



 **COLOMBOSCOPE**
interdisciplinary arts festival

way
of the
forest

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2024

COLOMBOSCOPE 2024:

Way of the Forest

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“What goes too long
unchanged destroys itself.
The forest is forever because
it dies and dies and so lives.”

– Ursula K. Le Guin

The Word for World is Forest:

An Introduction

It has been a decade since the first edition of Colomboscope was held in 2013. Since then this itinerant festival has inhabited several corners of Colombo. A generation of artists, writers, and thinkers have gone on to realise pathbreaking creative visions as part of this journey, and the platform has grown into an autonomous, non-profit initiative without the fuel of private enterprise, state funds, and corporate resource structures. Today, plural pathways foster a defiant South Asian social imagination despite political failures. This is only possible due to continuous sustenance through an ecology of cultural practices from Sri Lanka

and around the world, a community of more than 500 participants who committed over the years to shaping Colomboscope, and an expansive web of collaborators who have continued the labour of tireless dreaming with us, within the island, and across vast distances to support the festival's existence.

Way of the Forest, the eighth festival edition accompanied by Mushroomings—a series of interdisciplinary events with over 50 artists, collectives, and cultural initiatives—is conceived by the festival team together with artists and cultural organizers Kathmandu-based Hit Man Gurung

and Sheelasha Rajbhandari and Dhaka-based Sarker Protick as guest curators. Starting from the largest festival venue J.D.A. Perera Gallery and collectively-led cultural project SNAFU to the Colombo Public Library Garden and Barefoot Gallery, each venue is a chapter that folds into the next, inviting a planetary conversation.

The forest is a multispecies school, a place of origin stories, medicinal ground, an ancient altar, and a sensory communication network that far exceeds human intelligence and lifespan. It is from this realm that elemental lessons may be gained in interdependence, mutual aid, and defence systems that restore balance rather than unleash annihilation. Potawatomi botanist and author, Robin Wall Kimmerer writes, "The land knows you, even when you are lost." A compass provides orientation on the surface; however, grounded direction is gained through mutual recognition of a territory that fosters multitudinous life-forms and has regenerated despite imperial hunters, taxonomists, and land grabbers.

This book is a constellation of reflections on artist practices and visions, as well as writings including a critical essay, short fiction, process notes, and ecological analysis by Anna Arabindan-Kesson, Yudhanjaya Wijeratne, Myriam Mihindou, Symba

Tariq, and Dr Ranil Senanayake. Speculative fiction author and feminist thinker Ursula Le Guin's novella *The Word for World is Forest* (1972) served as a literary source of inspiration for this festival edition. Her critiques of war and state power, cultivation of anarchist aesthetics, and the fascination she held for alternative systems of political economy feel ever more vital in the ongoing grip of planetary cataclysms and human-made catastrophes. How to address ecological grief in a country that has seen decades of civil war, massacres, and mass displacement remains an open-ended inquiry. Under the forest's gaze, may we embrace 'untamed' ecologies, imagine future alliances and collective fictions, to chart zones of action, waiting, and retreat for tracing enduring grammars of dissent.

Nahla Al Tabbaa
Running After Time,
Charcoal on canvas

Commissioned by The Salama Bint Hamdan
Emerging Artist Fellowship (2021)

Photo courtesy Ismail Noor, Seeing Things.



Curatorial Note

Way of the Forest converges artistic pathways to rekindle knowledge of interdependence, custodianship, and restorative practices across rainforests, wilderness, mountain cultivations, and riverine wetlands. It invites deschooling—moving from the curriculum of plunder, reckless supremacy, and extinction, to embrace active listening beyond the human sensorium. The forest as a lexicon holds a plenitude of meaning across languages: Aaranya in Tamil (ஆரண்யா) and Sanskrit relating to a sanctuary, vana (වන) in Sinhala. Bonn, Jongol, and Aranno in Bangla, guñ in Nepal Bhasa, Tēm in Tamu—each evoking distinct states of being, emotions, disparate imagination, and a palpable climate.

This multi-chapter exhibition and accompanying events are an intricate study of our eroding ecological histories, of lost environmental wisdoms, monstrous developmental agendas, and ghosts of extraction. It endeavours to plot legacies of colonisation of resources and minds that operate in disguise. Within mutating landscapes, artists question who owns forest lands, who gets displaced, and who is restricted from sites marked for conservation.

What do the spirits of these lands, rivers, forests, whisper in our ears? In many folktales, legends, and mythologies, forests are associated with apparitions, witches, and other mystical beings. These entities are often depicted as powerful

and independent, existing beyond the reach of societal constraints. They are also spaces that elicit fear, of things unknown, and forces beyond human control. With the rise of imperialism, the exploitation of natural resources and abuse of primary inhabitants was exacerbated as a fulfilment of greed, power, and ego. The subjugation of jungles and wildernesses then portrayed as a victory over the vastness, unruliness, and mysticism of forests.

From the perspective of a patriarchal state, forests are seen as a liminal space, a place inhabited by rebels seeking solace and autonomy, an untamed space that challenges their authority and control. For centuries, Indigenous elders have recognized a strict adherence to forests' restorative ethos—in stark contrast to the teachings of modern education systems. They understand that it is not merely a collection of trees, but a living entity, embodying the spirits of ancestors and serving as guardians.

Many Indigenous peoples find themselves navigating nation-states driven by corporate capitalism and geopolitical hegemony. Throughout this struggle, there have been profound transitions marked by loss, change, resistance, and at times, even hopelessness. Revolutionaries, outcasts, borderline beings find solace and refuge within the forest's sheltering embrace. Its dense foliage and shaded paths provide a sense of secrecy and protection, allowing

Way of the Forest

those seeking autonomy and freedom to gather and organise away from prying eyes, to recalibrate uncertainty and fear, to dream of alternative power structures, of new world orders.

What might it mean to turn into an interspecies eye—sensing and observing differently amid ancient fauna, guardian spirits, murmuring leaves, and light streaks in the dark heart of woodlands? To follow the waters—from the mangrove membranes to tributaries coalescing in the rivers' mouth. The forest remembers, it recites. And reminds us that even death is intrinsic to life.

This festival edition's visual identity conceived by Fold Media Collective draws inspiration from an environmental phenomenon observed amidst tropical treetops called crown shyness, indicating a collective botanical consciousness and survival strategies. Principles of mutual growth, protection, and networked communication in the fabric of a forest result in these dynamic patterns formed between trees. Several cultural practitioners in this edition of Colomboscope are engaged in the restoration of land, seasonal cultivation, and fostering recognition of botanical species that stay resilient despite the earth cycles of destruction. They embrace intergenerational farming practices and address the depletion of forest cover across plantation landscapes.

Over centuries, ecocidal violence in canopied geographies has systemically accompanied forms of militarisation and the wounding of minorities in Sri Lanka and the Global South. It is in these terrains that rare earths are extracted to maintain digital thirst and accelerated mobility. And it is the landless minorities, eco-warriors, small-scale cultivators facing routine oppression and grave economic disparities who are unjustly demonised, systemically robbed, subject to mass killings, and labelled as anti-development protagonists. Way of the Forest weaves narratives around how repressed history turns to myth and lore, when what was sensuously real becomes illusive, as facts begin to face extinction. The voices silenced by ecopolitical wars return as echoes in creative endeavours, to retrace sovereign forest worlds—inscribing processes of storytelling into historical relations and inviting collective intelligence to hone psychic intimacy and fugitive holding beyond states of anxiety and decimation. These stories are enmeshed in perspectives of braided environments, natal histories, and vital forms of rematriation.

As the jungle floor shrinks and burns, it holds animated truths—if we care to pursue its regeneration—a return to dreaming, interdependence, hibernation, and ethical imaginaries shall inevitably manifest. From the forest we may also learn how to forage; to make use of what exists in abundance; to store what is scarce; and to listen deeply in order to hear the morning chorus.

Holding to the Forest

Anna Arabindan-Kesson

—For the most part, the entire view comprehends one interminable forest

Henry Marshall, Notes on the medical topography of the interior of Ceylon and on the health of the troops employed in the Kandyan provinces, during the years 1815, 1816, 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820 with brief remarks on the prevailing diseases, 1821

Forests are capable, like almost no other terrain, penetrating our collective imaginations. The theme of this year's Colomboscope Festival, *Way of The Forest*, moves us towards the formation of new practices drawn from forest-worlds. Their intricate ecosystems, dense canopies, tactile atmosphere, and entangled life forms are vividly symbolic. They recall the rhizomatic structure of the unconscious, they hold deep time, they materialize interdependence. Forests are, as Amitav Ghosh points out in his book *The Nutmeg's Curse*, entities in the world.¹ They house ancestor-ghosts.

They also hold us. They remember. A few years ago, at the British Library, I found a black and white photograph in an album. Overexposed, with the colour fading in the background, it is pasted onto a grey cardboard backing. A caption describes its location and its subject: *coffee estate, muster of hands, new clearing*. Our focus is on a large two-storey building—probably a processing factory—with a gabled roof. Its side walls support smaller buildings, each with a corrugated iron, sloping cover. A ladder bifurcates the front of the structure as men climb up to the upper section. Beneath them

1. Amitav Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 87, <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/N/bo125517349.html>.

is an open door to the factory floor. Workers, solely men it appears, are bunched around, wearing variations on lungis and turbans. Several hold or lean on long sticks like they are crutches. In the very front row a white man, in military-like dress, stands rather incongruously with an umbrella. Pay attention. Look here, he says.

The photograph's real focus is on what takes place behind these figures: large-scale deforestation. Hazily, coming into focus are the hills lined with fallen trees. A forest line is still visible, but it will not be for long. While staging the imposition of human order through clearance, the photograph, with its strewn forest remains, documents a scene of frenzied violence. The hacking, the chopping, the tearing of branches that, in the eerie light, look blistered and scarred. The ground is exposed, its surface interrupted by round, flat stumps. Branches and trunks, bleached white, are scattered like bones across the rocky soil. We are watching localized processes of the global human-made environmental change described in the term plantationocene. The term offers one kind of global imaginary. Acts of localized erasure—replicated in visual representation—sustained forms of extraction, management, and the illusion of control. The photograph in the album imagines a world cleared, and capable of being seen clearly.

But still, the forest line remains visible, an interminable backdrop, a potential obstruction. To colonists, the tropical climate and seemingly impenetrable vegetation of Sri

Lanka's forested regions signalled worlds unknown. As ecosystems of rapid growth and incessant verdure, they promised great resources while holding great terror. From their decaying undergrowth to their thick cover, forests in colonial texts were multi-species life-forms that harboured threat to colonial oversight. So often, the environmental catastrophe of the plantation was tied to the militarization of the forest. These local histories are also global, connecting Sri Lanka to spaces across the world where forests were, are, sites of war and displacement. Forests are often the scene of the crime, their clearance mapping catastrophe, while they become graveyards of history.

Like memory, the forest is a place of ruins, not resolution. It holds these stories of destruction; they are embedded and regenerate, along with soil, leaves, and insects, its undergrowth. Even for enslaved and unfree communities, forests were routes to freedom that held desperate terror. It was a place of paranoia, but also one of (even temporary) refuge. To move through forest worlds is to always move with, and through, the vulnerability and interdependence of its forms. It requires resolve and responsiveness. It is a practice of orientation that does not, necessarily, end with seeing clearly.

Part of the endless symbolism of forests, jungles, deciduous terrain lies in their low visibility. The dense entanglements of these spaces need not be a restriction, it holds potentiality. To move with the ecology

of the forest we need all our senses. Those who know the way, read the signs: they understand the vegetal language, they can follow forms of life that exist beyond the human realm, find the plants that can sustain, nourish, and heal. Maroon communities, Indigenous nations, for instance understand the different zones of forest life, the cultivation areas, the areas where medicinal plants lived, the areas to search for food. These understandings of the forest rely on what Afro-Brazilian writer Evando Nascimento calls *vegetal thinking* that includes, amongst other aspects, a deep relation with, and centering of, the plant world.² Forests require us to move beyond an emphasis on sightlines, on what lies beyond the horizon, to noticing the shades and shadows of foliage, the textures of roots, the patterns in the soil. It requires proximity, tenderness, anticipation. Forests demand intimacy from those who move through them. In South Asian art, being obstructed from view allows for a range of intimate and erotic expressions of religious fervour that might take place under sheltering foliage, without fear of exposure. As a site of ruin, these forest histories tell us something about processes of creative destruction. They detail forms of encircling and break down, they materialise processes of regeneration and renewal that animate the vegetal interdependencies of all life.

Amidst the multiple crisis we live with, and in, it is even more important to keep that forest line visible, so we can find a way of moving beyond our colonial inheritances with their increasingly inadequate constructions of how to imagine liberation. Forests remind us of the limitations of our dreams while compelling us to move differently. In the forest we must look for relation rather than resolution. And so they are a blueprint for the expansive eco-political relationships through which we live the future now.

Otobong Nkanga

Earthing

Acryl ink, acrylic and sticker on paper

2021

Courtesy of the artist

2. Evando Nascimento, *O pensamento vegetal: A literatura e as plantas*, 1st edition (Civilização Brasileira, 2021).



EXHIBITION VENUE

J.D.A. Perera Gallery

The largest exhibition venue, located on the campus of the University of Visual and Performing Arts, is the J.D.A. Perera Gallery, established in 2010. Traversing the emergence of origin stories, intergenerational mythologies that constitute a kinship with earth elements, observational sketches, and the study of medicinal fauna, artists relay the forest through paradoxes of spiritual beliefs, Indigenous lifeworlds, and belligerent corporatization. The impacts of industrial mining, deforestation, and mega development projects amidst fragile ecosystems are addressed as planetary challenges unfolding amidst militarism, environmental movements, and liberation struggles. Creative visions infuse a collective pedagogy and 'deschooling' embracing wild thinking, eco-futurist solidarities beyond anthropocentric principles, and a curriculum of multispecies aesthetics.

Anoma Wijewardene

Anupam Roy

Anushka Rustomji

Barbara Sansoni

Fernando Garcia-Dory

Karachi Lajamia (Shahana Rajani & Zahra Malkani)

Krisushananthan Inkarani

Laki Senanayake

Mónica de Miranda

The Initiative for Practices and Visions of Radical Care
with Myriam Mihindou, Tawfiq Sediqi & Elena Sorokina

Nahla Al Tabbaa

Otobong Nkanga

Pankaja Withanachchi + Roshan De Sella

Pathum Dharmarathna

Pushpakanthan Pakkiyarajah

Rakibul Anwar

Ruwangi Amarasinghe

Sarmila Suriyakumar with Pirainila Krishnarajah

Sanod Maharjan

Saodat Ismailova

Shiraz Bayjoo

Spore Initiative with U Yits Ka'an, Colectivo Suumil

Móok'taan, Rafiki Sánchez, and Cecilia Moo

Subas Tamang

Tamarra Jayasundera

Thujiba Vijayalayan

Zihan Karim

way
of the
forest



Anoma Wijewardene

Anoma Wijewardene engages with human impact on the earth system in her paintings and installations conceived over decades. Having trained and worked as a designer and interdisciplinary artist in the United Kingdom and Sri Lanka, her wide-ranging perspectives draw from the realms of science, peace-building, and literature. Her home studio is brimming with creative experiments she meticulously develops, often holding layered narratives and synching with unfolding events. They carry a timeliness and kinetic energy while holding onto a subjective grammar of abstraction and allegory. The artist's use of mirrors, tracing paper, and photography builds complex image fields mediating on social relations, and environmental and geological phenomena. Her father, visionary engineer, agronomist, and technologist Ray Wijewardene's words resound in the artist's engagements interweaving nature and culture: "We need a fresh paradigm towards a permanent truce with Nature in concurrence with her pace and in sync with her rhythm."

Wijewardene's recent drawings and collage works reflect on the poems of Amanda Gorman. In a work titled after Gorman's poem, *We walk into tomorrow, carrying nothing but the world* (2021) there is a lasting acknowledgement of lineages of pain and earthly destruction, while also gesturing to the potential of healing, collective transformation, and recovery. The core elements of water, fire, and wind are active ingredients in shaping her atmospheric compositions, often haunting in their impact as reminders of the devastating imbalances and turmoil of a fractured planet.

Anoma Wijewardene

The singing winds

The Lucid Light

Our body is this earth

This earth our body

Charcoal, pastel and

paint on paper

2012

Courtesy of the artist.

Title excerpted from poem by R C Jirasinghe



Anupam Roy

"The land doesn't belong to us, rather, we belong to the land. Both land and people are finite—bare lives in constant expropriation and infinite accumulation. Historically, the collusion of state and capital has achieved accumulation not only through slaughter but also through clinical and methodical administration," reflects artist and educator Anupam Roy inspired by Saito Kohei's idea of Metabolic Rift.

