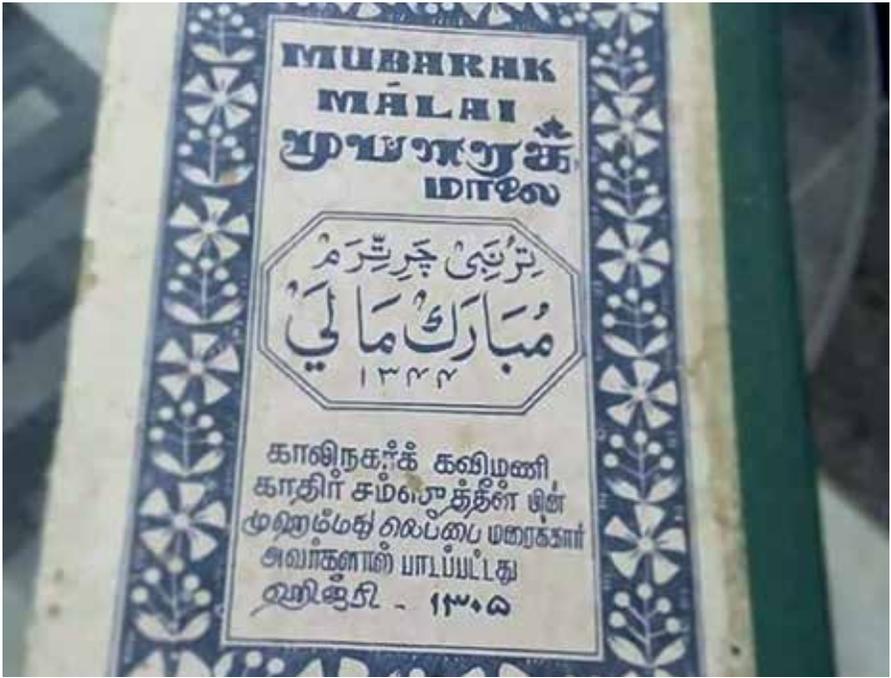


Letterforms are objects in their own right. The Colomboscope logotype design was inspired by this nature of the letterforms and are made with fragments of organic shapes and representation pieces of 'things' come together to create meaning. As creating a harmonious style across scripts is a challenge, each script has its own rhythm and idiosyncrasies which create its identity. The effort taken to create 'matching' letterforms across scripts should preserve those identities while creating a sense of belongingness. The sharp geometric nature of the Tamil and Latin letterforms is constructed in harmony with rounded and more organic letterforms to create an even texture across the three scripts.

Arabic Tamil in Sri Lanka

Ramla Wahab-Salman

Ramla Wahab-Salman conversed with us about the chronicling, social amalgamations, and erasures of Arabic Tamil in Sri Lanka during the early stages of our preparation toward *Language is Migrant*. This reflective piece speaks for broader currents of how heterogeneous language-forms travel, how words shelter bodies in need of refuge and how oral traces perform as a climate enveloping those who become inhabitants of a language world. Wahab-Salman's conclusion brings forth how languages perish and remain ghosts of history. In *The Library Book* (2019) Susan Orlean notes: 'In Senegal, the polite expression for saying someone has died is to say his or her library has burned. When I first heard the phrase, I didn't understand it, but over time I came to realize it was perfect. Our minds and souls contain volumes inscribed by our experiences and emotions; each individual's consciousness is a collection of memories we've cataloged and stored inside us, a private library of a life lived. It is something that no one else can entirely share, one that burns down and disappears when we die.'



Mubarak Malai - An Ode to the Prophet, Arabu - Tamil Poetic Masterpiece by Poet Cadir Samasudeen of Galle, Sri Lanka (1887 AD). Courtesy of Ramla Wahab-Salman

The language of Arabic-Tamil can be defined as a hybrid language, or a creole, which borrows heavily from the Arabic language.

"...Arabic Tamil was a panacea for several social diseases for centuries. It was fondly and fervently nurtured by selfless savants and holy saints"

(Dr Zubair in Harees, 2020)

Languages and dialects across Asia and Africa show a comparable

historical trajectory to Arabic-Tamil in Sri Lanka and parts of Southern India. Such languages include Swahili and Somali along the East African coast; Persian in South and Central Asia; and Malay, Jawi, and Gundul in South East Asia. The languages of Arabi-Malayalam and Arabic-Bengali in Malayalam and Bengal respectively too have their separate historical trajectories (Gani R.P.M. 1963, 209 in Nuhman 2007, 81). In 2011, Ronit Ricci argued that within the Arabic Cosmopolis of South Asia and South-

East Asia, the sheer volume of Arabic and Arabicized materials is testimony to their centrality (Ricci 2011, 267).

The Arabic-Tamil alphabet consists of forty letters, of which twenty-eight are from Arabic and twelve are devised by adding diacritics to the original Arabic alphabet. Eighteen Arabic letters do not have their equivalents in Tamil from the phonetic point of view, and similarly, ten Tamil letters and two vowel sounds have no equivalents in Arabic (Zubair 2014; 6). It is written in the Arabic script from right to left. In a technical description of the script, Torsten Tschacher notes that 'the script functions in the same way as other Arabic-based alphabets, with one major peculiarity: the vast majority of documents are fully vocalized, that is, the diacritical marks to write short vowels making them far easier to read than other applications of the Arabic script, but also giving them a cramped visual impression. A number of letters modified by diacritical marks have been introduced to represent sounds needed for Tamil but not present in Arabic' (Tschacher 2017; 2). Arabic-Tamil script differs considerably from the Perseo-Arabic script of Urdu. However, religious loan words and expressions in the two languages have a lot in common in recited and spoken form.

The creative usage of the Arabic script with local languages among the Muslim populations of Asia and Africa mirrors the extent of the influence that the movement of Muslim co-religionists and preachers had upon local language and culture. Local languages historically merged with the Arabic language in what is defined by Ronit Ricci as an Arabic or Arabicized Cosmopolis (Shukri 1986, iv; Ricci 2011). Muslim co-religionists in parts of South India, particularly Kilikkarai and Kayalpattinam, and by Tamil-speaking Muslims of South-East Asia, including Singapore, share a history and usage of Arabic-Tamil (Tschacher 2017, 8 Wahab-Salman 2017 59-60). The languages of Arabic and Tamil are described to have operated in 'complementary and rather overlapping domains' in a 'transnational Muslim world' (Tschacher 2017;18; Mc Kinley-Xavier 2017;2). The 'chimerical quality' (Tschacher 2017, 2) and vagueness of the concept of Arabic-Tamil itself lies at the centre of the language's identity.

This speaks to the concept that the language of Arabic, even to local speakers of Tamil, was required to communicate religious truths. Recitals in Arabic-Tamil will showcase a way in which religious songs and tales are recited to distant Arabian Prophets and Saints while maintaining the richness and

precision in expression of the native Tamil (Shulman 2016; 11).

Heritage work within the Muslim community and government places Arabic as a cultural identity marker over Arabic Tamil. A stamp was issued in 2003 by the Government of Sri Lanka to mark the heritage of the first mosque of Sri Lanka built in 920 AD by Arab traders in Beruwala in conjunction with Meelaud-un-Nadi, on the birth date of the Holy Prophet of Islam. In a rare occurrence, the stamp was issued in four languages, Sinhala, Tamil, English, and Arabic (Azwer 2003; Samath 2013).

For the Muslims of Sri Lanka, Arabic has traditionally been a language associated with religion. It is commonly referred to in Tamil as 'koruvaan eluttu' or 'letter of the Quran' (Nuhman 2007, 85).

The late A.M.A. Azeez once wrote that a study of text in the language was bound to reveal a lot more to the layers of Ceylon Moor identity and origins, than only referencing texts in Arabic. This remark speaks to the politics of identity formation in late colonial Ceylon and the independence period (Shukhri1986; iv). This remark is however an isolated one for its identity and 'purity' pales against languages in their own right such as Tamil and Arabic. In 1941, Azeez wrote

that 'Arabic-Tamil possesses neither a separate grammar nor separate literature, and therefore cannot be elevated to the position of a language. Arabic-Tamil was at one time preferred in the writing of Muslim literature owing to the difficulty of some of the Arabic words being satisfactorily pronounced if written in Tamil. But this difficulty has been overcome by the use, in the purely Tamil scripts, of special diacritical marks improvised for the purpose' (Azeez 1941 in Nuhman 2007; 80).

Was the creation of Arabic-Tamil one of those pragmatic uses of the ancient language of Tamil over the historical encounter and process of conversion to Islam within Tamil speaking populations? Perhaps the weaving together of these language worlds speaks to the many ways in which language, religion, culture, and identity make their way through the boundaries, rigid categorizations and adherence to present-day identities.

Elsewheres and Otherworlds in the Wake of War¹

Vindhya Buthpitiya

While their exteriors claim bold expertise in the latest digital cameras and drones on vinyl signs, the interiors of northern Sri Lanka's photography studios are often intriguingly old-fashioned and ill-lit. It is as if we have been invited to share in the secret of the imminent enchantments that might manifest by the sleight of the photographer's hand.

All images courtesy of Vindhya Buthpitiya (Jaffna, 2017-2019)



The windowless grottos are painted into vividness in baby blues and bright purples or marigold yellows and lime greens evoking something of the locality potently shaped by religiosity and cinema. Outmoded photographic paraphernalia, from old film cameras to sample prints and albums sheltering smiling strangers, litter dusty cabinets stickered with years-old Kodak-Fujifilm-Konica advertisements pledging goods no longer sold.

Beyond the antechambers, where apprentices busily slip photographs into stamped envelopes, we are summoned to wonder how we might fashion our *unfolding* present ourselves to be realised into future photographic selves by the camera. Slender dressing tables readied with sandalwood talcum and neon plastic combs beckon to us to spruce ourselves up for the occasion. Offerings of men's clothing, taking the shape of polyester ties and rayon

'coats' (suit jackets) pinned to the walls, entice us to assume new identities. Plastic flowers spill out of ornate vases perched on plywood Grecian columns. We might steady ourselves against these imported relics of the Grand Tour, as we gaze into the blithe panorama painted onto a tall canvas backdrop. With the quick tug of an intricate system of pulleys, we could find ourselves in the magnificent archway of a stately home or against the lavish velvet drapes of French doors opening out to blossoming springtime meadows. Another turn of the lever transports us to an Italian coastal town in the warm glow of summer or the autumnal rose garden of a dainty cottage in the English countryside. A wall of antiquarian books might attest to our implied or projected accomplishments. Practised constellations of reflectors and softboxes are arranged to illuminate us into fleeting film stars. In this 'chamber of dreams' we momentarily evade the humdrum logics of self, time, and geography.

It is easy to imagine a workshop of prophet artisans channelling glimpses into these *elsewheres* and *otherworlds* we might pass briefly through in the space and fantastical vernacular of the photography studio. Possibilities of and for the future are folded into brushstrokes that make up what appear to be the quaint remnants of photography past. They weave together disparate but shared dreams and aspirations of movement, *elsewheres* and *otherworlds* in the wake of war.

In the everyday makings of photography, analogue techniques have long since given way to the potentials of the digital. Desktop computers and off-brand editing software are deftly wielded in the place of now obsolete needle-thin brushes and delicate tints in the capable hands of studio ‘touching’ artists. At least one such retoucher, now in his 70s, swiftly adapted his precise but outmoded craft to a series of expert mouse clicks turning out digital images as if they had been overpainted by hand. Revitalised portraits are zipped off on WhatsApp to dispersed island communities in Paris or London to make up the contents of family albums or death notices. The shadows of long war loiter in even the most hopeful studio interiors – in the inclining daily demands for passport and visa photography, captured against staid grey, blue, white, and red cloth

screens. Here, the photographer’s lucky hands mediate the promise and opportunity of passage to new states and new citizenship to re-imagine and re-build home among kin displaced to *elsewheres* and *otherworlds* by decades of violence. In the promising portraits of young women and men to be dispatched to marriage brokers, instructed with the demand for a spouse with ‘status’ (residence or citizenship) elsewhere, are the accrued impairments of postwar citizenship that continue to hinder and hamper futures and aspirations.

Against these painted backdrops, new loves, new homes, new freedoms, are envisioned, setting up the photographic premise for a different kind of mobility as they witness, evoke, and catalyse individual desires for movement.

The long war has been unkind to photographers and their archives; an accumulation of displacements and devastations wearing away at the community and the landscape. Where the photography studio may evoke nostalgic visions of technological obsolescence or photographic debris past, in practice, these have always served as sites and means of imagining, experimentation, and novelty.

Conflict compelled certain instabilities. Studios would become further entangled with state and border actors and the expanding



security apparatus on account of the rising demands for the production of identity photography to authenticate personhoods and citizenships in the form of national identity card or passport snaps. In spite of this, photographers would become maestros of invention and improvisation in photographic soothsaying. The war has now long since ended, but the countless cruelties making up its causes and consequences endure. In the unease of the postwar, bright little shops offering to realise glamorous wedding portraits of Kollywood dreams or lucky visa headshots for aspiring migrants, preside over the local image world as the unassuming arbiters of fates and futures. Within their painted walls and trifling sceneries, they make possible myriad real, imagined, aspirant identities and mobilities.

1. This essay draws on visual and ethnographic material from fieldwork carried out in northern Sri Lanka between 2017-2019. This research has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 695283.

2. In his ethnography of popular photography in Central India, *Camera Indica*, Christopher Pinney poetically describes studios as 'chambers of dreams' (1997:108, Reaktion Books).

3. *'Image world' after Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* by Deborah Poole (1997, Princeton University Press).



Listening to listening: A Thousand Channels

Syma Tariq

I am obsessed with listening to recorded speech.

The spontaneity of a voice note pinged from a friend on their way to meet me carries noise and disruptions and signs a text message never could.

I admit I also discreetly record people in my daily life – the older queer handyman who tells me about my neighbourhood; my aunt in Islamabad loudly translating a recipe over the phone. As storytelling should never be taken as just a semantic exercise, sonic records of relation – in all their flawed, intimate forms – channel, in a Glissantian sense, multiple belongings, and multiple opacities.

'The thrust of the world and its desire no longer embolden you onward in a fever of discovery: they multiply you all around.'

– Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*

Quite differently to a standard podcast series, each episode of the 'online radio' project *A Thousand Channels* embraces differing forms of sonic narrativity that together defy standard definitions of broadcast, or art. It is also underpinned by an archival impulse: given the ever greater urgency to preserve witnesses of violent colonised 'pasts', we have become used to storytelling of the kind that is stripped of the politics of the present and relegated to hegemonic forms of event-memory. To follow the artist-researcher Shaina Anand, we must refigure the (sonic) archive as a space of alliances,'against dissipation and loss, but also against the enclosure, privatisation and thematisation' that concerns archives globally. Even digital archives, as Anand writes, can take fortresses as their model. Sonic thinking can help us understand the production of history beyond the textual or written document. Conversely, focusing on sonic histories also address sound studies' lack of attention to voices, offering another way to critique the world that we hear,

as composer and academic Cathy Lane argues.¹ Newer scholarship on the politics of listening often focuses on the relationship between self and sound through the medium of sound art – limiting listening's political possibility to a certain means of (sonic) production. Applying such thinking to a project like *A Thousand Channels*, however, has meant that the work of sounding out identitarian connections/contradictions across 'the "Indian" subcontinent and its diasporic and oceanic fringes' also becomes an exercise in multi-lingual, extra-geographical, non-semantic listening. Approaching listening in a feminist spirit also means doing away with concerns for perfect sound quality, disciplinary coherence, or referential, instructive language. The works that make up each of the four episodes hold no sell-by-date (though that is not to say that some of the voices contained within do not speak urgently). Speaking and listening to numerous scattered voices conditioned by a global pandemic at varying severity has

1. Lane, Cathy. 2017. (audio paper) 'Listening and not listening to voices. Interrogating the prejudicial foundation of the arts canon.' *Seismograf Special issue: Sound Art Matters*. November. <http://seismograf.org/en/fokus/sound-art-matters/listening-and-not-listening-to-voices-interrogating-the-prejudicial-foundations-of-the-sound-arts>

revealed that remote relationships and long-distance communication are not only accessible to us when we are forced into isolation, but we have also always depended on such relations, even in pre-hyper-technological times. Listening's power ultimately lies in showing us the world in its invisibility.

A Thousand Channels has recognisable configurations despite its sprawling outlook: of the six tracks that make up each episode, there is always one 'annotated' interview that historicises historical listening: to the radiophonic standards of the Indian independence era (Episode Three, Track 1); to calls for justice by women activists in Kashmir (Episode Two, Track 1), or to the fabulous Sufi tales that enliven the characters of the Quran (Episode One, Track 1). Each episode also features a contribution

from a community online radio station (titled 'radio crossings') and a musical guest mix or playlist. Alongside compositions and readings from Colomboscope's invited literary guests and artists, all tracks speak to each other, but in ways that are dependent on the listener and the journey they choose to take – audible traces can be found for sure, but in a manner of horizontality.

To historicise listening is a difficult task at a time when history itself is being held hostage. The fraught terrain of Kashmir, where the use of English terms like 'mediation', 'encounter', or 'interlocution' come with distinct meanings of erasure and political violence, is listened to critically with poet and anthropologist Ather Zia (Episode Two, Track 1). Like historian and dreamer Samia



Miyah Poets © Parasher Baruah



The Tape Letters Project © Maryam Wahid

Khatun's history of South Asian movement to Australia (Episode One, Track 1), alongside formerly 'seditious' Sufi texts through Bengali and Urdu readings, the prophetic dreams of her mother and the 'Afghan' music from these Aboriginal sites of imperial subjugation, there is a sense that such historical methodologies would hit very differently if we were to read them silently to ourselves. Such annals of listening are necessary to expose - and that includes other, less historically tethered efforts in sonic pedagogy, as we hear in Radio SAVVY ZAAR's archival riffs on dis/harmony (Episode Two, Track 5), or the feverish club mix from Manara that cares little for genre nor smooth transitions (Episode One, Track 6). Somehow, if we want an idea to be made audible, then

its background noise should also be heard. A double act of 'voice-reading' as well as voice hearing is aided by the inclusion of audio notes for each track, useful for proving context and credits, but also spaces that mark the trajectories of each track through imperfect time-stamps, translations and tracklists.