His visual strategies encompass durational and collective engagement around hinterland territories, especially in and around West Bengal, India. Attending to workers' struggles and agrarian resistance, using print, sculpture, and video zines, he creates 'action-oriented' projects that chronicle modes of dissent and lived experiences in response to dispossession and extractivism that routinely poison lands and waters. Anupam is an active member of Panjeri, an artists' union based in Bengal and part of an international collective called Locust Review.

Sensing the breathing earth in multidimensional time-relations, the artist's multi-part large-scale compositions, videos, and illustrated diaries, *Time is Sloshing* (2023) at Colomboscope hone in on the mechanisation of rural cultivation and corporate land acquisition. Deucha Pachami Movement reflects on ongoing activism against a proposed coal mine in Bengal, while also presenting touchstones on how majoritarianism and nationalist agendas lead to manipulation of the news media in India. In the artist's words, "These works are connected to the precariousness of industrial materials, such as tarpaulin, distemper, and black pigment. The iconography often embraces grotesque depictions of the 'fascist bulldozer' roadways carved into the belly of a herding animal, and land guardians. Veering away from imperial and landowning elites' art and historical renditions of Bengal's landscape, Anupam turns to the vertical format with strokes that divulge jaggedness, distress, and inequity."



Anupam Roy

Time is Sloshing 1

Distemper, acrylic and black
pigment on tarpaulin
2023

Co-commissioned by
Colomboscope 2024 and
Ishara Art Foundation



Anupam Roy

Time is Sloshing 5

Screen print poster
2023

Co-commissioned by
Colomboscope 2024 and
Ishara Art Foundationn

Anushka Rustomji

Observing the morphology and mythological symbolisms surrounding botanical species, Anushka Rustomji takes inspiration from visual representations of legends and cross-cultural sacred practices of East Asia to examine themes of historical and cultural erasure, duality, and transcendence. Elaborating on her series *Flesh and Foliage* (2022-ongoing) Rustomji writes, "The Waq-waq tree with its Gandhara influences and Yakshini (female guardian spirits) inclusions are meant to signify the process of transmutation; to show earthly creations in metamorphosis with the cladding of their cultural form not yet sloughed off." Her hybrid interpretations of female tree spirits confront the everyday entanglement of human infrastructures in the natural world. Across intricate graphite drawings on paper and hand-painted installation works, Rustomji is sensitive to how cultural imperialism and environmental devastation impact the living web of organisms.

The imagined beings foregrounded in this series at Colomboscope relay how expansive cosmologies and devotional practices are transmitted from one generation to the next, and across borderlines, despite ethnic division and rising nationalism in Pakistan. They also centre matrilineal and healing constellations—the wild feminine responding to the ruination of the biosphere. Aerial roots of the banyan tree and thick curved branches echo bodies in motion. *Flesh and Foliage* conceive a 'social habitat' in which human-plant interdependence calls for planetary kinship and restoring the rights of nature.

Anushka Rustomji
Flesh and Foliage (III)
Pencil on paper
2023

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2024







Anushka Rustomji
Waq-waq Tree
Charcoal and pencil on paper
2023

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2024

Barbara Sansoni

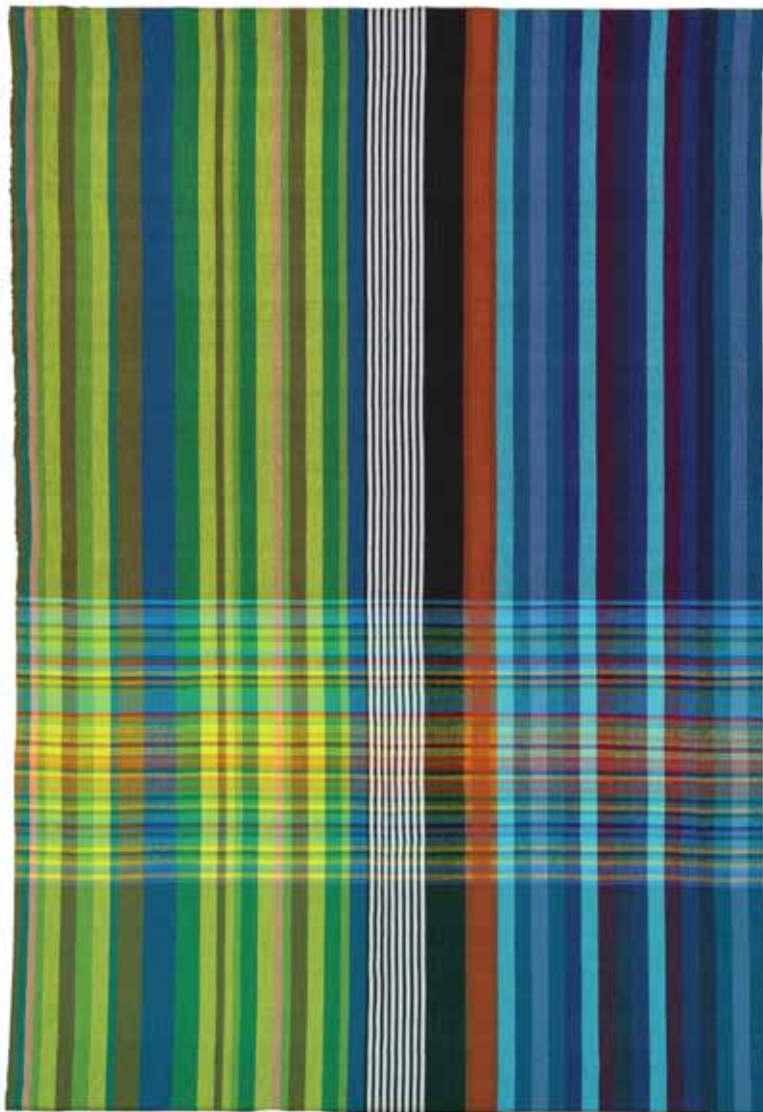
Barbara Sansoni (1928-2022) travelled across the island as she accompanied her father (who was in the Ceylon Civil Service) from the hills of Kandy to Kurunegala, the coasts of Batticaloa, and Mannar. Since childhood, Barbara committed herself to a free-flowing artistic practice, studying the island's built heritage and living traditions, creating drawings and portraiture that mirrored diverse ecologies—the coastline at sunset, mountain slopes at dawn, the shrubs of Jaffna forests, as well as endemic birds and animals in rainforests and the dry zone.

A Renaissance woman, who became known as an illustrator, architectural draughtsman, artist, and writer, Barbara first encountered the challenge of designing fabric for handloom in her thirties. This was the beginning of Barbara's iconic works of modern abstract designs in woven natural yarns. Her books *Missy Fu* and *Tikkiri Banda and Missy Fu in Yala* featuring her stories and illustrations of whimsical characters gained wide popularity. In the books *Vihares & Verandas of Ceylon* (1978) and *Architecture of an Island* (1998) with her husband Dr. R.B. Lewcock, Barbara Sansoni chronicled vernacular domestic, sacred, and colonial architecture.

In an interview with Ellen Dissanayake in 1989, Barbara reflected, "My interest and curiosity is in colour and colour relationships, but my training is in drawing. One cannot draw on a primitive two-pedal loom, so a bird, a tree, a complicated view of a river—whatever has colour excites me. The very limitation of the loom forced me into a deeper and deeper exploration of colour." Never having worked on a loom herself, Barbara's process would begin with poetic, meticulous notes of her keen observations during islandwide journeys which transformed into strata of colour blocks, distinctive gradients, pattern ideas and instructions, which were then translated into weavings in geometric compositions.

For the composition *Peacock Flying in Yala* she stated: "Peacocks flying, wings widely spread, show different colours to peacocks dancing and displaying their tails. Peahens, unlike their mates, have rather dull brown wings and not much tail."

Barbara's designs and textile experiments remain central to the legacy of Barefoot, the flagship store and cultural establishment she founded and pioneered in Colombo and Galle.



Barbara Sansoni
Peacock Flying in Yala
Handspun, hand dyed,
handwoven cotton reddhas
1968

Collection from Barbara Sansoni archive

Fernando García-Dory

Fernando García-Dory has been recovering an abandoned village in the Cantabrian Mountains, Spain, over the last ten years. With experiments and interventions through theoretical reflection and action, this living project sees the transformation of six hectares of woodland covered with eucalyptus. The monoculture eucalyptus plantation, with its roots in the 1960s, had coincided with the beginnings of the environmental movement, the protests against dictatorship, and the rejection of this foreign species that feeds an important paper industry in the region.

With an academic background in Rural Sociology, Art, and Agroecology and through the collaborative platform INLAND-Campo Adentro which García-Dory founded in 2009, he began the research on *ThinkAForest* (2023) in collaboration with the scientific community of the Royal Botanical Garden in Edinburgh, and continued it with local stakeholders in the mountains of Northern Spain, such as neighbours, shepherds and fire brigades, who are redefining their relationship with the plantation system. Part of the project consists of the catalyzation of

communities-of-practice that involve cultural producers and artists who work with the land, generating a mixed agroecosystem that nourishes them. He has also previously engaged with artistic production in twenty-two villages in Spain.

Within a learning-led structure, *ThinkAForest* (2023) García-Dory shares his process of intervening in degenerated forests, expanding the ecology of forest imaginaries, and creating shifts in the paradigm of culture-nature relations. He showcases a series of drawings, research, pottery, digitally rendered distillation vessels, models of biomorphic architectures, and a sound landscape of the interspecies relations within the forest. Expanding his research around capitalist tragedies of replacing old forest ecosystems with non-native cash crop cultivation, he has been in conversation with systems ecologist Dr Ranil Senanayake who specialised in forest restoration in Sri Lanka. Senanayake's pioneering endeavours in analog forestry since the 1980s are foregrounded as a pivotal foray to grapple with unsustainable monoculture of eucalyptus and pine tree species.



Fernando García-Dory

ThinkAForest

Digital image

2023

Project at Colomboscope 2024 is supported by the Embassy of Spain and Acción Cultural Española (AC/E)

Photos courtesy INLAND.

Karachi LaJamia

Shahana Rajani & Zahra Malkani

Ecopedagogy is the guiding principle in Karachi LaJamia's practice, where pedagogy is understood as a mode of connection and collectivity—a practice for building and mending relations with one another and with the environment. Cultural research thus is an ecstatic, mystical, and relational process of encountering and engaging an other—a person, a community, a lake, a cluster of trees.

The nomadic space or anti-institution was founded by artists and educators Shahana Rajani and Zahra Malkani. Since 2015, in collaboration with community and activist organisations across Karachi, they have facilitated a series of site-specific courses and collaborative research projects to explore the intersections of militarism, land accumulation, climate crisis, Indigenous dispossession, and assembling dispersed practices centering Indigenous knowledges and genealogies of resistance.

They write: "The English word Jungle derives its root from the Sanskrit Jangala—dry land. The imaging of dry, arid land as abject, unproductive, and unsafe is an enduring colonial legacy in Karachi; it is also deployed alongside

a systematic drying of Karachi's wetlands through extractivist practices like sand mining and construction into riverbeds and waterways. Countering this colonial narrative, Karachi LaJamia has conducted their ecstatic ecopedagogies in the dry/wet/land that they found instead to be a rich, fertile, and bountiful plain." Their multi-media installation titled *Ecopedagogy* (2023), at Colomboscope revisits and redesigns their almost a decade-long vast archive, which includes experimental publications, video works, scholarly texts, browser-based artwork, syllabi and workbooks, and an expansive archive of fieldwork: audio, video, photographs, and maps.

A space of gathering and collective witnessing, the installation alludes to architectures like community libraries, roadside dhabas, boats, and autaaks situated within landscapes where ancient ecologies and new, violent infrastructures exist side by side.

Image from Karachi LaJamia course
The Gadap Sessions. January 2017.

Co-commissioned by Colomboscope 2024
and Rockbund Art Museum

Courtesy of Karachi LaJamia



Exhausted Geographies II,
a publication by Shahana Rajani, Zahra Malkani & Abeera Kamran. 2018.
Courtesy Abeera Kamran



Krisushananthan Inkaran

"The trees began to look like ghosts, and I spent the night time worshipping clan deities." The forests of Northern Sri Lanka are invoked as witnesses of historical violence, wartime displacement, and resistance in the suite of sculptures by Krisushananthan Inkaran. Having observed the changing contours of the 'Vanni' from dawn to dusk and in pitch darkness, Inkaran recalls these vast forestlands as inscribed by Tamil memory cultures. Deploying rusty car and motorcycle parts, used clothing, CDs, sacred threads, and carved wood, his sculptures operate as an archaeology of media and sensory experience. Drawing on visions from his forced flight and search for safe passage at the height of civil war from Mannar to Mullivaikkal, the artist recalls the physical contours of the landscape, "rough gravel paths, dry climate, and thorny vines," but also the "smell of the forest" and the "impossibility to identify who was who."

Surrounded by gunfire and cross-fighting in the Vanni led Inkaran to live out fugitive days and nights on scarce nourishment: "eating foraged

and dry foods every few days and obtaining water from a puddle in the dry riverbed." The works in *Way of the Forest* reflect on mnemonic cycles and traumatic injury that carve a jagged inquiry into the viciousness of war, ethnic persecution, and tenuous refuge found in a canopied geography. Through the convergence of wood and mud elements as well as an alchemical use of industrial ruins in these works titled *Vilaththikkulam* and *Papapettai* (2023), Inkaran reflects on the act of sculpting as an affective mode to reunite shattered landscapes; offer medicine to old wounds; and foreground hidden facets of the forest sphere as bearing the whispers of truth-telling, communal dreaming, and the restless will to survive despite systemic brute force.

Krisushananthan Inkaran
Untitled

Wood, motorbike parts, wheelchair wheel,
lamp, cutting wheel, speaker, spring,
motorbike wheel, sand & steel
2023

Commissioned by
Colomboscope 2024





Krisushanathan Inkaran
Untitled
Motorbike parts ,
wood, table fan parts,
silicone gun, nails,
mousetrap, steel, soil
2023

Commissioned by
Colomboscope 2024

Krisushananthan Inkaran

Untitled

Motorbike exhaust pipe, spoon,
thread, wood, motorbike chain wheel,
nail, barbed wire, gravel soil
2023

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2024



Laki Senanayake

Laki Senanayake (1937-2021), known for his unorthodox and exuberant approach to living, is a beloved sculptor, painter, landscape designer, and inventor. He was amongst the post-independence generation of artists who practised radical agency towards creative endeavours beyond disciplinary bounds. He may be remembered listening to Stockhausen and Stravinsky on an outdoor sound system, seated with binoculars and mimetically whistling back to birds at sundown from his home studio in Diyabubula—a jungle hideaway that was his longest organic endeavour. Hearing owls screeching at night while spending time in the wilderness away from Colombo city, his early fear of that creature turned into an absorbed fascination and rigorous study of the owl, conceived by him in nearly every medium, colour, and scale imaginable.

In 1976, when Laki was commissioned to design Sri Lanka's currency notes, he was an unconventional choice. His wide-ranging practice, including botanical drawings, murals, landscaping, and outstanding projects such as a coconut palm chandelier at the country's parliament designed by architect Geoffrey Bawa reveal a deep alignment with the island's environmental geography. The suite of currency note designs was a significant break from the usual emblems representing

political portraiture, majoritarian culture, and heritage monuments. Laki's extensive research spanned weeks-long field trips to the Peradeniya and Hakgala Botanical Gardens, to the Sinharaja Forest, and significant study of reference materials in Ismeth Raheem's extensive collection of natural history books.

The artist deliberately chose to portray only endemic species of flora and fauna in their respective regional habitats, annotating each with its scientific name. After making dozens of sketches, the watercolour series of 38 unique species, resulted in 12 designs for notes of Rs 2, 5, 10, 50, and 100.

On Laki's request, the back of the notes was reconfigured in portrait format, a feature which has been adopted since. In one of the developments of the Rs 50 note, within a gold border, in moonlight, roost a pair of birds, the Ceylon spurfowl (*Galloperdix bicalcarata*), with a Pinum Katussa, the Ceylon kangaroo lizard (*Otocryptis weigmanni*).

While these financial notes were in circulation for less than a couple of years, one of the designs dedicated to his daughter Mintaka was featured on the cover of a volume on Paper Currencies of the World.



Laki Senanayake
50 Rupee Note
1979

Pair of birds, the Ceylon Spurfowl (*galloperdix bicalcarata*), set off against a scenic background containing an Ayurvedic Diya Na tree, or the ironwood (*mesuathwaitesii*) and flowers, the Vesak orchid (*dendrobiummccarthiae*)

Courtesy of the Sansoni collection and the artist's estate

The Initiative for Practices and Visions of Radical Care with Myriam Mihindou, Tawfiq Sediqi and Elena Sorokina

Myriam Mihindou delves into languages, energies, histories, landscapes, bodies, and materials, injecting them into her performances, actions, rituals, and sculptures. Her work is often curative, shamanistic and artistic in equal measures.