In Belinda Zhawi's sound work, 'Black Skin, White Lines' (Episode Two, Track 2), her use of her matrilineal totem of the zebra becomes a method of ancestral navigation and a personal balancing act, not just between Zimbabwe and the UK, but between the customary distinctions of animal and human too. The poetic nature of listening to languages one does not fully understand - linguistically, but

also out of western anthropocentric and 'chrono-normative' forms of understanding, to follow Elizabeth Freeman – sometimes belies the radical potential of such an act, as certain rhythms and measures we receive remain ineffable. The psycho-acoustic affects of Lee Ingleton's composition 'You Will Never Travel' (Episode One, Track 2) produced out of their response to racist Australian border-marketing to Sri Lankan migrants and the predetermined 'Indian sound scales' of software designed for audio synthesis and algorithmic composition are, for the spoiled and pandered-to Anglophonic listener, equally critical for our aural-historical repositioning. Language is migrant, but it is also subject to borderisation. The scratchy voice notes that lawyer and filmmaker Khalid Hussain sent to me for his piece on Urdu-speaking Bangladeshis (Episode One, Track 4) responded to questions I had emailed him about his work on the complexities his community has faced post-1971 (we could not speak directly on Zoom because of technical issues). The inclusion of a reading of Naushad Noori's Urdu poem 'Moheno daro', written in the context of the Bangla-language movement while exiled from west Pakistan, skews the idea of 'correct' modes of solidarity and belonging, as well as the distinctions between language communities where sonic forms of relation blur standard modes of

identification: Hussain himself grew up listening to the BBC's Urdu Service. This complexity is vivid in the work of Miyah poets – who take their name for the Urdu word for 'gentleman' used as a slur in the north-east Indian region of Assam for Assamese Muslims of Bengali heritage. They reclaim the word in their political poetry (Episode One, Track 3), in dialects that differ from the Assamese language spoken by the mainstream population. Modes of censorship and silencing are countered through other less obvious sensings, be it the leftist-literary ambitions of Bangladeshi art radio project *Baba Betar* (Episode One, Track 5) or a critique of the western music industry's extractive 'digging' for African music via the work of Ostinato Records (Episode Two, Track 6). New modes of circumventing the sound standards of archivable history are revealed in Wajid Yaseen's generous piece about the project *Tape Letters* (Episode Two, Track 4), where voices of Potwari-speaking Pakistanis/Kashmiris in the UK are unearthed, re-sounded and re-performed from the original, intimate cassette tapes sent between loved ones across oceans. This bygone mode of storage becomes a trigger for expansive listening – in 'Let Me Listen', tapes between two young, enamoured fiancés are re-performed decades later, a profound clue into how conceptions of love and the familiar migrate over time.



The Tape Letters Project © Maryam Wahid

The individual as harbinger of postcolonised memory is an idea that radiates through Christian Nyampeta's first act of his three-part radio play *The Africans*, a 'multiform audio-social structure' that portrays a battle between individualism, universalism, and social collectivism through key scenes of Ali A. Mazrui's novel *The Trial of Christopher Okigbo* (1971). It is another offering that puts the medium of radio itself on trial, too – in a multimedia landscape where often, the loudest is heard most, where speech, repetition, and even the refusal to speak must be part of our affective discourses. Assessing the

relationship between the individual and the collective then becomes a tricky question of what it means to take action outside of utterance.

Before her thoughts on the complex and resistant listening necessary for Kashmir (Episode Two, Track 1), Ather Zia quietly recites:

I know
women should not be seen
should I hide?

I know
women should not be heard
should I be quiet?

I know, if all I do is listen,
Listen.

Who will find you?

From Silence to Song

Indran Amirthanayagam

I was born into an initial interior silence. Three years passed from birth at the McCarthy Nursing Home without uttering an intelligible word, although I must have screamed on arrival and grunted afterwards. I alarmed my parents and extended family. Why did this boy not articulate? Plans were hatched, a pilgrimage arranged, off to Madhu, the shrine, prayer, supplication before the Virgin. Conversations on the veranda on Rosmead Place. Reassurances. The boy is just gathering material, waiting for the right moment. Then the explosion, in full sentences, in Tamil, Sinhalese and English. That was how I came into the world, raising my parents' anxiety then impressing them with a command of all the island's languages.

What came next? The trip out, to far away London, no small journey in 1969. I landed in the city and within a few days an old woman in a black dress and black hat rode by on a bike and hurled the filthiest racial abuse at my young newly-arrived head. She called me sambo, wog, nigger, paki. These words bore into my consciousness and conscience. I looked for air. At grammar school later I cut my name to Amir, easier to say, to be assimilated. But before I got there, even before admission to Saint Vincent's Primary on Blandford Street, on the first day of school in the new country, I told myself that I would never again speak those other tongues, my native Tamil, and the Sinhalese I learned from household workers, the radio, the playground.

I have stuck to my childhood word, the terrible vow before intolerance embedded in words. Language is migrant, yes, abuse, scaring, ship-shaping of the migrant into a kind of quiescence, acceptance. But not the wisdom I would acquire later studying the eightfold path, and Christ on the cross, his supreme and generous sacrifice, forgive them Lord for they know not what they do. Not yet the wisdom which imbues these sentences as I write, sixty now, thinking back and ahead, a potpourri of new languages in my memory banks, Spanish, French, Haitian, Portuguese. The languages of this new Tamil. Displaced. At ease and at peace with the migrated self, migrated into multiple selves, but always the call of the sea and palmyra, thwack of ball and bat not far away in my language fields, synapses waiting to run wild

when a visitor comes with a bottle of arrack, or a cousin remembers our grandfather, how he made merry on the piano singing nostalgic old English and Irish songs. But in the songbook he printed at his company he included Tamil as well, the national anthem. I would like to hear the anthem again, in Tamil as well as Sinhalese and English. I would like to return to my Ceylon youth where memories of the first attacks against Tamils had been swept away by afternoons at the Otter Swimming Club and evenings around the radio listening to the BBC World Service, and days when Tamil, English and Sinhala mediums at Saint Joseph's co-existed with pleasant conviviality. But I was only eight years old when I left, and perhaps I did not notice the dark venomous hurts and angers seething in the social fabric—what had brought about the emergency in 1958—what was to bring out goondas and soldiers in July 1983, and yes the Boys as well who became scorpions stinging themselves with their own tails.

By 1983 I was long gone, yet living on another island, Manhattan, and writing about the first island, settling accounts with the elephants who asked me why I left. I answered then in poems, and I have kept writing ever since, in languages of the migrant, saddened by my inability still to return to my original tongues, wondering if I will give myself the chance—if the country will help as well—to get them back, to migrate back, to return to the source, to finish the game of snakes and ladders where it began, a stone's throw from a nursing home in what used to be gardens of cinnamon.

Coconuts On Mars

I have left my other languages to sit in the troughs of their foreign pens, snorting beautiful and strange cries—to be visited some day when I have gathered the force again to leap beyond the white cliffs, to crash into the sea between island and old continent. But I forget my birth under a coconut tree. I forget too that I found fan-tailed palm trees when I visited Cornwall. You can imagine the perplexed grin I sported that weekend, the sun warming my skin in St. Ives, as we walked among those English palms... I did not find the king coconut, agreed, but a cousin, a relation. We are all blood coursing through veins, each white and red cell identical in shape and substance, no matter the different clothes and names and histories we sport on our bodies, in our heads... I am rich in cells, and some are dividing still. Turmeric stops the decline. Persistence. Repetition of sums. Writing certainly. The ever-present chance of discovery, the blue-canopied forest, a finch unlike any other, you, my dear, reading these lines. I can see through every glass in my mind. In short, let us not build any frontiers as there are no strangers. In short, I compose this meditation in English but anticipate a translating tool will convert my words into every other language on the planet... Ah, what a silly fantasy. As I write, the last speaker of a tribe in the Amazon forest will die. As I write, the trapped finch will bleed from the wire and lie down to die. As I write, a coconut tree will grow in an open-air hot house on the Cornish coast. As I write, six thousand loaves will sprout, and sixty thousand fish fly, from one loaf, one fish in the hands of a miracle maker. As I write, my fingers will rest. No need to type. My voice will guide the keys. As I write, I imagine the young thambili, sweet water coconut, tasty to drink, will be served outside the hothouse. As I write, scowl and sadness will turn to smiles and hurrays. That was a grand thirst quencher, my dear Cornish scientist. Congratulations! To engineering survival, let us raise our glasses.

- Indran Amirthanayagam

Silence

Bodies float in my silence,
trees are uprooted, waves
masticate timber, split
roof beams, in my silence,
babies tossed into palm
fronds, old man alone
on a beach engulfed
by seething mobs of foam
and spray, in my silence,
moments of clairvoyance
seeing whole populations
of islands and coastal wetlands,
inlets and lagoons, splits
and wedges of sandbars
and sandy points, convulsed
by churning of dirty grey
water, this starfish-laden
fish-spouting sea
turning blue again slowly,
in my silence.

- Indran Amirthanayagam

Packiyathan Ahilan
Indran Amirthanayagam
Kadak Collective
Jason Dodge
Dora García
Mythri Jegathesan
kal
Kumari Kumaragamage
Mantiq of the Mantis
Yoshinori Niwa
Christian Nyampeta
The Packet
SCROLL: Projects on Paper
Mounira Al Solh and Nada Ghosn
Slavs and Tatars
T. Thajendran
A Thousand Channels
Bombay Underground
Cecilia Vicuña
Belinda Zhawi

Reading in Tongues

Reading in Tongues, the reading room at Language is Migrant, which borrows its title from Gloria Anzaldúa's Letter to *Third World Women*, is a special initiative conceived as a time-space for assembling acts of reading, storytelling, performed and sonic narratives. Going by Octavio Paz's call: 'Words are acts', artists' publications including zines, poetry and journals are presented for browsing and activated by a cycle of rhizomatic programs and live performances at the Lakhmahal Community Library. It also includes within its fold, *A Thousand Channels* by Syma Tariq, a four-part multilingual radio initiative, with the final episode produced on site from the festival.

To the silence, and the rigorous, systemic diction implied by the space of a library in our collective imagination, Reading in Tongues—hosted at a self-organized, family-run, community library—proposes an unbridled heterotopia for radical intimacy, care, and communal empathy in the unknowability of another's experience of the world. An excess of linguistic engagement, in the form of poetic verses written in exile, studies on the machinations of language as both weapon and salve, and experimental fiction alongside collective making and thinking, hope to remind us that what has been made strange, and 'othered' is always a part of ourselves; 'strangers to ourselves' in Julia Kristeva's words. Estranged dialects, invented language, familiar vibrations, and echoes from the margins will be embraced by engaged listening, songlines, and reading, for such gestures may even pave the labyrinthine path to hope and renewal for our times.

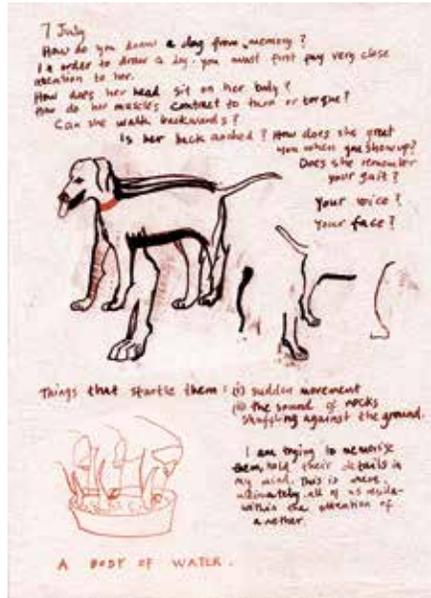


Dora García
Mad Marginal publication series, since 2010
 #1, 2010 published by Mousse
 #2, 2011 published by Sternberg Press
 #3, 2012 published by Walther König
 #4, 2014 published by Sternberg Press
 Courtesy of the artist

Fivehundred Places
 Edited by Jason Dodge
 Jericho Brown, Duplex Translations
 Noelle Kocot, Under Gemini (two volume poem)
 Alice Notley, At the Foot At the Belt Of the Raincoat
 Courtesy of the artist. Photo Credit: Abdul Halik Azeez

Jason Dodge, Dorothea Lasky
*As Soon As The Invented Language Enters Us Something
 Else Will Vibrate In Our Skin*
 Handmade by the artist. Fondazione Morra Greco,
 Napoli and Motto Distribution
 Courtesy of the artist. Photo Credit: Abdul Halik Azeez

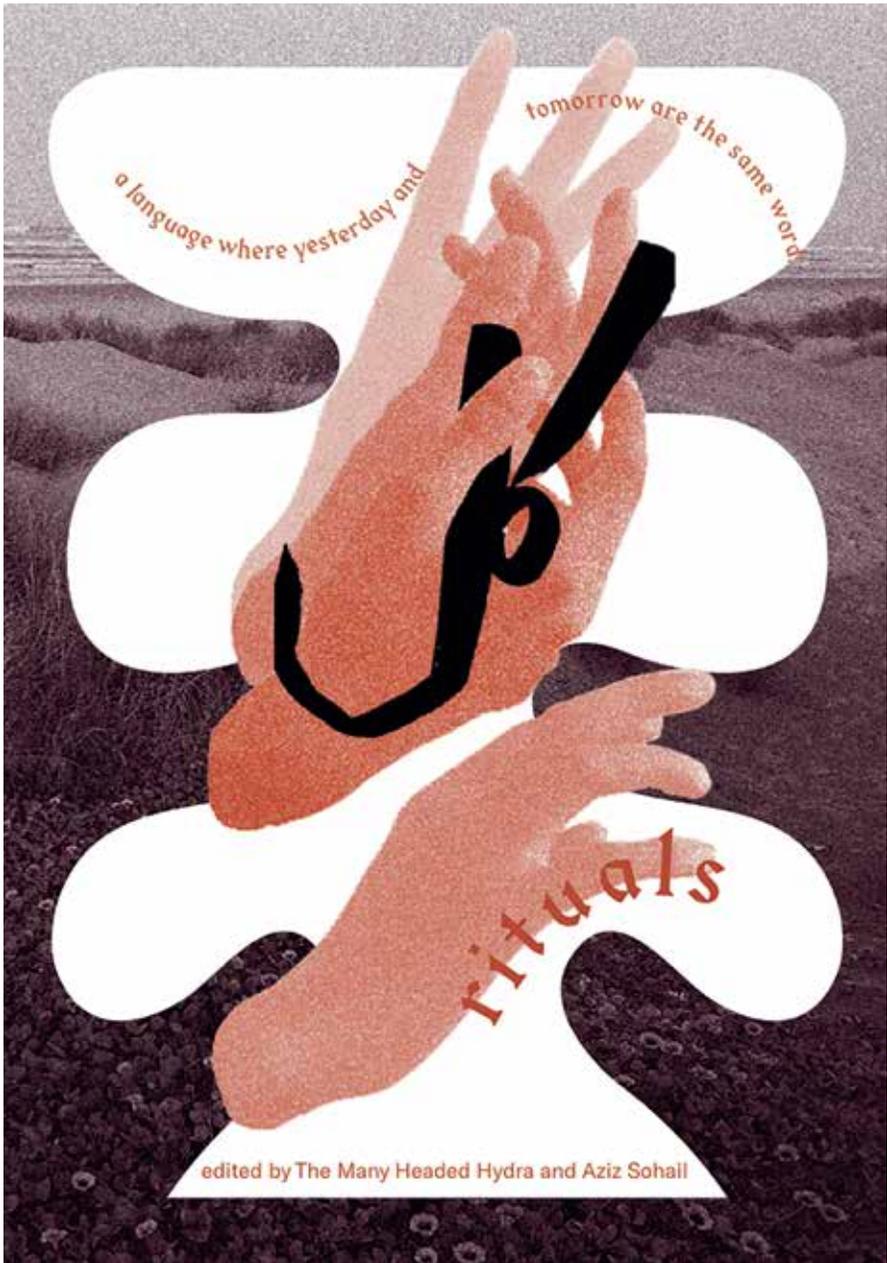




A language where yesterday and tomorrow are the same word. *Kal: rituals* (The Many Headed Hydra Magazine #4), edited by Aziz Sohail and The Many Headed Hydra, co-published by Archive Books & Zubaan Books, Berlin and New Dehli, 2021

Vicky Shahjahan, 'My Hands Are My Husband. Stories of Seaside Workers in Slave Island, in: a language where yesterday and tomorrow are the same word. *Kal: rituals*, co-edited by Aziz Sohail & The Many Headed Hydra, co-published by Archive Books & Zubaan Books, Berlin and New Dehli, 2021

Fiza Khatri, 'Untitled', in: a language where yesterday and tomorrow are the same word. *Kal: rituals*, co-edited by Aziz Sohail & The Many Headed Hydra, co-published by Archive Books & Zubaan Books, Berlin and New Dehli, 2021

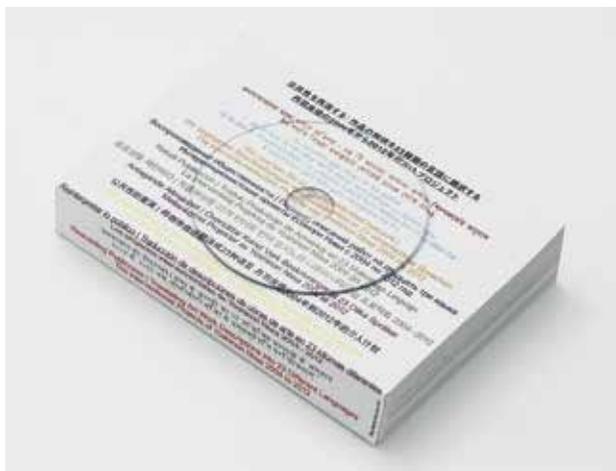


Rebroadcasting of the Japanese Language Radio Programme (1971-1989) in Sri Lanka is a context-specific, sonic iteration of Yoshinori Niwa's ongoing series *Forcing People to Speak About What They Don't Understand*, as part of which he invites speakers of one language to read a phonetically transliterated script—often singular perspectives on transformative political events—in a language they do not understand. By intentionally creating dissonances between the meaning and the sound of a language—the signified and the signifier – the artist reflects on the machinations of meaning-making in the post-truth era, while also drawing a performative parallel with the palpable distance of political events as they unfold, and state policies, from those who are affected by them yet have limited or no agency. During the 1970s and 80s, the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation featured Japanese language radio programming for 15 minutes, once a week, by Colombo-based Japanese radio journalist Yoko Okada. During some of the most socially and politically turbulent years in the island, Yoko Okada transmitted her interpretation of the context via radio waves for a community of Japanese migrants who were settled in the island but did not speak any of the local languages.

There were also many enthusiastic listeners in Japan who sent letters to Yoko Okada. The news programme, which primarily focused on the local political situation, interspersed with casual observations on the weather and gastronomy, came to an end in 1989 when Yoko Okada moved to the United States for a period of time before returning to Sri Lanka in her old age. The project traces the history and memory of the Japanese community in Sri Lanka by relating to their specific experience of loss and longing for their language while attempting to make sense of their immediate reality in an alien context. Excerpts from transcripts in Japanese are activated as part of the radio programme for *Language is Migrant, A Thousand Channels* by Syma Tariq. A multigenerational group of Sri Lankans narrate events that are closely connected to their history even as they cannot comprehend the meaning of the words that they read out loud.



Yoshinori Niwa, *Reenacting Publicness | Translating Art Work Descriptions into 23 Different Languages: The Interventionist Projects of Yoshinori Niwa 2004 to 2012*. Image courtesy of the artist/My Book Service, inc