This performance-photography was conceived as a test of the artist's body's capacity to transcend trauma or injury and to heal. The black honey is used here as a mythical substance of healing known in different ancestral cultures including Gabon, where Myriam Mihindou grew up. Her community in Gabon developed a deeply interconnected living with the primary forest as a space of knowledge, sensing an ongoing interaction with the chain of the living: the water, the air, the sea, the bacteria, the plants, the trees, the cork, the animals, the moon, and the stars.

The performance *Black Honey Manifesto or I am not a Foreigner in the Forest* (2023) was developed in collaboration with the Initiative of Practices and Visions of Radical Care, based in Paris. It started as a space of reflection on possible material and immaterial connections and translations between Greater Paris—one of the most densely urbanised

areas on Earth—and Colomboscope's preoccupations with the forest as a realm of multi-species sustenance, regeneration, and networked learning. In this context, the linguistic universe created by Ursula Le Guin in *The Word for World is Forest* served as an inspiration for the project. Mihindou's performance is also searching for language that reflects a sophisticated, non-extractive, sensitive, and caring relationship with the forest.

A series of photographs of the performance was taken by Tawfiq Sediqi, journalist and war photographer from Afghanistan residing in France since the Taliban takeover in 2021. As a member of the Initiative of Practices and Visions of Radical Care, he participates in the collective work of researching the interdependencies that constitute the diasporic 'locality' of Greater Paris.

The Initiative for Practices and Visions of Radical Care, founded in 2020 in Ile de France, is a diverse group of practitioners of arts, crafts, healing, and therapy, its members coming from vastly spread geographies. Based on friendships as well as professional bonds, the Initiative constitutes an ecosystem and a space for new modes of sustainable institutionalism.



Myriam Mihindou
Black Honey Manifesto
or I am not a Foreigner in the Forest
Performance & photographic series
2023

Performance developed in collaboration with the Initiative of Practices and Visions of Radical Care, Paris. Performance photographed by Tawfiq Sediqi.

Project at Colomboscope 2024 is supported by Alliance Française and the French Embassy to Sri Lanka and the Maldives



Black Honey Manifesto or I am not a Foreigner in the Forest

Myriam Mihindou

*Developed in collaboration with the Initiative of Practices and Visions of Radical Care, Paris.
Performance photographed by Tawfiq Sediqi. Translated by Elena Sorokina.*

I am the body of the forest.

I am part of an ecosystem—I interact with the chain of the living: the water, the air, the sea, the bacteria, the plants, the trees, the cork, the animals, the moon, and the stars.

I am a woman of the forest.

My body carries its ancient memory. Even living in the city today, I live with the few trees and birds around me, I take care of them. I see them and they see me.

My body stays true to the teachings of the old and vivid memories of the forest. I am wearing a mask of the most ancient people of our primary forests, the pharmacopoeia people.

The forest preserves our intuition and this intuition constitutes a consciousness, it allows to foresee and to open up visions. These visions are like a granary for the future. If humans lose their intuition, they would become limited, they will not

be able to project themselves into the future, to propose ideas, to dream, to desire... They would become vulnerable prey to the system.

Matter and material might seem ordinary. And yet, we are taken away from them as we are taken away from spirituality. Spirituality means our human spirit immersing in the moving matter of the world. Spirituality means us humans living with the energy of all things. Receiving, welcoming with humility the fundamental teachings of the living, its most infinitesimal memories. Spirituality is arborescence—like a tree deploying its branches.

The respect of the matter compels us to be careful, to deny and to contest if need be, because matter is a living thing. Our bodies interlace with the vital matter of the world, it is beautiful and powerful, it transforms us transforming itself. We need the primary matter to exist, we need all its virtues and vigour.

In equatorial Africa for example, the nomad pygmée peoples collect the black honey on the top of the great canopy of the primary forest. This rich honey is the major healing substance for the people.

The honey covering my face comes from this natural forest pharmacie. It is produced by the bees who forage the flowers, concentrating organic medicinal substances, subtle and spiritual themselves. The bees forage a multiplicity of plants which have never been tampered with by humans. And they do it so well, that when we eat this honey, our body reconnects with the gift of self-healing. Our body reconnects with our ancestor plants and with the world of the insects. With the old cellular memories.

Genetically transformed plants do not have this power any more, they lose the power of healing and we have to preserve the power of plants, rivers, air, the organic and non-organic for all of us. This is our commons, our heritage.

Long ago, we considered trees and insects as peoples, we talked about the people of trees, the people of insects. In ancient Egypt, some insects were buried with humans, for example, small beetles, because the Egyptians recognised the precious collaboration connecting us, humans, to the smallest of the insects and to the greatest of the ecological processes. They had the intelligence to read and understand other intelligences.

Today, we speak about the economy of trees, instead of speaking about trees as our antennas to the cosmos, as the sources of our rivers, our primordial healing shadow protecting our bodies in constant change and growth.

The forest loves silence because it leaves room for all vibratory expressions. It is in the silence of the forest that we hear the plant body vibrate, dropping its seeds to remind us that it is our ally, our ancestor, our temple of benevolence, our indispensable source of intelligence with all the intelligences present.

The forest does not belong to us, it only belongs to itself and to those who participate in its transformation. When we talk about the forest we must whisper and even avoid naming it. The forest is not a zoo, and what we call 'landscape' doesn't exist. What exists is this unbreakable bond of closeness, benevolence, and love for all these matters of life and healing. We must not forget this covenant of perpetual rebirth.

I wear this mask of honey like a manifesto, to honour the people of trees, the people of insects, and the intelligence carried by their universities of the living.

It is near the big Teva tree that we bury our ancestors, where the bees come to make their hives. They keep reminding us that the holy substance of honey forms a sediment from which our relationship with the Goddess of Bees can unfold, and the safeguard of humanity can begin its flow.

Mónica de Miranda

Mónica de Miranda's photography and filmic works relay experiences of Afrodiasporic lives, resistance struggles in Africa, as well as Europe's coloniality, not only as a long past project but also via its ongoing projects of erasure and displacement. By composing lyrical scripts and location research that interweave documentary and fiction, the Portuguese/Angolan cultural practitioner's oeuvre centralises ecologies of care and liberation stories through a black feminist lens.

De Miranda mediates over island geographies as realms of fugitivity, but also as unusual contact zones for collective dreaming, urging for deeper reckoning with ecological trauma and political violence. She has created a sonic ensemble that fuses echoes of a 1961 international meeting of liberation movements of the Portuguese colonies in Casablanca, Morocco, with the writing around agronomic issues in Portugal and Guinea-Bissau by Amílcar Cabral, pan-African scientist and visionary leader of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands (PAIGC).

The photographic work *Three Sisters* (2022) on view in *Way of the Forest*, from the project *Pathway of the Stars*, foregrounds an ex-combatant of the Angolan struggle for liberation as she travels to the banks of the Kwanza River, the birthplace of the Ndongo kingdom, a pre-colonial African tributary state of the Kongo kingdom. Twins and triplets frequently appear, passing on intergenerational matrilineal wisdom and revolutionary agency, and knot their braids in a show of conjoined tenderness. A segment from the larger project *Mirages and Deep Time* (2022) dwells on geologic memory, plantation landscapes, and soil as an agent of history.

De Miranda is a co-founder of Hangar, an art and research centre in Lisbon that draws on the city's cultural history and fosters collaboration among cultural producers from the Global South.

Mónica de Miranda
Tide

Inkjet print on cotton paper superposed
on *Deep Green* Inkjet vinyl print
2022

Courtesy of the artist



Mónica de Miranda

Mirror and mirages

Wood, wheels, mirrors, vinyl print
2022

Courtesy of the artist





Mónica de Miranda

Three sisters

Inkjet prints on cotton paper

2022

Courtesy of the artist



Nahla al Tabbaa

Nahla Al Tabbaa dwells on the alchemical relations between organic and inorganic matter in her artistic processes taking shape in varied settings including the kitchen, public parks, and publishing. Learning about medicinal herbs, 'rewilding' as a culinary method, and mountain and desert-based foraging practices, she observes how spiritual ecology becomes embedded in everyday living and urban place-making. Al Tabbaa is also a culinary navigator, podcast host, and ethnographer.

I Sit Under Your Shade (2021-22) is a series of gestural charcoal drawings first exhibited at 421 in Abu Dhabi. She uses the scroll to chart enduring observation of trees responding to the sun's luminosity, shadow spaces, and light temperature. Al Tabbaa equally reflects on conditions of labour and leisure, as well as the eclipsed temporality of pandemic-driven isolation. Choosing to spend time under a tree during her six-month residency at Salama Bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship (SEAF) and with a fruit tree in Amman, Jordan, planted by her grandmother

and uncles in the 1970s, this iterative series connects with fauna as a sort of breathing sundial.

Nahla Al Tabbaa will conduct workshops at Colomboscope that enliven the crossroads between urban foraging, alchemy, and plant remedies. Participants will meet at Viharamahadevi Park in the city centre to learn from each other about traditional remedies, and create herbal, medicinal concoctions using locally available plants through processes including fermentation. She describes the process as part explorative, part culinary, part fictional writing. The discoveries and results will culminate into an incantation-like recipe book and a remedial spread.

Nahla Al Tabbaa
Preparing for a supper club
2020

Project and workshop at Colomboscope
2024 is supported by 421

Courtesy of Kathleen Hoare

- Zaatar bread
- Beetroot Carpaccio + wild rocket + pistachios
- stuffed peppers
- the Zaama + dried lime oven baked pepper all the chains
- ~~leek soup~~ Spring onion soup SUN baked dip + carpaccio + dip
- Dried green tomatoes like in Gilni MON ham + onion + carrot + green onion
- beetroot moutabbal with Kubbeh TUE hot soup + make Zaatar bread
- purple Spinach like in Bangladesh WED bread
- hawissa, tahini, spring onion THUR tomatoes
- mint, parsley, lemon FRI Mo

Drying

onion skins
purple spring
beetroot

carpaccio

stuffed peppers

potatoes



Otobong Nkanga

"(...) I remember as a child being in Nigeria, there were certain stories about certain trees you do not cut. There are stories about certain things that you're not meant to eat because where you come from you are not meant to eat that, because it is your totem and eating that will affect your energy."

Otobong Nkanga is absorbed with studying processes of wounding and restorative care of the earth system. Through sensorial modes of visual and performative storytelling she plots humankind's relations to the commodification of planetary resources, thereby chronicling the history of capital and colonial modernity as a terrain of constant displacement. Her long-term projects engage in the circulation, extraction, and refinement of organic substances such as indigo, copper, cocoa, and rare earth minerals. With emphasis on the African world and diasporic subjecthood, Nkanga's drawings, acoustic environments, and multi-part installations place the body as a central witness to global economic transactions and political currents that determine value, mercantile networks, and supply chains.

Teju Cole writes in response to the artists' practice, "The fissuring and fracturing of the earth are

deconstructive processes. But beyond them lies facture, construction. We mine, and build." Nkanga elaborates on mineralized terrains as part of the technological apparatus at the core of our everyday aesthetics, of warfare, enslaved labour, and as part of our beauty rituals—in their glimmer, rupture, and perpetual enticement even the necropolitical rise of toxicity doesn't beat down the thirst. Conflating drawings from *Intimate Series* (2021) and the artists' haiku-like poems in a new installation at Colomboscope, Nkanga extends her vision of a support structure that intertwines affective imprints of ecological grief and multispecies kinship. Sessions from the Iko podcast conceived with curator Sandrine Honliasso extend our ears to a plurality of voices summoning earth guardianship and songlines of interdependency.

Otobong Nkanga
The Reset
Acrylic on paper
2021

Courtesy of the artist.

Project at Colomboscope 2024 is supported by KIOSK
(Departement Cultuur, Jeugd & Media, Belgium)



Pankaja Withanachchi & Roshan De Selfa

Inspired by cross-disciplinary exchange, principles of forest conservation, and the pop culture mythology around human-nature coexistence, *Ecophora* (2023) is a site-specific installation, conceived by Pankaja Withanachchi and Roshan De Selfa. The installation uses intricate laser-cut patterns of native Sri Lankan flora with a moving spectrum of light to mimic Komorebi (a Japanese word, pronounced *kō-mō-leh-bē*, translating to 'sunlight filtering through trees'), a phenomenon which is not only experienced as a visual interplay but also understood as a philosophy of experiencing life with mindfulness. Mimicking the rhythm fields in a rainforest, viewers activate sensors to witness the soft movement of shadows and a transforming gradient of luminosity.

Withanachchi and De Selfa are deeply interested in human behaviour and its interaction with technology. *Ecophora* (2023) was initially conceptualized when they tried to find ways to modify the modern-day Vesak Thorana—large multi-coloured LED boards modelled

on ancient gateways, with symbols from cultural and mythological stories displayed in public spaces during religious festivities in Sri Lanka. Trained as a computer engineer, Withanachchi sees his role as an experimentalist to create interactive and immersive experiences at the intersection of arts and technology. As a member of TechArtICT, a collective of multidisciplinary creatives, he has installed several exhibitions since 2022. De Selfa, a concept artist and illustrator, explores the juxtaposition of culture and myth against futuristic philosophies and emerging technology responsive to the isle's socio-political landscape.

Pankaja Withanachchi, Roshan De Selfa
Ecophora
Experiments with shadow projectors
2023

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2024,
supported by Goethe-Institut, Sri Lanka



Pathum Dharmarathna

Pathum Dharmarathna's first performance stages comprised the treetops and giant waterfalls of his village in the Sabaragamuwa Province of Sri Lanka, a region known to extend from the Kandyan kingdom's dance tradition, while maintaining unique characteristics of chants, costumes, and drumming rhythms. After graduating from the University of the Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo, where he specialized in ballet and contemporary dance, Dharmarathna went on to train at the Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts in India. His practice includes martial arts, experimental theatre, and Kandyan dance. Among a wide range of mentors, he worked closely with dancer choreographer Venuri Perera for nearly a decade.

Having experienced the economic challenges of maintaining a career as a professional dancer, Dharmarathna enrolled at the Sri Lanka Air Force during the pandemic for over two years. He received combat training and instructed the Air Force dance group in Kalaripayattu and yoga. This conflicted experience involving a strict disciplinary regime and encounter with the inner life of armed forces and forced

performativity has left a fundamental impact on the artist. Since he resigned, his movement research continues to investigate the impact of military protocols and hierarchical order on the nervous system and physical contours of a dancing body.

The newly commissioned dance film *Bhawana* (2023) is anchored in a hillside forest at the edge of the Ganthuna village in Kegalle. The artist's village ecology and childhood memory landscape is foregrounded as a dense entwinement between rock faces, wind currents, a cavernous tree trunk, and mighty water bodies. Filmed by Yashoda Suriyapperuma with sound design including field recordings by sound artist Dinelka Liyanage, this work produces a cine-geography tapping into the forest waterfalls at the end of the monsoon season as an energy field.

Pathum Dharmarathna
Bhawana
Performance research

Co-commissioned by Colomboscope 2024
and Rockbund Art Museum

Photo by Prawuda Buwanwka



Pushpakanthan Pakkiyarajah

The land is a porous and resolute witness to historical legacies of exodus, ethnic cleansing, and a toxic present under the reign of human greed. As a shared horizon of joy and suffering, life and death, Batticaloa-based artist and educator Pushpakanthan Pakkiyarajah turns to terra firma as materiality and inspiration, summoning granular notions of belonging, collective memory keeping, resuscitation, and micro observation as commoning.

Pakkiyarajah considers how civil war has disrupted the environmental rights of living species, how landmines have devastated the soil, and how the impact of the ongoing economic crisis has accelerated deforestation. His large-scale installations and sound work *Hidden Mycelium in a Wounded Land I* and *Hidden Mycelium in a Wounded Land II* (2023) bring together drawing, an acoustic environment, and sculpture. He states, "The material investigations I take up are in contrast to the populist imagination of the island, knowing well that it can also be a terrifying place, because of what is often hidden, disappeared, and camouflaged. So, rather than focusing on pristine scenes, easily perceived on the surface, it is the unseen landscape that interests me more."