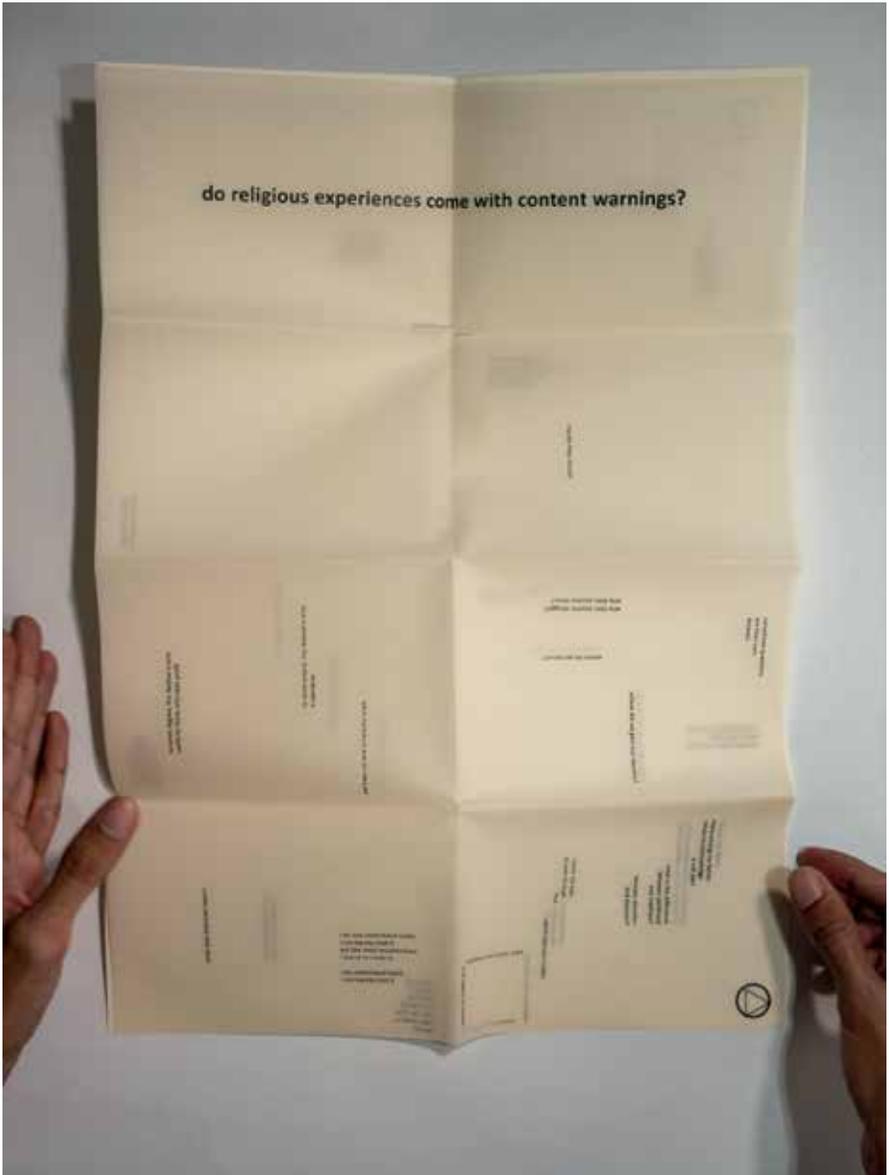




The Packet, A deconstructed art book, 2021. Courtesy of The Packet.



Mathematics, Publication, 2020.
Courtesy of The Packet.



"do religious experiences come with content warnings?", The Packet, A deconstructed art book, 2021.
Courtesy of the Packet.

In a world of dissolving distinctions, *Black Skin, White Lines*, a composition by Belinda Zhawi aka MA.MOYO imagines life as a southern African plains zebra, investigating the boundaries between animal and human—from southern Africa to south-east London. In *Black Skin, White Lines* (2021) the plains zebra is evoked as MA.MOYO's mother's totem and a great migrator between eastern and southern Africa. Its relational tale is told in parallel to the familial systems and ecologies of the Shona people of Zimbabwe, using the mediums of voice, ambient music, and soundscape.

Excerpt from Belinda Zhawi aka MA.MOYO's audio notes on 'Black Skin, White Lines', for Episode 2, A Thousand Channels.



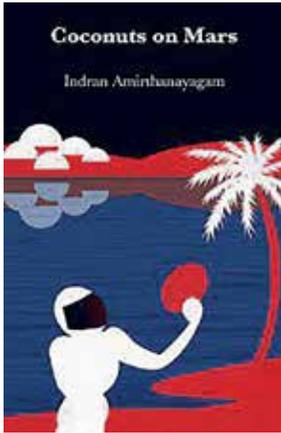
Belinda Zhawi
 Small Inheritances
 2018
 Ignitionpress



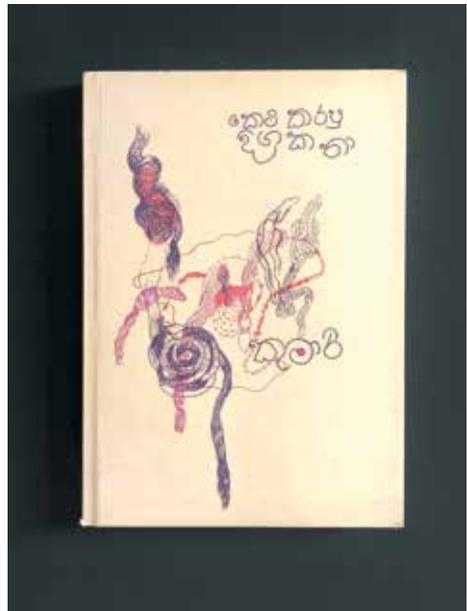
Cecilia Vicuña
 Installation View, *Palabrama* (1970s - ongoing),
 a retrospective exhibition at Former Witte de
 With Center for Contemporary Art, 2019,
 curated by Miguel A. López
 Courtesy of the artist



Cecilia Vicuña
Unravelling Words and Weaving Water
 Graywolf Press, 1992
 Courtesy of the artist



Indran Amirthanayagam
Coconut on Mars
Paperwall, 2019
Courtesy of the author



Kumari Kumaramage, *Keti Karapu Diga Katha*, 2008

TEA & SOLIDARITY

TAMIL WOMEN & WORK IN POSTWAR SRI LANKA



MYTHRI JEGATHESAN

Mythri Jegathesan
Tea and Solidarity: Tamil Women and Work in Postwar Sri Lanka
University of Washington Press, June 2019
Courtesy of the author



Selections of zines and publications by Bombay Underground at Colomboscope



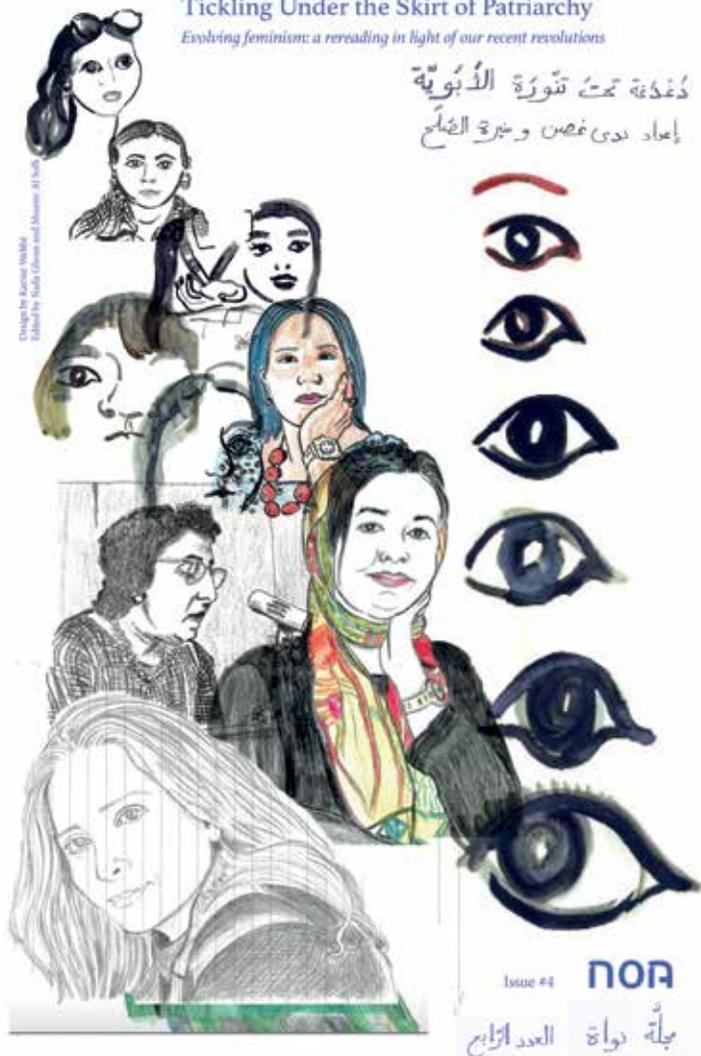
Christian Nyampeta,
*A Flower Garden of All Kinds of
 Loveliness Without Sorrow*
 Installation View at GfZK
 Leipzig, 2020
 Courtesy of the artist. Photo
 Credit: Alexandra Ivanciu

Tickling Under the Skirt of Patriarchy

Evolving feminism: a rereading in light of our recent revolutions

دُعْدُةٌ تَحْتِ تَنْوَرَةِ الدُّبُورَةِ
إِعَادَ نَدَى غُوسِنَ وَ مُونِيرَةَ السُّوَالِحَ

Design by Karim Maki
Edited by Nada Ghosn and Mounira Al Solh



Cover of NOA (Not Only Arabic) Magazine #4. Edited by Mounira Al Solh and Nada Ghosn. Courtesy the artist



P. Ahilan
Geetha Sukumaran (Translator)
Then There Were No Witnesses
Mawzni House /TSAR, 2018
Courtesy of the author

P. Ahilan
Tea. A Concoction of Dissonance
Geetha Sukumaran (Translator), Paintings: Vaidheki, 2020
Courtesy of the author



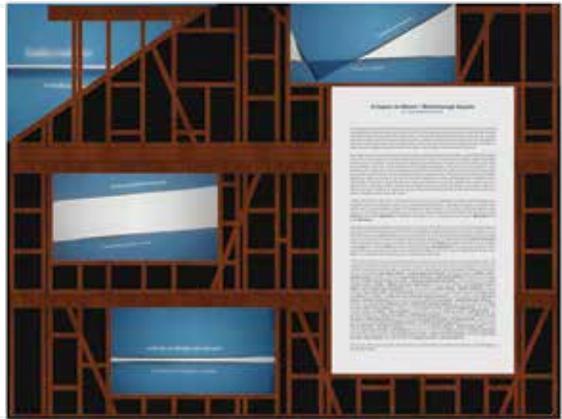
SCROLL Projects on Paper
It is Not the Seas that Scare Me
Launch at Sea Change, Colombscope 2019
Photo credit: Ruvin de Silva