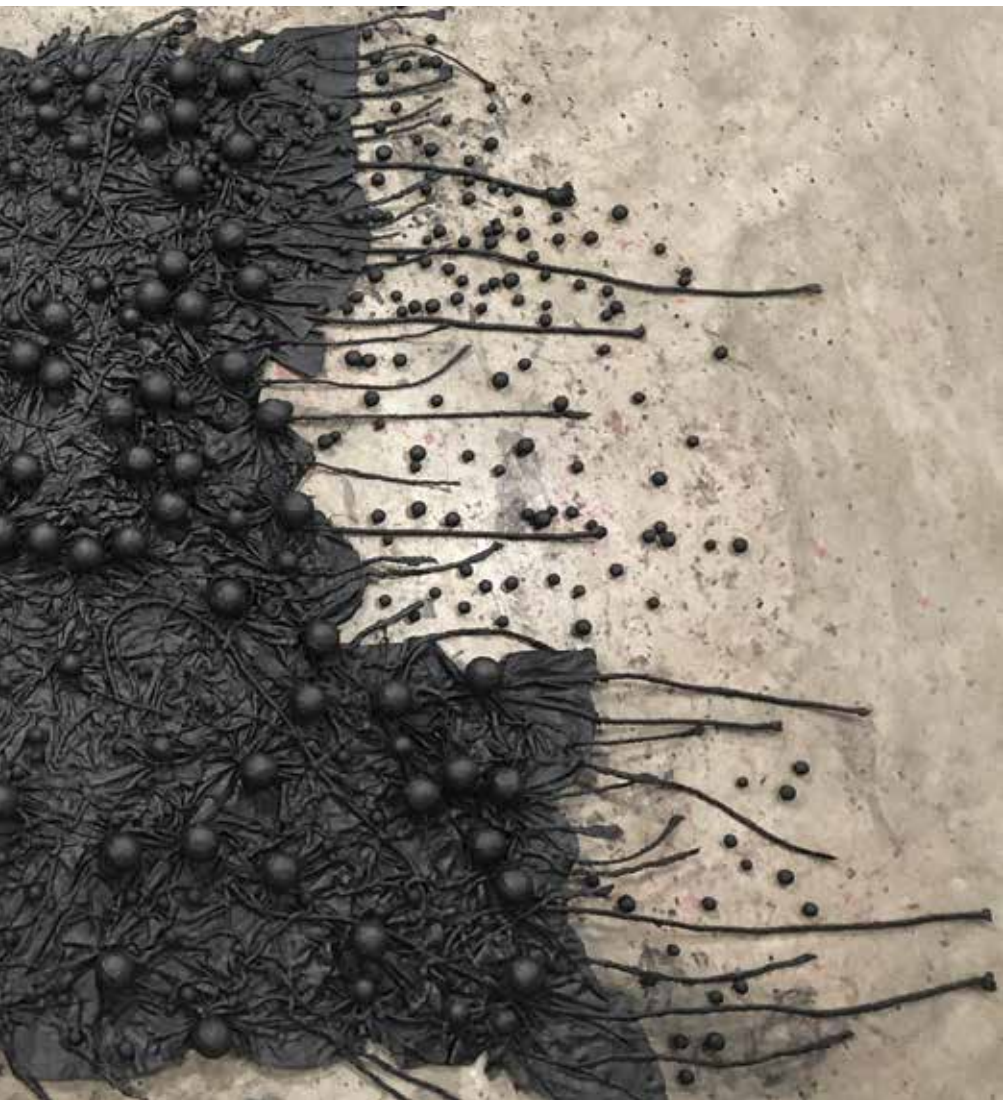
Through a mycelium-based process and organic residues convening as dark matter, Pakkiyarajah's recent sculptures reflect on charred landscapes, decomposing bodies, cycles of intergenerational trauma as well as the restorative potential of mycorrhizal networks that keep forest systems alive. The soundscape includes acoustic recordings made in Batticaloa of sung dedications and the beats of Udukku (small drum) invoking goddess Pattini, a deification of Kannagi worshipped by Tamil communities in Sri Lanka and Southern India as well as Sinhalese believers. Pakkiyarajah also records Sufi recitals and water bodies, producing a sonic river connecting multi-faith traditions of the lagoon landscape of his home terrain.

Pushpakanthan Pakkiyarajah
Hidden Mycelium in a wounded land II
Mixed media installation with sound
2022

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2024







Pushpakanthan Pakkiyarajah
Hidden Mycelium in a wounded land I
Mixed media installation with sound
2022

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2024

Rakibul Anwar

Rakibul Anwar's early years were spent in the quiet suburbs of Netrokona and Sylhet in Bangladesh. These terrains became a counterpoint to his life in Dhaka, full of rambling buildings, informal flows of daily labour, festivities, hartals and riverine crossings. His approach to drawing shifts between a 'fly on the wall' approach and more surrealist and dramatic compositions that reveal affective portraits of workers' lives, overburdened architectures, internal migration, and offer a miniature index of material culture.

In 2021, the artist relocated to Banasree, a burgeoning residential enclave in Dhaka City. The neighbourhood as microcosmos is centred in his recent work—he meticulously documents daily observations through sketches and photographs during slow wanders. For him, Banasree embodies a distinctive melange of urban sophistication, real estate greed, and rural nostalgia. In *Way of the Forest*, Rakibul's suite of drawings investigates the gradual metamorphosis of this once-verdant urban sector and its present

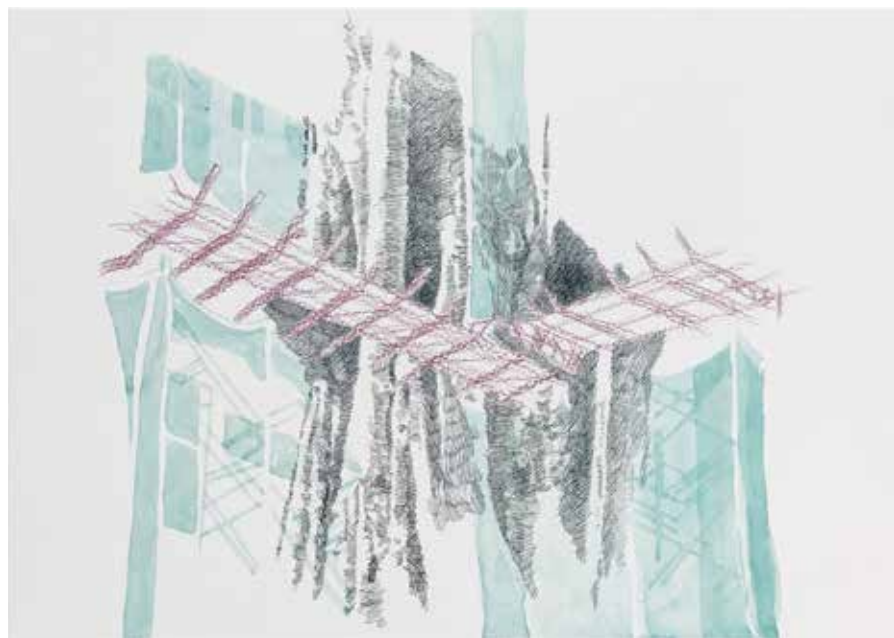
deteriorating condition, wherein human dwelling encroaches upon what was once nature's province. As metropolitan expansion fuels building blocks to take over where marshlands and paddy fields stood, the artist considers precariousness of city living between the spiralling demand for affordable housing and cohabiting with agrarian lands and water bodies. His vantage into mixed ecologies at the fringes of city centres underscores the pressing need for sustainable urban planning. Anwar's sketches made outdoors and on-site, then detailed in the studio, stitch visual narratives in gestural lines—conflating memory spaces, charting people's daily rhythms and the fauna of Banasree.

Rakibul Anwar
Banashree Series
Watercolor, pen & colour pencil
on archival paper
2023

Co-commissioned by Colomscope
2024 and Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation.
Additional support from
Goethe-Institut Bangladesh







Ruwangi Amarasinghe

Artist and illustrator Ruwangi Amarasinghe spends hours immersed in her home studio on the south coast of Sri Lanka, composing chimerical and eerie creatures that inhabit otherworldly environments, morphing characters from a non-stop fantastical cinema and femme residents at edges of dream spaces. She works as head illustrator of Fold Media Collective and creative designer for Smoke & Bitters. These engagements and her solo practice have led to artworks for posters, children's books, city maps, music records, magazines, textiles, and spatial design. Amarasinghe has composed murals across the island, including more recently at SNAFU, a venue of this Colomboscope edition. Science fiction and speculative storytelling bear a recurring presence across her oeuvre and are particularly dramatised through the ongoing digital story series *The Space Motel*, which explores the strange and absorbing lives of celestial inhabitants with earthly problems.

In her large-scale painting *Reverence: to the Unspeaking* (2023) envisioned for Way of the Forest, the artist writes, "In an imagined dimension similar to ours, travellers from villages surrounding a forest arrive at the dense heart of it to lay their offerings, to pray in silent journey, with reverence to the spirit of the all giving entity that is within." The forest is conceived as a life source blessing with fruit, shade, and clean air. Offerings are made by the travellers in the form of personal tokens and crafted wares. And it is here that those who have departed are remembered and rekindled as animate presences. Yet, from darker recesses a sinister energy brews as Amarasinghe outlines the cavernous spread of greed and corrupt forces that set foot to plunder, scavenge, and suffocate the woods.

Ruwangi Amarasinghe
Demon Parade
Acrylic & mixed media on canvas
2021

Courtesy of the artist.







Ruwangi Amarasinghe
Reverence to the Unspeaking
2023

Commissioned by
Colomboscope 2024

Sanod Maharajan

Sanod Maharjan is from Tistung, one of the earliest settlements on the outskirts of the Kathmandu Valley. Until 1974, Tistung served as a pivotal trade route connecting Kathmandu to the southern plains of Nepal. After the construction of a new highway, traffic was diverted from the town, its economy eventually shifted, and many people moved out.

The inhabitants of Tistung hold a deep reverence for the Chhun forest spirit, whom they regard as their guardian. Rituals are seasonally performed to these spirits to ensure that the rules of the forest are respected and harmonious equilibrium with the environment is maintained. It is believed that in doing so cattle are protected, wild animals keep their distance from farms, and a safe passage is ensured for local residents. Some rituals still survive more out of habit than need, and permission is sought for hunts even though the remnants of the jungle no longer suffice as hunting grounds. The sites where the Chhuns are worshipped have also been on a decline with only

seven active spaces. Some rituals are even performed in the absence of a designated shrine.

The artist who left his village as a child still holds a deep connection to his land. He often visits Tistung to observe and converse with the forest landscape while meeting his family and community. During these trips, he takes small canvases and boards to record these sites through impromptu field-based paintings and drawings. His method results in reflections that are imbued with nostalgia, melancholia, and reverence for a place that is subject to cycles of change and inertia. These works are witness to the shifts in Tistung's nature as well as the complexity of belonging in it, for seemingly dislocated peoples and spirits.



Sanod Maharajan
Oil on canvas
2021



Sanod Maharajan
Oil on canvas
2021

Collection of Shaili Malla



Sanod Maharajan
Maun yaad
Oil on wood panel
2019

Saodat Ismailova

Saodat Ismailova is a leading voice within the first generation of Central Asian artists to come of age in the post-Soviet era. She investigates the historically complex and layered culture of her region, at the crossroads of diverse material histories and migratory legacies, skillfully interweaving myths, ritual, and dreams within the tapestry of everyday life. The tumultuous socio-political trajectory of this region looms in the background, as successive regimes have led to the erosion of languages, traditions, and the natural environment. Ismailova acknowledges these losses, yet her work primarily serves as a tribute to the spiritually rich world of porous terrains and challenges an imperial vision of Eurasia.

In 2020, Ismailova initiated the educational program CCA Lab and Tashkent Film Encounters at the Center for Contemporary Arts, Tashkent. The following year she established the research group Davra, dedicated to studying, documenting, and disseminating Central Asian culture and knowledge.

Arslanbob (2023) presents fragments of enduring research that crisscross animate and inanimate cosmologies. It relays Ismailova's first vivid impressions of the Arslanbob forest, a huge reservoir of walnut trees that at times release hallucinogenic gases. This forest is a place with porous borders, mainly populated by Uzbeks but located in Kyrgyzstan. It is a space embroiled in religious and political friction. The name of the Arslanbob forest in its literal translation means 'the door of the tiger', a totemic animal in the imagination of the people of Central Asia, elaborated in her epistolary portrait *The Haunted* (2017). The artist notes, "This research aims to present itself as a performative film, *A seed under a tongue* (2023-ongoing) that will unfold ancestral, historical, hallucinatory memories of the relict forest."

Saodat Ismailova

Arslanbob, 2023

Three screen video, 16 mins

A first encounter video with
the Arslanbob forest.

With the support of
the Magnum Foundation



Sarmila Suriyakumar with Pirainila Krishnarajah

Visual artist Sarmila Suriyakumar comes from a lineage of wood carving artists living in the Thirunelveli town in Jaffna. This area is home to over a thousand families who practice woodcraft over generations. Yet, it is rare for a woman to apprentice and master the skills that are transferred to male woodcarvers as part of a familial transfer of vocabulary.

While studying in Batticaloa, Suriyakumar translated the lexicon of motifs she had learned into contemporary processes of drawing and sculpture. In her project for *Way of the Forest*, for the first time, she returns to wood carving to create two large-scale series *Bond and Touch of the Knots* (2023) made over several months. Using teak and neem wood primarily, the artist creates hybrid entanglements of creatures frequently imaged in traditional panels such as the dragon (Yazhi), turning, however, to lesser-known stories, myths, and kinships. In these works, she also recalls how coins, cradles, and cloths are tied to sacred trees interior to Kovils to pray for remedy, for maternity, to recall the dead and disappeared.

In conversation with the cultural space, Kālam in Jaffa, her process opened into a research inquiry together with Jaffna-based photographer Pirainila Krishnarajah. Suriyakumar and Krishnarajah consider the role of tree worship, how trees are felled in synch with ritual protocols of the lunar calendar and village deities connected to particular species of flora and fauna. Likewise, ornately patterned doors and chariot-like vehicles (vahana) designed to carry gods and goddesses serve as a reference for the artists' inquiry into Tamil artisanal memory and devotional craft forms. Krishnarajah has photographed in the workshop and sculpture gallery of Arumugam Chitpalayam, established in 1964 by the lineage with Arumugam Achari, as well as held interviews with master teachers of this tradition.



Sarmila Sooriyakumar
Bond
Teak
2023

Commissioned by
Colomboscope 2024

Shiraz Bayjoo

An attunement to the oceanic horizon as a passageway of human, botanical, and material culture and economic histories lies at the core of Shiraz Bayjoo's artistic world. He weaves together a range of creative genres in his projects from photography and film to textile, painting, installation, and collaborative performance. His research-led approach is archipelagic as he focuses on island geographies such as Mauritius, Madagascar, and the United Kingdom—and their imprints within public and familial archives. His practice expands over a decade, charting complex visual narratives that arrive as multimedia ensembles destabilising imperial records, as well as hegemonic chronicles of occupation, division, and exploitation. Bayjoo listens for buried archives that often lie far beyond the museum, traversing graveyards, ruins, literary texts, court records and botanical gardens. To borrow a term from poet and thinker Kamau Brathwaite, his pursuit carries on the 'tidalectics' of remembrance, bearing witness to creole formations, beliefs, and rhythms.

Seeds, pods and shells sit on wooden altars as memorials of survival and resistance in maroon settlements. Shiraz Bayjoo notes, "The work *Botanical Shrines* (2023), focuses on the network of botanical gardens, which evolved with every diminishing moment of the indigenous forests they were extracted from. In Mauritius its forest interior rapidly vanished in the 17th-18th Century, making way for the plantation, and reducing the sanctuary afforded to the maroons who escaped them. We, the descendants of the communities, through the misery of slavery and indenture, displaced to these tranquil islands, shared it all too briefly with the true indigenous of our islands, the Dodo, the Blue Parrot, the Red Wren, the Hibiscus *Fragilis*, or the Lonely Palm who bore the first irrevocable erasure."

Shiraz Bayjoo

Sambo Series Chi Lakaz 2

Sapele wood, archive print, card, coral stone
2021

Project at Colomboscope is supported by
British Council (Biennials Connect Grant)
and Jhaveri Contemporary

Courtesy of the artist







Shiraz Bayjoo
Pu Travers Sa Dilo
(To cross this water)
Dye Sublimation
print on canvas
2023

Courtesy of the artist

Subas Tamang

Subas Tamang comes from a family of traditional stone carvers and has a shaman ancestor who used woodblock prints for medicinal purposes. He incorporates carvings, engravings, diverse printmaking techniques, and oral knowledge in his artistic practice to reclaim the often erased history of the Tamang community. During the 19th Century in Nepal, the Tamang people were subjected to extensive servitude and coerced into providing corvée labour to the state and its representatives. This involved forced, unpaid work in portering, paper manufacturing, gunpowder production, and fruit farming, among other tasks.

Within Tamang society, plants serve multifaceted roles, encompassing nourishment, textile production, rituals, and medicine. In this work, the artist revisits his ancestral lands and researches Tamang origin stories alongside the particular relationship this community holds with plant life. The 'Tamja' Fern in the Tamang language is more than just a physical entity; it is also a symbol deeply rooted in Tamang cosmology. It is believed to be one of the chosen plants that

emerge as a part of the cyclical process of creation. As the Earth undergoes its circuits of destruction and rebirth, the Tamja is destined to re-emerge and flourish, embodying resilience and the looped nature of existence. In the exploration of fauna and their intricate connections with Indigenous wisdom, intriguing potentialities unfold to reinterpret narratives of the past and to transcend conventional reliance on textual and oral records.

Subas Tamang

Song of Origin

Woodcut print on Nepali paper,
ko mendo (*Oroxylum Indicum*)

2022

Courtesy of the artist

Co-commissioned by Colomboscope 2024
and Art Jameel. Additional support by
Goethe-Institut New Delhi



SPORE INITIATIVE

with Colectivo Suumil Móokt'aan,
U Yits Ka'an, Rafiki Sánchez,
and Cecilia Moo

Kuxaán Súum, which translates into English as 'the living rope', is the title of a Maya prophecy that is told to us by Atilano A. Ceballos Loeza, one of the founders of U Yits Ka'an, an agroecological school located in Maní on the Yucatán Peninsula. In this version of the story, a sacred rope that connected peoples, lands, skies, and the underworld was violently hacked into pieces by Western colonizers. However, in its destruction lies also the promise of repair: the fragmented rope awaits reknitting by Maya Peoples through collective and regenerative practices of care.

Stories can only take shape and be renewed, reinterpreted, and reinvented by the people who keep them alive and hand them down from one generation to the next. For KUXAÁN SÚUM, the living rope in Berlin, Spore Initiative invited contributors living and working on the Yucatán Peninsula to speak from different positions and vantage points to this story and to

thereby reference, either directly or through their living practice, their relation to the territories in which the story takes place. Juxtaposed are these testimonies with historical elements that visualize a perception of the land merely as a resource.

With Adriana Otero Puerto, Alberto Guerra, Atilano A. Ceballos Loeza, Cecilia Moo, Colectivo Suumil Móokt'aan, Fátima Castillo Torres, Isaura Inés Ortiz Yam, John Ogilby, María Cruz Torres Tzab, Pedro Guerra, Pieter van der Aa, Rafiki Sánchez, and Rodrigo Llanes Salazar.

Kuxaan Suum:
The Living Rope

Exhibition view,
Spore Initiative, Berlin

Project at Colomboscope 2024 supported by
Spore Initiative. With additional support by
Goethe-Institut, Sri Lanka



Kuxa

the living paper

...



Tamarra Jayasundera

Tamarra Jaysundera approaches metal as an alchemical entity that is not simply unfastened from the earth's core for extractive use but instead remains a creative element connected to ecological cycles such as weathering and oxidization. Using copper, brass, and steel, the artist makes interventions engaging with natural processes, while adding a range of media including ink, acrylic paint, and engraving. Jayasundera's sculptures remind us of geologic formations and timelines beyond human life—of alluvial soil, the dance of tectonic plates, volcanic eruptions, and sedimentary rock faces.

Jayasundera took to painting as a seven-year-old and eventually went on to train in biology and fashion. Her practice in meditation further informs an understanding of metallurgy as a field of vibration—coalescing hard and soft materials as well as states of consciousness.

Using recent technology and older handmade tools for mark making, scratching, and inscribing into metals, Jayasundera further puts her work

through a burial process with oxidising organic compounds that are found in tree canopies and forest habitats of similar pH values. The piece on view is a study around Peter Wohllebens' *Hidden Life of Trees* (2015), especially laying emphasis on processes of death, slow decay, and regeneration in the woods. The artist notes her effort to "bring forth the ever-present question of anthropocentrism, while pushing for relatedness and ecocentrism—towards symbiosis".



Tamarra Jayasundera
Putresce
Mixed media on copper
2021/2022

Courtesy of the artist

Commissioned by
Colomboscope 2024

Thujiba Vijayalayan

Thujiba Vijayalayan studied visual art in Jaffna and continues to be based there. As an arts educator, she engages children in active observation of multispecies landscapes and the rights of nature. Her collaged drawings and paintings are often composed bringing together fragments of glossy magazines, which contrast with intimate portrayals of birds' and animals' daily movements. The artist zooms into scenes that are hardly visible to the bare eye without being aided by binoculars. It is her close monitoring of small species in her midst that leads to fine-lined captivating studies of zoological and botanical behaviour.

The birds in water bodies and forested areas around the Jaffna peninsula such as wood sandpipers, green pigeons, Eurasian Hoopoes, pelicans, tree frogs and dragonflies are highlighted in her paintings in vibrant tones. Some of these species are seasonal migrants, and also tell their own stories of wartime segregation, flashpoints, and violent crossings.

Vijayalayan's artistic work is realised from the vicinity of her home, after work hours and between responsibilities of motherhood. Often these drawings become a refuge for her to reflect on the ways species create habitats in hostile city environments, how they call out to one another in a thicket, feeding cycles, and the ways plant life becomes part of memory culture in the northern peninsula.

Thujiba Vijayalan

Herbal Paradise

Charcoal, acrylic and magazine paper
collage on paper
2023

Commissioned by
Colomboscope 2024

Courtesy of the artist



Zihan Karim

Zihan Karim's work often weaves together social happenings in civic life and political chronologies through archival modes, interdisciplinary thought, and processes of montage. Born in the port city of Chittagong enveloped by the sea and hills, these ecological terrains and an informal artistic milieu have inspired his trajectory. From a young age, Karim avidly consumed science fiction and participated in science-driven activities in academic contexts. He became intrigued by magical and cosmological characteristics in the development of scientific fields as well as principles of observation grounded in reason. Over time the artist also developed an interest in the film society movement and became immersed in the world of cinema, turning his attention to the potential of video making, theatre, and sound design.

The audiovisual installation *Eye* (2014-ongoing) reflects symbolisms around the 'all-seeing eye' and omnipresent vision across civilizational history and sacred cultures. Karim recounts forms of multisensory witnessing and hybrid perspectives denoted through multiple eyes and therefore sightlines. In this vein he references Zechariah, a prophet

figure in the New Testament and the Quran, who saw a vision of seven eyes, as well as the Chinese divinity Fuxi "depicted with three eyes. These eyes represent his ability to see the past, present, and future".

In his long-term engagement with this project, Karim extends the 'Eye' (in the forest) with a holographic video element. Serving to engage the dynamic quest for truth production and collective witnessing, the 360-degree convex view conveys the transition of landscapes into ruination and decay, as Rob Nixon terms 'slow violence'. While conceiving this work, the artist has been reflecting on Donna Haraway's assertion 'Making kin, not babies', his visuals thus juxtapose human and more-than-human gazes with fauna and zoological entities forging expansive webs of kinship bonds.

Zihan Karim
EYE

Video projection on installation
2015

Installation view, Dhaka Art Summit (2016)
Photo credit - Fiona Cheng

New works co-commissioned by
Colomboscope 2024 and
Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation



EXHIBITION VENUE

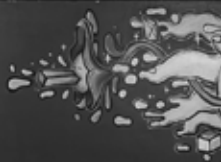
SNAFU Project

SNAFU is Colomboscope's freshest spot for gathering over music, experimental arts, and food. A former clothing store turned into a leafy creative refuge in the city centre, it is a space that invites all forms of making, connecting the mind and the gut. Amidst workshops, dancing, acts of reading, and hangouts, this space includes a collection of independent publishing and zines from the artist collective The Packet, Colomboscope's Reading in Tongues ensemble, as well as Dankini resting space. The works on view bring together Indigenous vocabularies of drawing from Nepal and Australia, interweaving communal healing, energy symbols, ancestral traditions, and quotidian practices that conjure humanity's altered relationship with living environments.

way
of the
forest

Chija Lama
Komal Purbe
Madhumala Mandal
Rebati Mandal
Selo Yadav
BLAK C.O.R.E
with Kieren Karripul
and Trent Walter

SNAFU



SNAFU
— KITCHEN —

4197

BLAK C.O.R.E

with Kieren Karritpul
and Trent Walter

BLAK C.O.R.E. is a collective driven by First Nations methodologies, research, and cultural practices focusing on walumarra (protection), yindyamarra gunhanha (ongoing respect) and murungidyal (healing). It is led by Brook Garru Andrew with Budi Miller and includes a range of international members engaged in support for First Nations-led projects and initiatives both within the University of Melbourne where it is established and beyond.

The term 'blak' was coined by artist Destiny Deacon back in 1991. The trailblazing artist from Erub/Mer (Torres Strait) and K'ua K'ua (Cape York) spent most of her life in Melbourne in Kulin Country. She wanted to take the C out of 'black' as a way to reclaim the derogatory and colonialist language used against First Nations peoples in Australia. Blak is now used widely across Australia to celebrate a proud urban Aboriginal identity. C.O.R.E. is shorthand for Care of Radical Energy and encompasses the urgent need for a duty of care when generating systemic change in cultural institutions and rethinking museum practices.

The dialogue with BLAK C.O.R.E. marks a significant step for Colomboscope to closely engage with artist-led thinking around self-determination, Indigenous solidarity, circulation of print culture, and intergenerational mentorship.

Trent Walter is a Melbourne-based printmaker, publisher, and educator. In 2009, he established Negative Press, a fine art custom printmaking workshop focusing on etching and silkscreen techniques. Walter is a long-time collaborator of Brook Andrew and has worked with several artists as well as Indigenous organizers. He will present a range of publications and workshops in *Way of the Forest* together with artist Kieren Karritpul.

Kieren Karritpul hails from the Ngen'gimurri lineage of Indigenous Australian artists, with his childhood in Daly River, southwest of Darwin, steeped in the traditions of art, hunting, and fishing. Observing his mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother intricately weave and paint left an indelible mark on his artistic journey. As a Ngen'gimurri

man restricted from weaving, Karritpul channels the essence of the woven form into his paintings and other mediums. Some of his pieces pay tribute to the meticulous fishnet weaving process, a vital aspect of life that, for him, extends beyond livelihood to impart lessons of humility and patience.

Karritpul's art delves into specific woven forms, such as the bundles of *yerggi* crafted by his maternal figures during his childhood. In these abstract representations, the woven patterns assume a meditative quality, constructed from radiating bands of short parallel lines. By incorporating

these iconic regional woven forms, Karritpul's work becomes a vibrant celebration of Aboriginal culture, showcasing his commitment to maintaining deep cultural ties in everyday life. The artist emphasizes that his pieces are composed of "many lines and dots or squiggly lines" because he perceives such dynamic patterns in the land itself. His art captures the constant movement of the land, portraying flowing water, trees, leaves, and grass. For Karritpul, connecting with the terrain is a spiritual experience, a mutual breath shared between himself and the living landscape.



BLAK C.O.R.E. collaborated with the Collarenebri Central School to create a final performance for NAIDOC 2022. Photo by Ribbon Gang.

Project and workshops at Colomboscope 2024 supported by BLACK C.O.R.E., University of Melbourne, and Australia High Commission



Kieren Karritpul

Baby Basket

Acrylic on canvas

Project and workshops at Colomboscope 2024 supported by BLACK C.O.R.E.,
University of Melbourne, and Australia High Commission

Courtesy of the artist



Trent Walter and Lizzie Boon
LOVE YOUR MOTHER

installation view, Shepparton Art Museum, 2022.
Commissioned by Shepparton Art Museum

Project and workshops at Colomboscope 2024 supported by BLACK C.O.R.E.,
University of Melbourne, and Australia High Commission

Courtesy of the artist

Chija Lama

Chija Lama is a practising monk and healer trained in the Indigenous Tamang tradition of medicine in Nuwakot, Nepal. The established tradition draws some elements and techniques from Bön traditions and Vajrayana Buddhism. He has been learning and developing comprehensive knowledge in preparing amulets since a young age.

He chooses healing mantras specific to individuals, then freehand carves the mantra, represented by protective symbols, figures, and mandalas into a woodblock. A layer of dark soot is applied to the carved block which is then pressed onto a parchment of Lokta paper. The paper gets folded, encased with thread, and given to the individual in need.

Throughout this process, Chija Lama has to play multiple roles; he is both healer and artist, doctor and confidante, monk and gentle friend. He prescribes certain rituals and chanting meditation routines to accompany the 'buti' (rung nga), or healing amulet. Over the years, Chija Lama's amulets have become highly prized, blessed possessions, recognising his vast wisdom and experience.

Chija Lama,
Woodblock print, charcoal
on Lokta paper

Courtesy of the artist and
Artree Nepal

विष्णुसहस्रनामस्तोत्रम् ॥ १ ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥



श्रीकृष्णाय नमः

Komal Purbe, Madhumala Mandal, Rebati Mandal, Selo Yadav

Artists from the Mithila region in Nepal have continued their visual history by often shifting and adapting materials and forms of their art in order to preserve it. Mithila art has its roots in wall paintings, Aripana designs made by women on the ground for rituals, and offerings of moulded clay objects; such vocabularies have recently been translated to paper. In Janakpur, early works on paper made in the early 1990s, like their village murals, utilised vegetable dyes, soil, and pigments for ritual purposes. Recent paintings are primarily created using poster and acrylic paints, which has led to a bold and intricate colour gradient.

The painted compositions explore dimensions of fantasy, ecology, and whimsicality. Many artists also address the complex dynamics of oppression faced due to their caste and gender, offering a critical reflection that challenges established patriarchal and brahminical structures. Artists often focus on quotidian activities and agricultural practices. The small-scale paintings presented at Colomboscope focus on domestic and wild animals both real and

imagined. They also offer a window to understanding the rapid ecological and cultural shifts that have taken place alongside the Nepal-India border: rapid deforestation, labour migration, shifting farming techniques, loss of biodiversity. The artists offer their own interpretation of such dynamics as a testament to the fundamentally altered relationship humans now have with the environment around them.

These artists have on different occasions received training in Mithila art and been employed at the Janakpur Women's Development Centre, the first organisation in Nepal to encourage Maithil women to draw from their living traditions and take up a professional creative journey. Founded in 1989, the centre has trained and supported hundreds of women artists to experiment and produce works that have shaped contemporary cultural practice along the Madhesh-Bihar border.

Selo Yadav

Heron eating human head while fishing
Distemper colour on handmade paper

Courtesy of the artist and
Janakpur Women's Development Center

Supported by Art Jameel



Madhumala Mandal (i)
Madhumala's Life Story
Distemper colour on paper

Courtesy of the artist and Janakpur Women's Development Center



EXHIBITION VENUE

Barefoot Gallery

How does one imagine seed sovereignty through family networks? What does it mean to establish a renewed understanding of land art practices that include labour perspectives of the 'majority world'? How may repressed memories in plantation landscapes circulate through oral expressions and visual storytelling? Across the indoor galleries and outdoor settings of Barefoot, artists build encounters around these reflections while animating the forest interior and wetland ecosystems. Sculptural installations correspond with the recovery of soil from enduring militarism, migration, and mass tourism.

way
of the
forest

Dumiduni Illangasinghe
Jayatu Chakma
Karunasiri Wijesinghe
Kulagu Tu Buvongan
MTF Rukhsana
Sangita Maity
Sunita and Sanjeev Maharjan
Shehan Obeysekera
Soma Surovi Jannat
U. Arulraj



Dumiduni Illangasinghe

Dumiduni Illangasinghe recently graduated from the University of Fine Arts in Colombo and joined a residential workshop organised by Colomboscope, Geoffrey Bawa Trust, and Kālam at Lunuganga Gardens. She perceptively and intriguingly engages with plant worlds, particularly fungi, mycelium, and spore life. She closely studies the fruiting bodies of mushrooms and reproduces their stems and caps immaculately in tissue and via found materials. The artist considers how humans and the biosphere are linked as 'contact zones' for the transfer of all kinds of matter invisible to the eye but sensed as organic time and in living bodies. After all, our gut and the forest floor reflect each other through fungal entities.

The artist is interested in holistic and naturopathic modes of healing, intrinsically connecting the human psyche and corpus—our microbiota—with botanical and mineral elements. She addresses "the realm of fungi to have a closer look at mycelium networks, and how these reveal the interconnectedness of all living entities on the earth surface. This

interconnectedness mirrors the complex web of human beings' cognitive processes." Furthermore, she also sees how "mycelium facilitates communicative exchanges charting unity in the beyond-human world with Buddhist philosophy, given its profound teachings of interconnectedness, impermanence, and cyclical processes of life, death, and rebirth."