Lucas Odahara Monteiro,
O Sapato Do Mestre /
Masthararage Sapattu

SCROLL: Projects on Paper
Edited by Aziz Sohail
with Syma Tariq

2021-22

In partnership with Colombscope
Courtesy of the artist and SCROLL





Mounavaakkiya Maalai (The garland of silent utterance), T. Thajendran, First edition on September 2020. Courtesy of the artist



Space-Time & Intuition:
T. Thajendran, *Space-Time-& Intuition*, Charcoal dust on the floor, Dimension variable, 2020. Courtesy of the artist



Slavs and Tatars
 Slavs and Tatars: *Wripped Scripted*
 Hatje Cantz, Albertinum (Kunsthalle im Lipsiusbau),
 Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Kunstverein Hannover, 2018
 Courtesy of the artist



Slavs and Tatars
 River Bed Installation
 View, Reading Room, 2017.
 Courtesy of the artist and
 Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler



Mantiq of the Mantis Winter Retreat 2021-2022
The Strange Library
Writing On Air



**It is this time
That matters**

**It is this history
I care about**

**the one we make together
awkward
inconsistent**

—June Jordan

Between The Lines

Since the last edition of Colomscope, we have endeavoured to find new forms of presence in the island as a platform that is active between editions. This has led to shifting rhythms, contours, and purposes in collaboration with a circle of local and international interdisciplinary artists and thinkers. This itinerary was launched with a residential workshop focusing on skill-building and arts infrastructure 'Hacking the System' with young Sri Lankan artists. It was followed by discussions around spoken word, protest music, and live performance prior to the pandemic-thwarting explorative means of creating together. During the first lockdown in April 2020, we strove to seek for means of correspondence through the impasse and loneliness of being *Held Apart, Together*. Muvindu Binoy's *Conscious Meme* series brings together hilarious and spine-chilling insights by way of his take on meme culture in Lanka.

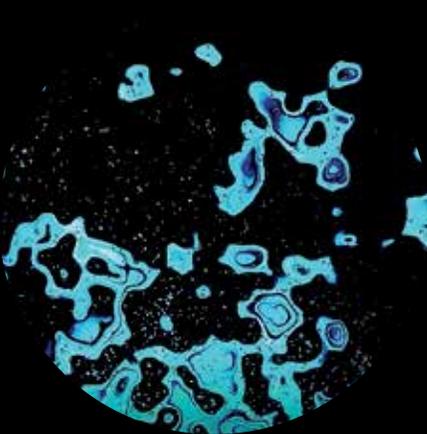
A range of hybrid workshops have been conducted from 'The Politics of Listening' to 'Self-publishing'. Through the weekend dialogue series, *Artist Encounters*, members of the festival network from Colombo to New Zealand (Aotearoa) formed associations around their research, production challenges, and new modalities of remote culture work. Another pursuit that was set in motion last year was 'Tandem Residencies' to prompt informal learning, off-grid research, and site-responsive art productions.

SCROLL Thru, edited by Aziz Sohail and Syma Tariq is the first digital version of Sohail's SCROLL: Projects on Paper. It inquires into paradoxes of citizenship, climate histories, diasporic belonging, and mobility with artists and authors Lucas Odahara, Naila Mahmood, Hardeep Pandhal, Angela Wittwer and Rahmat Arham.

#Held Apart, Together

We find ourselves in the middle. There is no single composition or frame that can render visible the abstract magnitude of this collective moment—a pandemic that releases omnipresent data mapping, infected bodies, inexhaustible news feeds, and whirlpools of emotion. A time for lessons of interdependence.

We are held apart on a breathing planet, seeking out spaces of restorative care, virtual togetherness, mourning, and the touch of duration. Let us forget, even the moon cycles convey time as continuum; let us remember that artists have sought method in the madness and located madness in the method. They have for long reflected on system failures and unequal suffering, but also given footholds into the imagination—that is reshaping the present as we know it.



Online Series

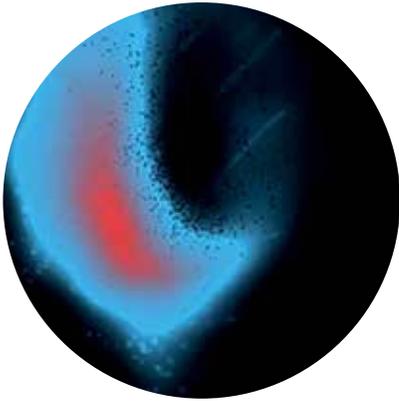
With #HeldApartTogether we turn to some of our artist friends and wish to sustain primary acts of reading, listening and viewing together. These online productions also open a window into the artistic community's present struggles and endeavours in communal resilience.

As Epicurus once said, 'The fool, with all his other faults, has this also, he is always getting ready to live.' Let us stay alert and responsive, but also joyous. This series was launched on April 7, 2020, during a full moon.



Visit www.colomboscope.lk/held-apart-together or scan the QR code for more information including artist documentation videos and conversations.

Enabled by EUNIC Spaces of Culture



Fold Media
Collective



Layla
Godanduwa



Susanne M.
Winterling



Ahilan
Ratnamohan



We Are
From Here



Hania
Luthufi



Lakvant
Chaudhary



Pedro Gómez-
Egaña

Muvindu Binoy

Muvindu Binoy's multidisciplinary practice blurs the boundaries between visual art, filmmaking, and music, while establishing a close relationship with popular digital culture and its circuits of creative production. Often he arrives to work while using the internet as a primary archive, engaging with graffiti culture, and other forms of visual poetry that seep into everyday life. Processes of assemblage are key to the artist's sensibility, often revealing the cracks in our social world, systems of fate and 'online' realities with the tone of absurdist humour and uncanny truths. His collages are especially concerned with polemical discourses on gender and individual agency. They challenge the rhetoric of the internet as a democratic realm and lay bare the tense and often contradictory relationship between tradition and modernity, militarization, and peace in Sri Lanka.

The artist has been part of several editions of Colomboscope, and for Language is Migrant he has conceived a four-part conscious meme series as the festival's first ever digital commission. This series began contemplating social relations in the aftermath of the Easter bombings that continue to lurk and resound as unresolved civic wounds. Furthermore, it also chronicles phases of unrest in the island through prolonged lockdowns, vaccine disparity, the passing of the Port City Bill, and an economic downturn. These visuals reorient meme formats that are popular worldwide and perform as recurring tropes of social commentary, from SpongeBob SquarePants, 'choose your fighter' meme and Mr. Orange, to chronicle public anxieties brought on by the uncanny year that has passed, while Sri Lanka remained largely closed to the world beyond.

Supported by Foundation for Arts Initiatives

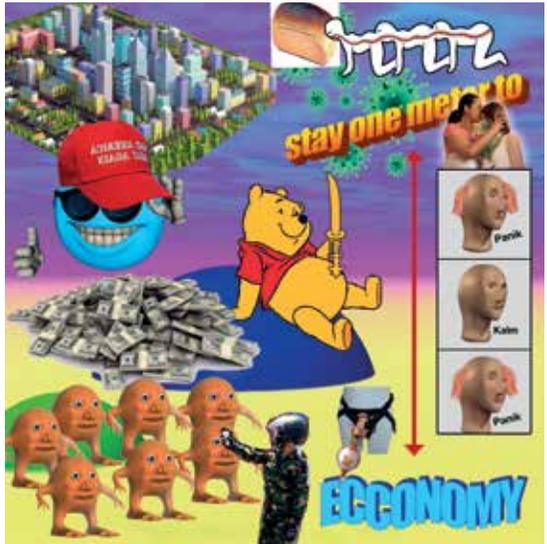


This submission considers the aftermath of the Easter Sunday bombings and the rise of public as well as political pressure that led to a ban on face coverings with particular reference to the niqab and burqa. In contrast is the current reality of the global pandemic that holds the world in suspension with masks becoming part of our body language for a long time to come. Through this simple gesture the artist interrogates experiencing the self and fractured identities as well as notions of freedom and contagion.



The second contribution as part of Muvindu Binoy's digital project for Language is Migrant is a conscious meme that is heavily influenced by SpongeBob SquarePants, especially the 'SpongeBobImagination' meme. In an ironic twist and with a dose of cynicism the artist wrestles with the prolonged impact of the pandemic in Sri Lanka and the upcoming elections. He considers the promises made, unevenly deployed disciplinary measures that colour daily life, and the threats that linger in our midst. Given the absence of a cure within an infected everyday, this visual explores aspects of naivety, sheep mentality, and power dynamics.

This third conscious meme by Muvindu Binoj takes a surreal turn while it captures a fatigued state of mind as the second wave of Covid-19 continues in Sri Lanka. The artist borrows several popular meme elements to reflect on a post-election context in Sri Lanka confronted by multiple concerns from militarization of pandemic control, Chinese and American influence, constitutional changes, and media-driven discourses that amplify anxieties around these issues while pinning their hopes on economic development. Winnie the Pooh, Mr. Orange and Meme Man among other exaggerated visual and textual fragments come together to present a layered and complex context that the artist identifies as confounding and absurd at the same time.



As we enter lock-down 3.0 (rebranded as 'travel restrictions') in Sri Lanka, Muvindu Binoj presents his last meme contribution. A scene brimming with hilarious and frightening protagonists who capture much of the island's reality. These motifs are premised on the 'choose your fighter' meme. Bizarre visual fragments from herbal medicinal concoction to vaccine frenzy and mixed signals received through mainstream media updates, a beleaguered and uneasy public is reminded no choice is easy and yet we are made 'easy targets.' This series began contemplating social relations in the aftermath of the Easter Bombings that continue to lurk and resound as unresolved civic wounds. Resigned furor against the loss of sovereignty with the passing of the Port City Bill, if we are only willing to look beneath our nose we might miss the extracted piles of sand in the nearby horizon

Tandem Residencies

THIS INITIATIVE focused on artistic research, site-responsive production, and durational approaches within contemporary cultural practice through month-long residencies for artistic producers hosted in different coastal and rural regions of Sri Lanka. Invited local and international artists worked closely with community mediators and practitioners, exploring aspects of social memory, oral histories, informal pedagogy, sonic archives, and traditional arts. Each residency included an Open House as part of contextualizing cultural processes for local audience groups as well as highlighting the process-led and migratory iterations of the Colomboscope Festival.