Working with paper in rendering translucency as well as fleshiness, she brings a sculptural dimension to her work. The enchanting fragility and uncanny presence of mycelium intrigues Illangasinghe. The process of making her work for Colomboscope has entailed growing mushrooms in the studio, as well as observing mimesis and camouflage from urban forests and wilderness.

Dumiduni Illangasinghe
In Search of Happiness
Mixed media installation
2023

Project at Colomboscope 2024
supported by Goethe-Institut, Sri Lanka

Courtesy of the artist



Jayatu Chakma

Jayatu Chakma's relation to landforms and their multispecies inhabitants is shaped by the Chittagong Hill Tracts region in Bangladesh where he lives. His formative bond with the terrain and its social relations has been sustained through resilience in the face of dispossession and discriminatory practices. Through an engagement with Indigenous knowledge as an everyday practice of the Jumma people, the artist articulates his multi-part paintings and installations.

In a set of triangular compositions, the artist deliberates over developmental agendas such as hydroelectric dams and tourism projects, as well as forced migration, through the hand-sown iconography: land movers, hornbills and flower-headed and inverted figures. Furthermore, the works on view, *Story of The Grey Hills* (2022-23) were made through dialogue with individuals who lost their ancestral homeland in the Sajek Valley. He turns his attention to the clothing of the Lusai community, who previously resided in this valley, but were displaced due to tourism projects. Uprooted from their homes, they were forced to seek refuge

elsewhere, with some even venturing into neighbouring India in search of a new life. Ironically, today's tourists take photos in Lusai clothing as mementos of their hillside trips.

Jayatu conveys how ancestral garments become enshrouded by shadows of precarity and erasure. And come to stand in for the losses in ways of life, historical memory, and possessions of the Lushai community. Using the clothing as canvas and bright-hued needlework, the artist unveils haunting surfaces removed from their place of origin with remembered belonging and creative acts of retrieval.

Jayatu Chatma

Story of the Grey Hills

Thread and acrylic on canvas

2023

Co-commissioned by Colomboscope
2024 and Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation.
Supported by Goethe-Institut Bangladesh



Karunasiri Wijesinghe

The singular draughtsmanship of artist and educator Karunasiri Wijesinghe makes him akin to a tree whisperer. It is as though he has a third eye perceiving the outer and inner life of young and centuries-old trees in parks and along highways, evergreens in national parks, dry-zone foliage, and wetlands. Filmmaker and critic, Tissa Abeysekera writes, "In Karunasiri's painting a tree is a tree but it is also much more. It reveals an inner dynamic of these denizens, in a way that a photograph can never achieve. Karunasiri achieves it by capturing unerringly a rhythm in the sculpture of a tree, and through a process of selection and isolation... He has preserved for us shards of a broken mirror which link us to a past which exists only as instinct. Perhaps the villager, who inhabits each tree with a goddess—'ruksha devata'—and lights a lamp in a cavity of its trunk at nightfall, is still closer to that lost world, than us. Karu's paintings are to me such an act of worship and a tribute to our ecological memory.

Wijesinghe uses ink, brushstrokes, and nibs with a Japanese style, sumi-e energy—his lines twist and

turn, like sinuous, textured networks, flowing like water. He has spent time studying plants and making illustrations at the Royal Botanical Gardens of Peradeniya, and lived in the deep interior of Sinharaja—said to be the most dense rainforest in Asia—under the canopy of endemic species such as Weera, Palu and Kekuna. He has great respect not only for the trees of the forest, but many natural species that seek shelter there and their symbiotic relationship with each other, and their natural surroundings.

Reflecting on his work *Tree Lives* (2023) at Colomboscope, the artist speaks of the circuitous nature of his process, "The trees speak to me. I not only see the complex knot of gnarly roots, I feel their complex struggle for survival, their problems and hardships. Every knot and scar on a tree tells its own story. Just the way sunlight falling on a tree makes it appear different from one moment to the next. It is as if the trees and stones are calling out to me, asking me to tell their story."



Karunasiri Wijesinghe

Nuga Tree

Lahugala, Pottuvil

Ink on paper

2005

Courtesy of the artist.

Commissioned by

Colomboscope 2024



Karunasiri Wijesinghe

Mara Tree

Viharamahadevi Park, Colombo

Watercolors on Paper

2023

Courtesy of the artist.

Commissioned by

Colomboscope 2024

Kulagu Tu Buvongan

Home of endangered flora and fauna, and the source of several rivers, large areas of the Pantaron Range in the Philippines have already been usurped for large-scale monocrop plantations, mining, and logging operations, disrupting the most important watershed and biodiversity corridor in the Mindanao region. Government and corporate interests have been driving out the Indigenous Lumad stewards of the Pantaron Range, even labelling them as terrorists. Some Indigenous groups vocally critical of this injustice are now displaced in refugee camps and sanctuaries across the Philippine archipelago, some even driven to hiding under threat of death, and several have already been martyred.

With initial support from the Open Contemporary Art Center, Taipei, in 2021, Kulagu Tu Buvongan, a collective of majority Pantaron Range Indigenous members, held a series of recording sessions and workshops focused on forest calls and non-lexical vocables, non-words used in daily forest life that also mimic forest fauna sounds. Several Indigenous elders in refugee

camps in Davao City recreated forest sounds from memory and explained their meanings and use. Some sacred, some for play, these sounds were later taught to children in the camps, many of whom were born in exile and had never experienced forest life in their ancestral domains.

Kulagu Tu Buvongan
Recording sessions
Davao City
2021

Images courtesy of the collective



MTF Rukshana

M.T. Fathima Rukshana is a multidisciplinary artist and activist from North-Western Sri Lanka. Her practice has sustained a commitment to building creative testimonies around women's oppression and patriarchal violence—in particular through laws that have led to structural inequalities in the lives of Muslim women on the island.

Employing an intergenerationally learned trade practice of weaving, Rukhsana weaves different materials such as paper, reed, cloth, and canvas. While teaching art and design at a vocational training centre, Rukhsana explores how women reclaim their agency by subverting the trade-craft of weaving and moving toward collective freedom, social leisure, and endurance. While local weaving techniques involve meticulous counting and grid-based patterning, Rukhsana elaborates that "continual rhythms of the weaving patterns constitute an environmental philosophy, rather than a function, wherein themes of restraint and freedom, death and birth, void and renewal, are intertwined—not as rigid opposites but rather as dynamic concepts."

Repurposing familial practices, Rukhsana questions societal conventions around women's roles in normative kinship. Her anamorphic sculptures, *Kiduhu I, II* (2023) are embedded with the seeds of the Tuna tree and coconut leaves—borrowing their form from the daily object of kiduhu, food baskets woven from leaves, used by Muslim communities in ceremonies to serve delicacies and collectively feast from. These handcrafted wares are living entities bearing the potential to sprout.

Invoking her childhood, Rukhsana recalls the cradle hanging from the tree in which her parents would nestle her. *Touch me not* (2023) is a sculpted cradle woven with fibrous roots and seeds recalling matrilineal relations and taking primary lessons in replenishment from the earth. Refuting the dualism of nature and culture, the artist's work engages with ecological feminism as an active principle and turns to women's histories in land art.

MTF Rukhsana
Untitled
Mixed media on paper
2023

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2024



Sangita Maity

Kolkata-based artist Sangita Maity works at the intersections of diverse media and material, often informed by her training as a printmaker. Her practice involves ongoing engagement with Indigenous communities' rights to land, their displacement from sustainable living practices as custodians of the earth. Through a series of conceptual and material investigations she attends to the prevalence of occupational migration as a consequence of encroachment by extractive mining and farming practices. For several years, she has been travelling and working with communities displaced from their traditional ways of living in the resource-abundant, forest-covered and mineral-rich Chota Nagpur plateau in Jharkhand, India, which has been transformed into mining sites by industrial complexes. In the body of work on view, *Manmade Landscape*, the local landscape and its transition that she witnessed over the years embodies the imposition of extractive economies upon it, speaking for itself through topographies that the artist has interpreted by layering soil on copper plates. In dialogue with these works is the series *Wall of Traditions* where the artist reflects on her time spent in the makeshift settlements of communities

from the region, and their cultural traditions that the local ecology had engendered. The walls of these homes are adorned with material remnants and objects from a life that they have had to leave behind, and are evocative of social and individual practices that are no longer compatible with their current employment as daily wage labour, often with the same industries that displaced them from their homes in the forest.

A third body of work, *They Don't Call Themselves Farmer Anymore* is informed by her frequent visits to Tripura in the northeast of India, and the rapid expansion of rubber plantations replacing forested areas in the 1970s under the leadership of the Communist Party as part of its initiatives to encourage economic growth in the state. The community that traditionally farmed Indigenous crops and plants using methods such as *jhum chaas* (step cultivation) and whose rituals depended on the harvest season have had to quickly adapt to the methods enforced by the state which focused on short-term gains and does not care about the depletion of the soil or heed the local wisdom of the original inhabitants of the land.



Sangita Maity
They Don't Call Themselves Farmer Anymore
Acrylic on canvas
2020

Courtesy of the artist and Shrine Empire





Sangita Maity
Manmade Landscape III
Copper and soil
2023

Courtesy of
the artist and
Shrine Empire

Shehan Obeysekera

Shehan Obeysekera's image-making pursues itinerant pathways opening to and tuning with monsoon, lunar, and tidal cycles acting in the island's mountainsides and rainforests. Of late, he has been immersed in cultivation and learning to adapt to the biodiverse terrain in the foothills of Samanala Kande in South-Central Sri Lanka. An everyday connection with soil, agrarian implements, and Indigenous fauna is transforming his relationship with the lens. In his latest work, the artist considers what it means for photography to chronicle the slow transformations of cultivation systems and degradation of mountain ecologies, while marking how custodianship differs in liberal settler schemes of proprietorship of land as well as how legal fictions control terrestrial barriers.

Having spent extensive time at Laki Senanayake's *Diyabubula*, considered a sanctuary for the webbing of art and life—regenerating land and water bodies, Shehan continues to draw on the small wisdoms of elders such as Laki. Equally, he derives inspiration from ancient landscaping such as the library in the Ritigala monastery

complex, water gardens of Angkor Wat, and community architecture across South Asia.

Through series such as *Sculptor* and *Chaos Made You*, Shehan takes up macro photography to hone in on the minutiae of seasonal thriving in the highlands—scaling shallow lakes as well as ancient rocks that have held the currents of gushing streams; examining a world of mycelium networks and tropical reptile inhabitants on the forest floor.

Shehan Obeysekera has photographed musicians and performance artists across Sri Lanka, recording moments of rhythm-making, live experimentation, and social intimacy in a cultural scene that lacks contemporary archives. His audiovisual installation *Grow in Green* (2017) made in collaboration with Sarani Perera and exhibited previously at Colomscope was composed during a month-long stay in the depths of the Sinharaja Rainforest Reserve.

Shehan Obeysekera

Lines in the Sand

Acrylic on photographic print

2023

Commissioned by Colomscope 2024

Soma Surovi Jannat

Through her practice, Soma Surovi Jannat challenges the confines of a conventional studio space, as her canvas extends beyond the boundaries of the city of Dhaka, where she resides, leading her into manifold landscapes of the country and villages of her home region Lalmonirhat in northern Bangladesh. The artist drafts spatial constructions, often including detailed hand-drawn illustrations, thereby playing with scale and volume. Interweaving herbs, handmade paper, and other organic substances, Jannat invites viewers into a multisensory environment.

Jannat's project, *Where Every Leaf Holds A Tale* (2023), journeys into folklore of the Sundarbans, an unparalleled mangrove forest in Bangladesh. Observing this delta's geography and water politics, while taking inspiration from 19th Century photography and print culture of Mughal miniatures. *Way of the Forest* brings her to the water forest's gateways where she aspires to engage with accounts and beliefs of community stakeholders with the universal potentiality of drawing.

During the Mughal era in lower Bengal, an extensive collection of folk literature highlights the existence of supernatural powers in the Sundarban forests. The conceptualization of 'Bonobibi' as a mythical protector of the forest has been portrayed, blending hybrid characteristics of human, animal, and marine creatures. These illustrations breathe life into centuries-old tales, revealing eco-cosmologies and cultural wisdom. These narratives provide clues to the intricate braiding of wetland systems and human cohabitation. Soma Surovi Jannat's art becomes the conduit for a dialogue between living traditions and a collectively visioned futurity among more-than-human inhabitants and aqueous ecology.

Soma Surovi Jannat

Where Every Leaf Holds A Tale...

Archival ink pen on paper,
acrylic colour, gold and silver leaf

2023

Co-commissioned by Colomscope
2024 and Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation.

Additional support from
Goethe-Institut Bangladesh



Sunita and Sanjeev Maharjan

Sunita Maharjan and Sanjeev Maharjan come from a family of farmers indigenous to the Kathmandu Valley. Yet they also belong to a generation in transition, having memories of participating in fieldwork but lacking the skills and space to farm. Sanjeev's grandparents and Sunita's parents, the last of their family to live as professional farmers, have since retired. Through their artistic trajectory, Sunita and Sanjeev map a changing relationship with land, farming, heirloom seeds, and metropolitan space amidst Kathmandu's rapid urbanisation, utilizing visual media, small-scale processes of planting, and their family's archive of seeds. This work questions the nature of land, production, growth, and the continuation of traditional practices. Indigenous knowledge is accumulated through years of intergenerational instruction, observation, and practice meant to be passed down through the land. However, the seeds stored in their grandparents' houses have become fixtures that sit alongside important documents. Knowledge, like seeds, needs to be revitalised and kept in rotation. During conversations with the last farmers in their families,

the artists gather instructions to repurpose the seeds. The instructions are expected to come less in precise words and measurements and more as gestures, revealed in non-linear, relational narratives. Following these conversations, they attempt to grow these seeds on their rooftop terrace, reflecting the evolving relationship with space amidst urbanisation. This will open pathways for the artists to explore alternative modes of documentation as well as a translation of their families' legacies.

Sunita Maharjan
Fence
Bamboo weave
2020

New works co-commissioned
by Colomscope 2024
and Rockbund Art Museum

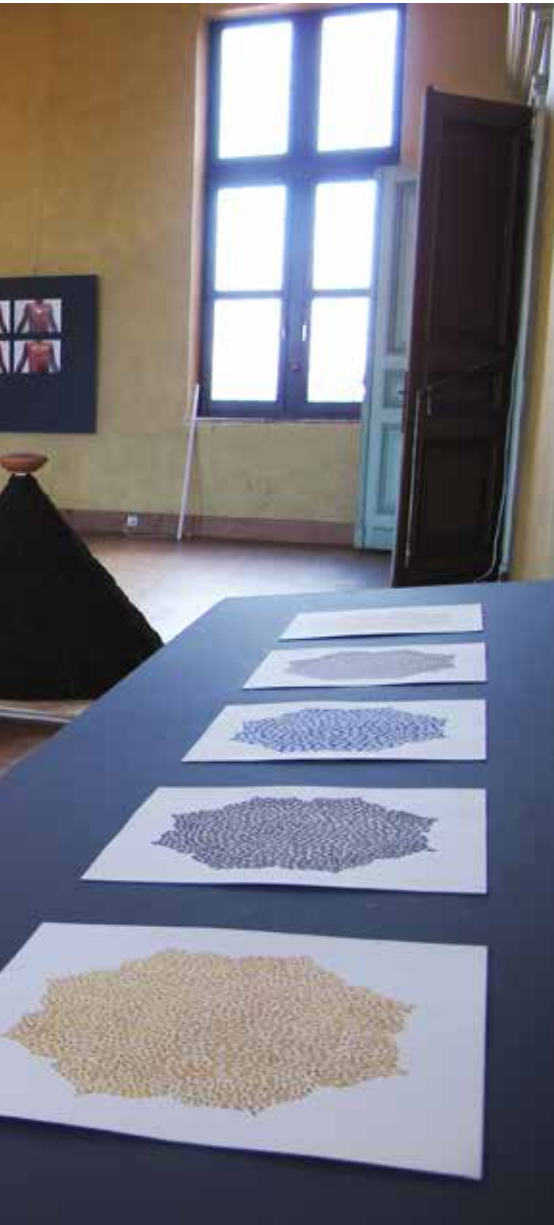
Courtesy of the artist



Sanjeev Maharjan and Sunita Maharjan
Seeds Have All the Stories
still image from two-channel video
2023 - 2024

Co-commissioned by Colomboscope 2024
and Rockbund Art Museum .