Colomboscope carried out tandem residencies with local and international artists through April - May 2021 extending process-led encounters and inviting artistic exchange in different regions of the island after over a year of travel restrictions. Language is Migrant foregrounds the spirit of movement-based inquiry and new modes of on-site production and collaborative listening that echo our interdependence with living ecologies. Pakistani artist Omer Wasim and Sri Lankan artist Thisath Thoradeniya travelled across the Jaffna peninsula researching botanical species associated with memory, the afterlife of conflict, as well as colonial legacy and social histories of salt in Kandy. They met with environmentalists,

horticulturists, artists, and writers, eventually making their way to Hiriketiya on the South coast where the residency culminated in an open house. For the second residency in the North, Berlin-based Afghani artist Aziz Hazara together with Batticaloa-based artist Rupaneethan Pakkiyarajah developed their production process by documenting sonic traditions and rituals, and journeying through coastal areas. Their research focused on landscapes as testimonial sites, internal displacement, and terrestrial conflicts in Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. They maintained a temporary studio space in the historic village of Vaddukodai, while working closely with cultural organizer and founder of Kālam, Kirutharshan Nicholas throughout their stay.

Supported by EUNIC Houses of Culture and Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka



Visit www.colomboscope.lk/tandem-residencies or scan the QR code for more information including artist documentation videos and conversations.



Aziz Hazara and Rupaneethan Pakkiyarajah
Colombo - Jaffna - Mullaitivu - Vaddukodai



Omer Wasim and Thisath Thoradeniya
Colombo - Jaffna Peninsula - Mullivaikkal - Ritigala - Hiriketiya

Workshops & Outreach

THROUGH A RANGE of workshops with emerging arts professionals, performers, and writers, Colomboscope organizes intimate and horizontal learning environments as part of developing cultural inquiry at grassroots level. These modules are practice-oriented and involve skills development, strengthening attitudes of curiosity, debate and collaboration, as well as furthering dialogue with visiting creative producers from South Asia and beyond.



Online Workshop with spoken word artist, poet and educator Belinda Zhawi, April 2021. Courtesy of Colomboscope



Politics of Listening Workshop with Lawrence Abu Hamdan, July 2020. Courtesy of Colomboscope



Online Workshop with Jason Dodge on Self-Publishing and Book Making, January 2021. Courtesy of Colomboscope



During the Re-Tooling Workshop #1 in the central hills of Sri Lanka, October 2019. Courtesy of Colomboscope



Visit www.colomboscope.lk/workshops or scan the QR code for more information including artist documentation videos and conversations.

Workshop on Book Making & Self-Publishing

Colomboscope together with artist and publisher Jason Dodge facilitated a workshop on bookmaking and self-publishing in January 2021. Jason Dodge shared and discussed his experiences and techniques of bookmaking and publishing with a diverse audience from around the world—from how to maximise offset formats, to folding thousands of pieces of paper by hand, and why he started his poetry imprint Fivehundred Places in 2012 where he has published poets such as Alice Notley, CAConrad, and Ishion Hutchinson among many more. Participants were invited to share their own projects and ideas, creating an environment of mutual exchange.

Politics of Listening Workshop

In June and July 2020, Colomboscope organized the workshop 'Politics of Listening' led by Lawrence Abu Hamdan for a small group of artists and collaborators in Sri Lanka invested in learning from forensic approaches to the visual arts and extending inquiries at the cross-section of media, investigative tools, and sonic practices as well as documenting histories of repression and dissent through aural and acts of witnessing. Between physical and virtual interactions, the sessions turned out to be considered exercises in sharing ideas traversing political geographies, ongoing research processes, and cross-disciplinary learning.

Re-Tooling Workshop #1: Hacking the System

The workshop took place from October 18 - 20, 2019 at Ellerton Bungalow in the central hills of Sri Lanka. It was organised with the support of EUNIC European Houses of Culture. Sessions focused on working conditions for contemporary practitioners, spatial practice, as well as key principles of arts publishing. A reading corner with catalogues, artist monographs and self-published zines activated conversations between sessions.

Performance Poetry Workshop

The first Performance Poetry Workshop was held in November 2019 in the framework of Kacha Kacha with live performers, writers, and spoken word artists from different regions of Sri Lanka and Mumbai, India. Participants met in a convivial atmosphere and exchanged positions around their diverse practices. Tamil and Sinhala translations were provided by Kirutharshan Nicholas and Gaya Nagahawatta. The workshop was facilitated in three segments: a session by spoken word artist Priya Malik 'On Gender and Feminist Learning', a session by Natasha Ginwala on 'Radical Potentiality: Oral Storytelling and Dub Poets', and finally through a moderated sharing of process work, improvisation techniques, and production challenges.

Festival Code of Conduct

AS YOU PREPARE to join us for the festival this year, in addition to the mandatory health and safety guidelines listed at the festival venues, we ask that you endorse this very important code of conduct to ensure a safe, pleasant, and fun experience for everyone involved.

Colomboscope is committed to creating a safe and respectful environment for all participants as well as for the local community that hosts us so graciously. The festival will not tolerate any harassment and intimidation of a sexual, physical, verbal, emotional, or any other nature based on gender, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, age, appearance, marital status, religion, ethnicity, ability, or any other characteristic or feature of any person, at any time of day or night, at any festival gathering.

Being under the influence of a substance will not be considered a legitimate excuse. Should the festival be notified of any inappropriate behaviour during the course of its running period, the festival reserves the right to terminate any/all association with you.

Should you be a witness to any inappropriate behaviour during the festival, we ask that you not be a silent bystander but offer your support to the person needing it in the way they deem safest. We also encourage you to speak to those of us working on the festival should you feel you may need support in making an intervention.

This clause is not meant to offend anyone who does not plan to offend others. And it shall not get in the way of us all having a perfectly wonderful time together!

Visitor Information

Festival Dates

21 - 30 January 2022

Colomboscope venues for exhibitions and events are free and open to the public. Some events require prior registration.

Festival Venues

Rio Complex

60 Kumaran Ratnam Road, Colombo 2

*This venue is not wheelchair accessible.
We apologise for this lack of access.*

TIMINGS:

10 AM - 6 PM on Weekdays

10 AM - 7 PM on Weekends

Barefoot Gallery

704 Galle Road, Colombo 4

This venue is wheelchair accessible

TIMINGS:

10 AM - 7 PM on Weekdays & Saturday

10 AM - 6 PM on Sunday

Lakmahal Community Library

8A Alfred House Road, Colombo 3

This venue is wheelchair accessible.

TIMINGS:

10 AM - 6 PM on Weekdays

10 AM - 7 PM on Weekends

Colombo Public Library

15 Sir Marcus Fernando Mawatha, Colombo 7

Part of this venue is wheelchair accessible.

TIMINGS:

Auditorium and Gallery Annexe:

10 AM - 6 PM on Weekdays

and 10 AM - 7 PM on Weekends

Main Building:

10 AM - 6 PM on all days

W A Silva Museum & Printing Press

Silvermere, 126 W A Silva Mawatha,
Colombo 6

Part of this venue is wheelchair accessible.

TIMINGS:

10 AM - 6 PM on Weekdays

10 AM - 7 PM on Weekends

Lak Cafe

Viharamahadevi Park, Colombo 7

This venue is wheelchair accessible.

TIMINGS:

4 PM - 6 PM

A Note ‘Out of Nowhere’

SINCE THE INAUGURAL EDITION of Colomboscope in 2013, different constellations of ‘We’ have been bringing together artists, filmmakers, thinkers, and musicians across generations to reflect, exchange, and conceive experimental cultural projects and live events over seven festival editions. Taking along and finding our audiences across Colombo from the Whist Bungalow in Modara to the Freemasons’ Temple, the Rio Complex in Slave Island (Kompannavidiya), and further on to the former General Post Office in Fort and the Terminus Railways Station in Maradana, this festival has continued to reinvent itself and bring together people from diverse walks of life in unfamiliar, dilapidated, and underutilized public spaces to celebrate unbounded creativity, sustainability, and collectivity through the arts.

Manifesting this edition, Language is Migrant has been the most challenging iteration so far. While having pursued the artistic and curatorial ideas of tracing subtle migratory flows of linguistic belonging, the borrowing and morphing of words across languages over time, the complex questions of

translation and the transformation of social vocabularies over generations, the festival organizers, together with the rest of the world, were caught off guard and hit sideways by the steamrolling, hyper-migratory reality of a mutating virus that on top of its deadly potential also turned out to be the world’s first virus that went viral, turning social media amplified anxiety into mass fear and paranoia.

Writing this Note ‘Out of Nowhere’ in mid December as the festival publication should have made its way to the printer and as we make our way through logistical hurdles to hold the festival a year after the originally scheduled date, uncertainties are rife around us. We can only hope that a change in travel protocols will not prevent us once again from convening with the handful of adventurous artists and guests who are booked to join us for the festival. It’s impossible to know if a new lockdown will force us, again, to remain separated behind screens and not even whether there will be stable electricity to remain ‘connected’ and display a range of audiovisual works, due to the worsening economic deadlock that the country has manoeuvred itself into.

While we have secured extensive international support and are working collaboratively with a wide network of local partners, it remains somewhat disheartening to witness how reluctant and reserved Sri Lankan patrons are towards supporting a dedicated non-commercial cultural venture of this calibre that has consciously brought together the island's creative practitioners against all odds time and again.

With the ongoing pandemic and economic collapse unfolding, the challenges of securing funding for such a multilayered platform in South Asia are likely to increase, which brings us to question the future validity and sustainability of such an intensive multi-site festival model. Despite more and less successful dabblings in online formats, we strongly believe that uninhibited human togetherness and lively social exchanges are what make the core of a Colomboscope experience.