Sanjeev Maharjan

Untitled, from the ongoing series, *What Remains?*

Water color drawings, photographic prints, turf and different grains used in different rituals in Newa community.
2016

Site specific installation for Coup De Ville Trinnale of Contemporary Art, Belgium

Courtesy of the artist

U. Arulraj

Arulraj Ulaganathan reflects on historical experiences of ecological devastation and systemic violence in coffee and tea plantations through the Dutch and British colonial periods. He connects these experiences to communal stories of migration and dispossession of Tamil tea workers in Sri Lanka's central highlands today. His often surrealist and sardonic compositions consider enduring legacies of forced labour, hierarchical management, and excruciatingly restrictive architectures of living as part of daily existence in the hills of Haputale.

In his recent drawings and installations, tea is an ingredient in the literal and metaphorical sense, staining the paper surface and producing volume to render testimonies of how Indigenous forests were erased to make way for governable tea slopes and tea as a favourite export was planted in the island as a perennial commodity. In plotting a multispecies relationality between Malayaha communities and forest species, the artist maps the local names given to various plantations: Pazhaya Kādu (Old Forest), Pudukkādu (New Forest), Pachakkādu (Green Forest), Alangkādu (Banyan Forest), Kurangu Malai (Monkey

Hill), Mandi Thōttam (Langur Estate), Kuthirai Malai (Horse Hill), Yānai Thōttam (Elephant Estate) and Mayil Vaththai (Peacock Garden).

Ulaganathan revisits stories told by his foremothers and village elders as well as songs that speak of homesickness and the demands of return: "We're not used to wearing raincoats; We're not used to plucking tea leaves (...); Send us back home!"—sung by South Indian Malayaha Tamil plantation residents brought to coffee and tea estates in Lanka in the 19th Century.

He writes, "Our people who have enriched the forests and hills have not owned even a single piece of land until today. At times they have been forced to go hunting. That is the extent of dispossession, but their ancestral guardianship remains steadfast. On the other hand, a large number of tea plantations have been abandoned and have since become forests. More than 171 tea factories have been closed in recent years."



U. Arulraj

Into the tea forest 01

Pen and tea stain on brown board

Co-commissioned by Colomboscope
2024 and Rockbund Art Museum



U. Arulraj

Into the tea forest 04

Pen and tea stain on brown board.

Co-commissioned by Colomboscope
2024 and Rockbund Art Museum

EXHIBITION VENUE

Colombo Public Library Garden

A garden of environmental knowledge building, community-led remembrance and commemorative practices composed of mud, plant life, and personal belongings is planted in the garden of the Colombo Public Library that leads into the Viharamahadevi Park. Counterposed with this library as a towering modernist architecture holding an official inventory of encyclopaedic information, places of study, and a Cenotaph war memorial dedicated to Ceylonese soldiers lost in the two world wars—the open-air projects and performances carry out actions of conviviality, devotional offering, and mourning. They gesture to memories embodied in trees, stones, winds, and creatures' bodies.

way
of the
forest

Memory Truth & Justice
MTF Rukhshana
Thava Thajendran
Müge Yilmaz



Memory Truth & Justice

Memory, Truth and Justice is a project that seeks to preserve, record, and dignify the memories of survivors and families of victims of the armed conflict in Nepal (1996–2006). This particular series focuses on the Tharuhat region of western Nepal, home to the Indigenous Tharu people. During the conflict, many Tharu individuals joined the cause of the People’s Liberation Army to fight a government and society which had oppressed them for hundreds of years. In consequence, Tharu majority districts such as Bardiya were subject to brutal backlash; thousands were killed, and hundreds were forcefully disappeared, raped, tortured, and maimed. Throughout this and previous historical periods, the forests of the region bore witness to this violence, while serving as a place of refuge for many rebel camps.

Local memory is crucial in acknowledging experiences and shaping history. These images, objects, and stories detail how trees have now come to serve as active memorial sites after the conflict. The mothers, wives, and family members of those who had been disappeared came together

during the creation of the Kumbhar Adda Memorial Park in Bardiya. They carried heavy rocks and placed them beneath one of the oldest trees in the community forest—each rock representing someone they lost. As we revisit their commemorating effort, we also reverberate their voices and compel remembrance.

Memory, Truth & Justice is an initiative of Voices of Women Media.

Fathers holding photos of their disappeared sons who were captured and killed while they were out in the field. Their dead bodies were not given to the families. More than 11,000 murder cases have been filed at the official commission.



A husband of a conflict-related sexual violence survivor. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has received hundreds of complaints of conflict-related sexual violence but Nepal has not reviewed laws to look into incidents of rape and torture committed during the conflict.



Müge Yilmaz

Müge Yilmaz partakes in the intersectional circulation of feminist science fiction, agronomy, and eco-political convening. Her installations and performances often craft participatory zones for ritual, resonance, reading, and learning. Drawing on her early years in Anatolia, ancient traditions, and archaeological sites from Neolithic Mesopotamia, Yilmaz delves into the study of and rethinking around powerful objects such as amulets, shrines, and traditional tattoos. The Amsterdam-based artist remains attentive to paradoxes at play in strategies of protection, collective survival, and faith in an increasingly polarised and individualised world. Often she composes environments that invite inhabitation in the vein of caves, temples, libraries, and granaries.

Practising a philosophy of commons is central to the site-responsive sculpture *Garden of Coincidences* (2023-ongoing) re-created in the Colombo Public Library's garden. The carved wooden structure is totemic

with bright eyes and vivid hues and is envisioned as a refuge from the scorching sun, field labour, as well as the drying of grains and grasses.

Yilmaz is also the co-founder of Four Siblings, a public garden and community project experimenting on working with the wilderness. In 2021 it grew in the shape of a labyrinth in the Nieuw-West district of Amsterdam and has since been a space for social gatherings and performances.

Müge Yilmaz
Garden of Coincidences
2020

Photo credit: Lotte van Uiter
Commissioned by NEST, Netherlands

Project at Colomboscope supported by
the Embassy of Netherlands



Thava Thajendran

Jaffna-based artist and poet Thajendran's early works layer print and drawing techniques creating palimpsestic compositions that ruminate war-torn terrains, a jagged optics of ruination, and the militarization of landscape as an everyday scarring. He first participated in Colomboscope in 2015, where he began to reflect critically on the history of the Rio complex as a site of violence—his meditation on the building linked with the mythical burning of Ravana's kingdom as well as wordplay on 'ash' as an aftermath of arson, as grey zone, and as a colour representing the in-between. He attended postgraduate studies at Beaconhouse National University in Lahore. During that time, Thajendran began to conceive a distinctive practice around earth art and ephemeral sculpture using soil, stones, and various raw materials. He draws on philosophical and devotional principles such as Shunya—void and formlessness that continue to strive toward conceptual anchoring and spiritual awakening.

Thajendran notes, "I draw land on the land with elements of the land." Like the termite creates trails of temporary installations in its path, the artist observes organic life elements as actors crafting a window into aesthetics as part of our real-time environments. Music and poetry form the foundation for Thajendran's recent projects. The rhythms of sand, celestial bodies, and people's motion around the pieces render them surfaces in flux. At the Colombo Public Library Garden, he builds a confluence of hard and soft mediums: bougainvillea, rock pillars, origami-like parrots made from elongated leaves and an ode to the incandescent laburnum tree that grows across South Asia. The artist's visual wanderings cognize nature spirits as protection forces and weave an ecosophy of reverence in the wake of mass devastation.

Thavarasa Thajendran
Time and Space
Sand on floor
2020

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2024



Venuri Perera & Eisa Jocson

Performance at Kamatha (BMICH)

When thinking of Venuri Perera's expansive corpus of live work and experimental movement practice that shuttles between intimate and social realms of public life, well beyond the limits of the proscenium, one is reminded of feminist scholar and activist bell hooks writing on the 'oppositional gaze'—an elemental reminder of how looking relations and bodily presence in all their energetic potential involve radical love, recuperation through sourcing from the deep pockets of collective memory, rebellious pursuits, and a quest for dignity. Perera has been a participant of Colomboscope in multiple editions, including her performance *Keselmaduwa* (2014) which evoked characteristics of ceremonial dance, exorcism, and rites with a satirical humour and provocative grammar of rhythm as well as movement. In the 2019 festival edition, she conceived *I dance for* with a group of dancers and actors directly inscribing the milieu of dancer bars and economies of desire along the shoreline of Colombo.

As curator of Colombo Dance Platform (2016 onwards), educator and mentor to dancers and choreographers from

across Sri Lanka, Perera has encouraged collective practices and learning scenarios that sustain convergences bringing dance in closer relation with body politics, social hierarchies, sexuality, and fraught post-war ecological terrains of the island.

Her international productions have included collaborations with choreographers Geumhyung Jeong, Natsuko Tezuka and Zwoisy Mears-Clarke.

Contemporary choreographer and dancer Eisa Jocson's practice tackles the dynamics of masculinity as well as the embedded tensions between hostility and hospitality. Through a compelling performance vocabulary and research-led engagement as a trained visual artist with a background in ballet, Jocson has been committed to embodied investigations around mobility and the outsourcing of labour laying focus on the overseas Filipino service and entertainment industry including musicians and domestic and care workers in major productions such as *Death of the Pole Dancer* (2011), *Macho Dancer* (2013), *Host* (2015) and *Manila Zoo* (2021).

Both Perera and Jocson engage with border politics in a wider sense, through contextualising the daily impact of visa regimes and security infrastructures that regulate migrant bodies, but also as 'border beings' within public spaces that provoke and challenge urban and corporatized domains through femme provocation, performance as tipping the status quo of colonial inheritances, imperial practices of spatial planning as well as militarization of civic spaces.

Their performance note outlines: Eisa Jocson and Venuri Perera come from countries known for exporting women domestic workers. Their research on 'Magic Maids' began in 2022, when they were invited to Basel. Noticing the lack of women at the Basel Museum of Pharmaceutical History, they were

directed to study Switzerland's role in the European witch hunts. Learning that the 18th Century Swiss housemaid Anna Göldi was the 'last witch' to be persecuted through decapitation in Europe led them to examine the direct consequences of the contemporary exploitation of women's labour, particularly domestic labour in the Global South.

In 'Magic Maids', the broom is an axis that bridges the European witch hunts and domestic labour through rituals of cleansing. The act of sweeping becomes a portal for myriad physical metamorphosis that manifests the historical and ongoing subjugation of migrant women workers. They also delve into how spell casting, gossip, laughter, and exorcism produce agency within exploitative settings.

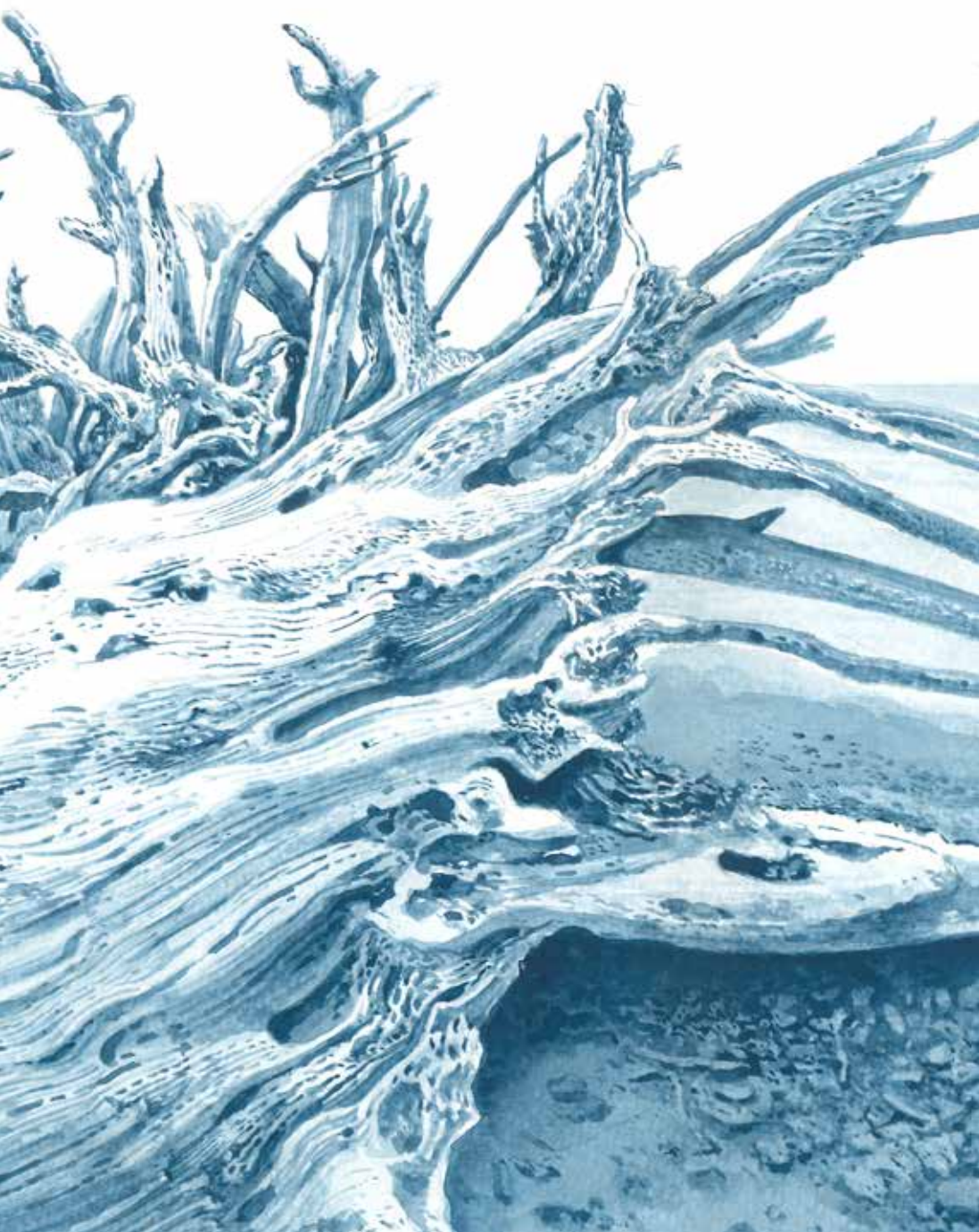
Production Künstler*innenhaus Mousonturm - Frankfurt am Main.
Coproduction: Spring Festival - Utrecht, HAU Hebbel am Ufer - Berlin.
Support at Colomboscope by Goethe-Institut, Sri Lanka



Screenshots from video documentation of work-in-progress showing of Magic Maids at Kaserne, Basel on June 23 2023.

Courtesy of the artists





Of That Heavy Carbon Footprint

Dr Ranil Senanayake

The shame of being the country with the largest fossil carbon footprint at the UN Conference on Climate Change (COP28) is only shadowed by the cringeworthy goals of that group of travellers. They have gone to finagle money out of the international system and private donors to build white elephants here. Nothing about stopping fossil carbon. Considering that the fossil carbon footprint on a Colombo Dubai flight is 0.89 tonne, our monstrous delegation of 80 is responsible for 71.2 tonnes of fossil carbon to attend the junket. When most nations send delegations with a carbon footprint of less than 2 tonnes, can we, with a footprint of 71.2 tonnes, really hold ourselves as the model for other nations to follow? We have not even addressed the Sri Lanka country statement to COP21 six years ago ignoring the critical concerns raised at that time. The 'advisors' to the Government have copied these concerns for years, with no concern or interest shown. They seem to be there to advise on how to bamboozle the world and avoid doing anything really meaningful. Otherwise, should

not those 'advisors' have alerted the country that:

"We are aware of the great difference between carbon dioxide that is emitted from biological sources and carbon dioxide emitted from fossil sources. One has sequestered rates measured in thousands of years while the other in millions of years. Yet the cost is still the same. We would request the IPCC to address the relative costs of each."

There is a carbon trade where fossil carbon is 'laundered' into the atmosphere by planting a tree. The life of the tree is a few hundred years at best. When the tree dies the fossil carbon is released back into the atmosphere. Will the huge Sri Lanka delegation at the UN Climate Change conference (COP28) bring this up for discussion? Or will they go along with the fossil fuel lobby so obvious at this conference and talk of distractions like making money on this carbon market? It is tragically ironic that a prelude to Sri Lanka's mammoth attendance at the UN Climate Change Conference is

framed by the Government decisions to hand over 300,000 acres of land for industrial agriculture with a full knowledge of the fossil carbon imprint of clearing existing living biomass, never mind the loss of its biodiversity. It also neglects the fossil carbon imprint of industrial agriculture. Even worse is the decision to allow an oil refinery in Hambantota. This will not only increase our fossil carbon footprint but also destroy the quality of the air we breathe in the southern part of the island. Its effect on our unique wildlife on Bundala and Yala is not considered. The health of the people of the south is not considered. The hypocrisy of promoting fossil fuel refineries on our land before the world, while demanding redress and restoration for the damage done by the fossil fuel industry is shameful.