For being true to our core mission, sustained support networks are vital for this platform and its adaptability in a changing world and within our island. Until such time that these are secured, we will take a break, look up

from our screens, potentially resort to learning farming, and be keener observers of the environment around us. We remain determined to figure out how to effectively carry forth our task of connecting exceptional artists—daring and imaginative minds—and unravelling the magical experiences that this creates for multifaceted publics at no cost and without commercial interests.

Acknowledgements

Initial support for Colomboscope to continue as an independent cultural platform that dares to experiment and take new directions—through residential workshops, online publishing and radio programming, and artist residencies across the island from North to South—came through the EUNIC ‘Spaces of Culture’ grant. Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka continues to be a steady pillar of strategic support when the ground under our feet feels particularly shaky. Structural support that enabled our work as a small yet unwavering team over extended timelines facing precarious conditions in the ‘informal’ arts sector of Sri Lanka came through Ffai in 2020 and DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program’s Relief Fund for Organizations in Culture and Education in 2021. Without these partnership resources and mutual trust we would’ve had to cast aside the festival plans within the early phase of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our utmost gratitude goes to every festival participant of Language is Migrant and curator Anushka Rajendran whose dedication has remained unequivocal since our collaboration began more than two years ago. At times we have struggled to stay afloat, learned of personal losses, but also rejoiced in the company of rich ideas and an oasis of aesthetic possibility.

EUNIC Sri Lanka, Art Councils, and Embassies have been key contributors that allow us, for the time being, to continue processes of cultural openness and internationalization of the arts ecology, even as travel restrictions make it nearly impossible to retain our mandate as a locally relevant globally-facing platform. We have been realizing productions by international artists, with a broad range of local collaborators, setting up new modes to produce contemporary cultural projects in more impactful ways and sustainable practices with local facilities, independent businesses, and crews.

We are thrilled to have extended our circle of local partners with this edition, especially the ever ingenious support and advice of Kirutharshan Nicholas, director of Kâlam, a space for cultural encounters in Jaffna. We are grateful for the enthusiastic guidance of the team of the Museum of the Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka and visitor educators for special tours during this festival edition. We also thank the authorities at the Municipal Council of Colombo and the Public Health Department for their attentiveness to our requests.

Colomboscope is known for its distinctive approach to contemporary and historic spaces in Colombo, and this recognition is due to our gracious venue partners including those we are returning to once more –Thamby Navaratnam and team at Rio Complex; the Sansoni family and Puja Srivastava at Barefoot, as well as Anisha Dias Bandaranaike of the Lakmahal Community Library. It is a privilege to host a part of Colomboscope at the Colombo Public Library, a site most festival participants have dear memories of, where we have been in amicable exchange with Chief Librarian Waruni Gagabadaarachchi and the staff. Another special collaboration has been with the Mooniak team on this festival edition's tri-lingual title font as well as hosting artistic works at the W A Silva Museum and Printing Press. Our gratitude also goes out to media partners in Sri Lanka, Roar Media and Wijeya Newspapers, as well as international digital partner STIR for enthusiastically sharing our journeys with artists through detailed coverage. In continued partnership with Anim8, we have been able to spread our visual footprint in more accessible ways around the city.

Colomboscope's partner network across South Asia and the Middle East is a realm of convergence and source of courage in persevering to generate a multifarious model. We have gained immensely from Warehouse 421's encouragement and their project revival fund, which enabled a large range of productions to be successfully realized. Our longstanding partner organization in India, The Gujral Foundation, has been seminal in furthering South Asian dialogues and supporting young creative practitioners. In recent years, we have also initiated collaboration with the Ishara Art Foundation to pursue the special initiative Reading in Tongues—Colomboscope's Reading Room—tying together various artistic and literary threads. Our deep respect for the pioneering Dhaka-based platform Chobi Mela led to intensive exchanges around working methods, alliance building, and cultural autonomy. Their inventive approaches resulted in a collaboration at the height of lockdowns in Sri Lanka in the shape of the exhibition segment *Anatomies of Tongues* at Chobi Mela 'Shunno', curated by Anushka Rajendran. We also thank Goethe-Institut Bangladesh's Translocal Solidarity Networks for enabling us to have candid discussions between the festival teams together with cultural researchers from across South Asia.

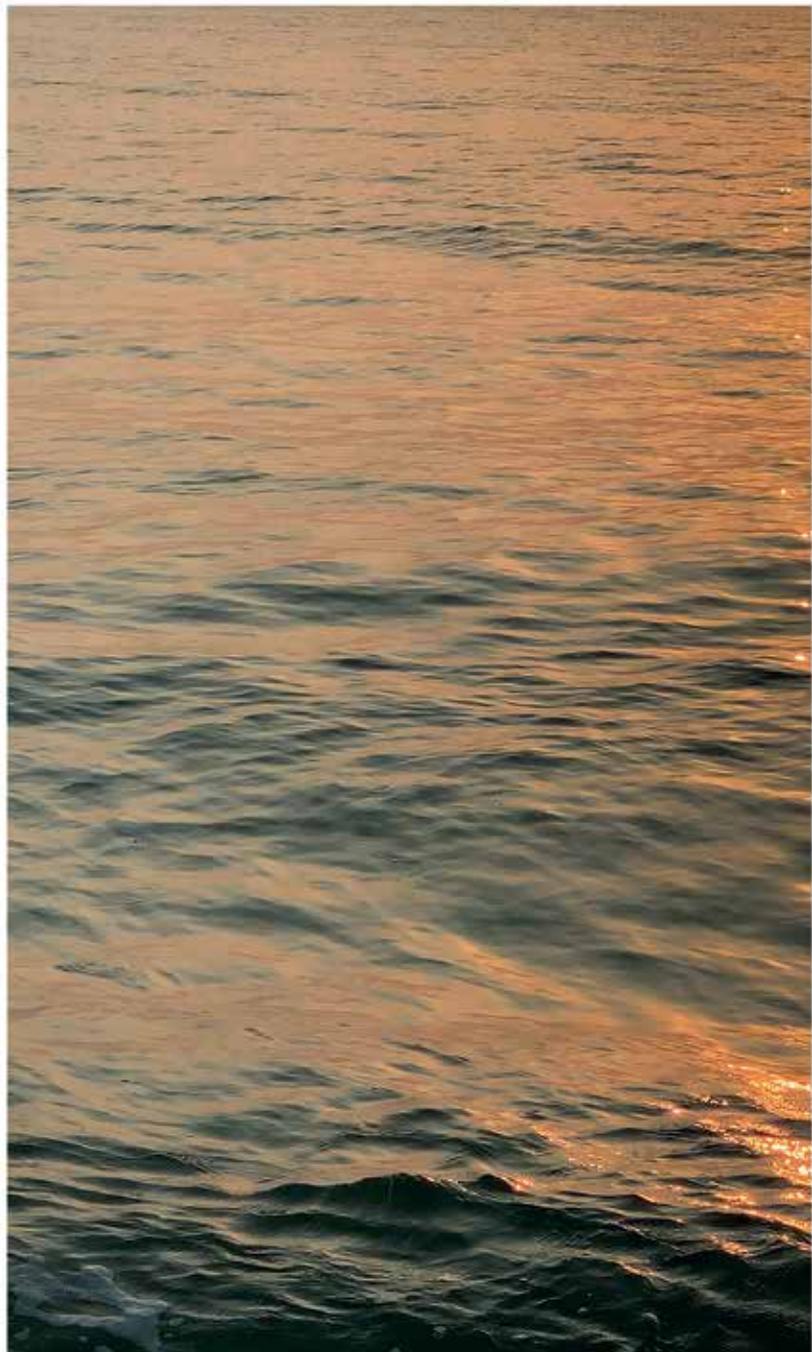
SCROLL: Projects on Paper, published out of Karachchi, joined us for another edition, with a range of thoughtful positions. In the form of online radio, A Thousand Channels carries resonances of this subcontinent's affinities, relations between coastlines, and twentieth-century partition memory.

It gave us confidence to pursue ambitious dialogues with artists over two postponements, as Festival Patrons, Friends of the Festival, and art galleries stepped in at crucial junctures with their assistance, especially A+ Works of Art, Experimenter, Shrine Empire, Taut Seni Foundation, and Vadehra Art Gallery.

We wish to acknowledge the backbone of Colomboscope 2019-22, those who have steered this path together with us through thick and thin. Shanika Perera has been with Colomboscope over four editions, she is a vital connection point for many – it would take an ordinary person many arms and legs to pull off what she does. As festival manager of this edition, Nicola Grigson has brought with her the spark of curiosity and accompanied our collaborators with genuine hospitality. Broadcasting our work to hyperlocal and international audiences as well as media platforms through lockdowns, information overload, and virtual fatigue has been a huge responsibility that has been admirably carried out by Marie Waarlo.

A multi-genre platform such as ours is fortunate to have long-term collaborators like Fold Media Collective, who create bold and abiding design propositions as well as prolific documentation to communicate the aesthetic spirit of Colomboscope. The team is bolstered through the enthusiastic and skilled involvement of Maleeza Nicholas, who joined us most recently as festival assistant and is a familiar face, having been a volunteer at earlier Colomboscope editions. Which also brings us to the current batch of festival volunteers with whom we have already begun meetings. Today, a month in advance of the festival opening, there are signs of hope that we will overcome what feel like insurmountable circumstances, and be reminded that artistic expression is a means to fortify the unfettered imagination in an increasingly volatile world.

Spectral Remains, 2020-22.
Images from fieldwork as part
of the project publication, Mul-
laitivu. Courtesy of the artist



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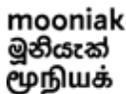
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Anojie Amerasinghe and Hugues Marchand

Feroze and Mohit Gujral

And those who wish to remain anonymous.

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