The other observation in the Sri Lanka country statement to COP21 was that:

"We are aware that the optimum operating temperature of chlorophyll is 37°C. In a warming world where temperatures will soar well above that, food production will be severely impacted. We would request the IPCC to address responses to this phenomenon."

A persistent period of unusually hot days is referred to as an extreme heat event or a heat wave. Heat waves are more than just uncomfortable: they can lead to illness and death, particularly among older adults, the very young,

and other vulnerable populations. The current trend of temperature rise and frequency of heat waves has increased steadily, from an average of two heat waves per year during the 1960s to six per year during the 2010s and 2020s. Temperatures are steadily moving into the forties. While the critical temperature above which plants get killed called thermal 'death point' is 50°C, the limit varies greatly; shade-loving plants are killed at lower temperatures. When it comes to productivity the threshold is even lower, for wheat 30-32°C maximum and for rice, 36-38°C maximum.

The danger to agricultural production is further exacerbated by the reliance on chemical farming with so-called 'high yield' crops. These crops have been bred by reducing photosynthetic biomass for crop biomass. This reduction is made possible by the use of chemical fertilizers. But in a high-temperature situation when chlorophyll is functioning sub-optimally, such reductions may bring serious crop losses.

Chemical fertilizers are produced using large amounts of energy, usually fossil energy. The creation of this fossil energy results in the discharge of huge volumes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Therefore chemical farming adds greatly to global warming and creates dangerous heat waves around the planet, which finally affects the farmer through increased heat stress on the crop.

The final point of the Sri Lankan statement reads:

"We are aware that critical Ecosystem Services such as the production of oxygen, sequestering of carbon, water cycling, and ambient cooling are carried out by the photosynthetic component of biomass. This is being lost at an exponential rate, because these Ecosystem Services have not been valued, nor economically recognized. We would request the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to examine the value of photosynthetic biomass."

Slowing down the loss of global terrestrial photosynthetic biomass stock is not an option—it is a critical need! A massive investment must go towards incrementing the global photosynthetic biomass stock. The potential value of this stock can also attract investment to develop market growth. Thus a discussion of the models of high utility and high photosynthetic productivity is urgent. The recognition and evaluation of photosynthetic biomass must become a primary driver of the restoration processes discussed above. It can energize the restoration of biodiversity and the restoration of environmental services. The current approaches to tree farming and forest management need to accept this potential of photosynthetic biomass and work towards realizing its value. For management purposes,

the photosynthetic biomass of a natural ecosystem has to be seen as a continuum of native species from the early seral stages, represented by annuals and short-lived species, to shrubs and bushes, to pioneer trees, to the mature tree-dominated, old-growth forest. If each stage is encouraged to carry its full complement of photosynthetic biomass, it will help ensure that the management plans address the generation and maintenance of the optimal levels of photosynthetic biomass in each seral stage and gain the corresponding value.

Ecosystem Services have become a stated goal in the new climate adaptation project by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) that could be implemented in the Knuckles mountains next year. In the evaluation of Primary Ecosystem Services (PES), creating oxygen and cleaning water, Sri Lanka is a pioneer. Their research promises a new economical way to add value to positive externalities produced by rural industry.

Climate Change is real, it will impact all of us. A platform for global discussion has been created, but it has been hijacked by the very people responsible for Climate Change. For us, we cannot do much except watch our 'delegates' dancing for dollars, as they look to show the white elephants that will bring them the dollars.



The Forest

Yudhanjaya Wijeratne

"There are no bleeding hearts in the forest," my grandfather used to say. "Only hearts that bleed."

As a child, I did not understand these words. As a child, my world was our creaking cottage, the endless puddles in our front yard, the scent of undergrowth after rain, the whispering of the trees.

My grandfather would groan and curse and potter around complaining about everything: the house he built, his back, the forest that kept us here. Every time it rained our cottage would spring new leaks, and the mosquitos would swarm out of the forest, hell-bent on their feast of blood.

But I loved the cool damp, the little drip-drip-drip that kept time for me, the little lizards and birds that came to our little verandah, looking for shelter. I even loved the smell that grew outward from the newspapers that we stuffed everywhere to patch up these holes; the smell of words written by people far, far away, mixed with the mud from our front yard.

You say that you wish to come into the forest, and live as I do. You ask me if you can buy this little cottage of mine. You offer me these notes, thinking that you are being fair, even generous.

I tell you now that your pretty bits of paper will do you no good out here. Throw them in the fire and listen.

My grandfather had two things he prized: a clock and a gun. The clock was a remnant of his marriage: a wedding gift that continued its duty long past my grandmother's death. *It's counting down the days until I die*, he would say, and yet he could not bring himself to be rid of it. On its clockface, in fading silver, were their initials, shaped into a heart.

The gun was an air rifle. Not the kind you use for competitions nowadays, but a heavy man-killer from the days of the old war, when gunpowder was scarce. With that gun, he brought home most of what we called food. Squirrel and rabbit and pheasant, mostly; sometimes deer.

Evidently, the old man had been trained, at some point. Every month he would take the rifle apart, fighting the growing arthritis in his fingers to clean and oil the springs and the barrel and the cocking mechanism. That was how I learned to tell time, growing up. The clock counted the days; the gun counted the months.

My grandfather spoke little of his days in the army, but he loved that gun. Just about the only thing it couldn't touch, he used to say, was the wild boar that hung around in the forest; an old, grouchy beast as adventurous as my grandfather and twice as ugly. My grandfather said Old Ugly had been hurt in the past by some overeager farmer, and now lived out his days in the kind of frothing anger that old boars fell into, half-mad with the pain.

I used to imagine them out there, stalking each other through the dim-lit forest, the man silent, the boar snarling; and then maybe they would even meet in a clearing, and both man and boar would see something of themselves in each other. *Until next time*, they'd say to each other, maybe, and both of them would go back to their ways.

As I grew older I began to understand the old man a bit better. There are no bleeding hearts in the forest. Only the

glory of a spider eating a fly; only the lizard that crawls, endlessly hungry, feasting on the spiders too in love with their webs to move; only the swift, screaming death of the lizard at the claws of a jungle-cat.

You say you want to buy my cottage. I know your kind. You think of lush forests and glades of summer romance. I think of the hidden spaces every hunter comes across; a space where to trespass is to suffer; a space where nothing that walks on two legs – not us, not even the golden monkeys – feels welcome. I think of red blood on whiskers, of the leeches that crawl, of the mushrooms that grow death, and of the trees that loom in the darkness, host to a thousand eyes.

No wonder we once made gods of these things and prayed to the forest to protect us. If my grandfather was old, quiet death, then the forest was, too, in a thousand ways crueller and more numerous. The old man with his clock and his gun was a part of the forest.

This is why I left as soon as I could. As a child, I was uncomfortable with death. As a boy, I dreamed of fleeing this place, leaving the dark glades for the places I read about in the newspapers that plastered our home. As a young man, I waited patiently,

learning everything my grandfather could teach me, counting down the hours with the clock.

When my grandfather died I buried him. I stilled and buried his clock, too. It seemed obscene that it should continue when its task was done.

The gun I kept on the mantelpiece, because even after all these years it was still beautiful; the maker had put work into it, and so had my grandfather.

Then I gathered up what little I had and set off to find my fortune.

It was hard going but eventually, I came to a place where people lived. They told me it was only a small city, but seemed to me like every person in the universe lived, worked, loved, laughed, wept there. They laughed when they said I lived in the forest. *Civilization*, they said proudly. *Look! Lights that burned in the night, houses that stretched to the sky, vehicles. Who wants to live in a forest like a savage?*

At first I was overwhelmed. I tell you the forest is a dark and dangerous place, but you do not understand how much more cruel a city is to people who do not fit in it. At first, I was taken for a beggar; there were many of us around after the war. Enough people were afraid of the dark and the damp

that there were spaces for those who did not fear, or had no choice.

Then I was arrested and released. For theft, they said, but I did not see what was wrong with taking the half-rotten fruits that others threw away. The city made mountains of waste every day. In the forest, all this would have been nourishment for some creature or even the soil – but here it was guarded jealously. Civilization, it seemed to me, was less about living and more about claiming everything, even when it meant nothing to you.

The police told me to find some work and threw me back out on the street.

For a while, I wandered the streets as best as I could. I was briefly employed in a bar of sorts, a place that specialised in wine. It was little more than a balcony on a half-built apartment at first, but the man who worked there knew his custom, and little by little made it a more welcoming place. Many unhappy people came there for a brief respite. Like any good hunter I tried to be invisible, but it so happened that people who are drunk become curious in foolish ways.

In this way, I learned about the city and its people.

The city was a forest.

They did not know it, but it was. The people wore colourful clothes and courted each other as extravagantly as any birds I ever saw. The buildings were trees; people swarmed in and out of them the way insects and squirrels do. The work that they were so proud of was little different from a colony of ants, eternally scheming, eternally toiling, thinking themselves masters of all that they surveyed. The vehicles that rumbled the streets, they were predators, loud and noisy. And there were other predators too, snakes in the dark alleys, waiting patiently for prey. In scorning the forest they had built their own. They even called it the concrete jungle when they were frustrated and tired.

The forest does not say, *welcome*. Live long enough in it, hear the trees grow, and you hear an older cry, more primal. This tree, bent and twisted, was old even in my grandfather's youth; *I was here before you were born*, it says, *I will be here when you are just a memory*. Treat the forest well – walk its paths, replant what you took – and one day you wake up and find that you, too, are part of the forest, a small system within a giant cacophony of systems. You earn your place in something older than you, and in doing so you belong. On some days you look out and understand what happens and why. On other days you cower and prepare for the worst.

So it was here as well. There were paths to walk, ways to replant, ways

to exist. There were people who were spiders; people who were lizards; people who were jungle-cats, with death stalking behind them; and, every so often, people who were trees, growing in silence, nurturing what they could, reaching for the sun. There were dark corners and streams.

The more I stayed the more I realised that this new forest, like mine, wanted to spread, wanted to remake everything in its own image. Even those who hated it, ultimately were part of what made it work, the same way that the monkeys are also a part of the forest, or the vines that wrap around old trees are also a part of the forest. Without this forest, they could not exist long enough to hate it. There were no bleeding hearts here, either, only hearts that bled.

The world, it seems to me, is a forest; wood or concrete, it does not matter.

Who wants to live in the forest like a savage? they had asked when I arrived. I did not respond because I did not have the words to explain that we all live in forests of a sort. It took me years to find the words. But when I tried, they did not understand, or want to understand. They laughed when I compared their lives to the things that I grew up with. They staggered home drunk, between the buildings that would outlast even their memories, crawling here and there on altars to even darker gods, spiders too in love with their own webs.

"Oblivious," said the man I worked for at the bar, when I tried to tell him this. "And briefly happy in their oblivion. This is the way of the world, my friend."

He was from a village, a far-off place called Naagoya. He buried himself in his work but sometimes he sat alone, a glass and a bottle on the balcony in front of him, staring out at the sea of lights and the busy streets. He would look at them and sigh. It seemed that he understood.

And with that experience came an understanding of why my grandfather chose the life he did. Because all the world is a forest of a different kind. The hawk, cutting the clouds, thinks itself master of the sky; the monkey, swinging through the tree-tops, thinks it is lord of the trees; the people I met and knew, briefly, thought themselves masters of their own lives, glorious centres of their own universes. Around them the forest continues, eternal, growing and dying, rotting and decaying, birthing new stories to reach for the sun.

I understood. Our only choice is what kind of forest we choose to be a part of. If that was the case then I saw no shame in going back to a forest that did not demand I drink myself into oblivion to survive it.

So I did my time; I made enough that I could buy myself what I needed, and one day I handed in my notice. The man I worked for understood.

"Home?" he asked me.

"Yes," I said.

Wordlessly he handed me a bottle of wine and an envelope. It was the expensive kind that Naagoya made. In the envelope was three months' wages.

I began the long, slow trek back home.

It was difficult. They say no man crosses the same river twice; for it is not the same river, and he is not the same man. So too was it with me and my return. Both the forest and I had changed.

I came across my grandfather's house, smelled the old must of the newspapers we had plastered into its cracks. My shoes were caked in mud; my hands torn.

The old gun was still on the mantelpiece. I took it down. I took my rags out and cleaned it and rested.

In the night the boar came. An ugly, misshapen thing, almost the size of a large man hunched over. Its fur was fraying, and from where I sat, watching it through the scope of the gun, I could see the litany of scars that criss-crossed its face, a tapestry of stories far richer than my own.

It looked my way and stood there in perfect silence. I knew then, as I do now, that if it saw me again it would kill me.

Eventually, I put the gun down. When I looked up the boar had vanished into the forest.

The forest did not say to me, *welcome*. It waited. It watched as with slow hands I rebuilt what I had once left behind. Sometimes I despaired, because the work was hard. But I thought of that other forest behind me, the city you come from, and I thought of how hard I had to work just to find something stale to eat, and I renewed my labour.

The forest waited. It blunted my tools and frustrated me. There were no police to jealously guard the waste, but I did go hungry. I was bitten and stung. I was clawed and hunted. I followed dim trails to places of danger, even death. At every point, the forest reminded me that it was here before I was born, and would outlast even my memory. To exist was to be part of it. I understood now that this was the promise it had made to my grandfather. There are no bleeding hearts in the forest; only hearts that bleed.

I accepted. I collected the dead branches for my fire and mended the fences. I collected the droppings of the forest and buried them where the soil was fading into clay. I took the fruit of the forest and planted it. On cold days I offered my little verandah for creatures that needed to escape the rain.

The forest grew closer, invited me to walk its paths again.

I watered the trees and cleared away their weeds and hunted as my grandfather once did, taking only a little, keeping away from those dark places that were sacrosanct. The forest crawled up to my fences, wrapped green fingers around them, and held them fast. The monkeys came to grow fat off the fruit trees. The birds came to refresh themselves in the pond I made for them.

You think I tamed the forest? No, it made me part of itself. I gave it my prayers and my toil. It let me exist. Here, have some wine. This bottle has lain here for years. Here, have some fruit. It ripened only yesterday.

And if the roof sprung leaks whenever it rained, if things stalk me at night, if unseen eyes sometimes crawl up to rest outside my window, that is simply the price of belonging in this world.

You say you wish to come here into the forest and live as we did. You ask me if you can buy this little cottage of mine. You say you wish to escape the city and live a simpler life here. You come here with your illusions and offer me these notes, thinking that you are being fair, even generous.

I say to you: the choice is not mine. Put aside your pretty bits of paper. Walk the forest. Bleed, suffer, learn its ways. Let it make you its promise.

And see if you have the heart to accept.

Sonic Companion

A Thousand Channels

This third iteration of *A Thousand Channels*, produced with Colomboscope festival, is a sonic companion to its delving into the forest—not merely an ecological area of land dominated by trees, but a multiple lifeworld that necessitates mutual and connective strategies of preservation and growth. Taking its title from Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* ("one way ashore, a thousand channels"), this online radio programme has developed slowly, dynamically and collaboratively with artists, writers, thinkers and activists over the last nine years, and continues to embrace Glissant's idea of relation as shared knowledge, inseparable from the complex grounds in which it is co-produced.

Thinking of the project as a living sonic archive, full of continuous noise, sonorous silences and conflictive plays between sustenance and decay, can situate this year's radiophonic offering. In **Hong-Kai Wang's** reflective contribution we listen near—rather than to—struggles and memories of the Indigenous Tsou nation in Taiwan, via the songs and prison letters of the assassinated politician and composer Uong e Yatayungana in the voices of his descendants and friends. Named after the forested mountain where he lived, the track initiates a collective arrangement that whistles within trees that we pray remain steadfast. A potent

composition by artist and singer **Bint Mbareh**, who has long been curious about the superpower of communal listening, brings together her recent field recordings and rain-summoning practices of settler-colonized Palestine. A spacious memoryscape by festival artist **Monica de Miranda** encounters migration and loss between Europe and Africa through objects left behind and narratives of decoloniality and crisis, while an exchange between Mallorca-based artist **Fernando García-Dory** and Colombo-based rainforest protector **Dr Ranil Senanayake** bridges ongoing ecological work in minor scales. Finally, **Amuleto Manuela's** revisitation of her listening sessions on dandelions and Afro-Colombian rhythms in moments of ceremonial transition asks us to consider not just the resilience of communities, be they plants or people, but their flowering.

As *A Thousand Channels* is self-consciously a resource to be used after this edition of the festival is long over, these contributions gathered together can help us interpret Lorde's delicate words generously and expansively. At a time of seismic and ongoing political, humanitarian, and environmental injustices, we can communicate quietly, listen in difficulty— and tread softly.

If you come as softly
As wind within the trees
You may hear what I hear
See what sorrow sees.

If you come as lightly
As threading dew
I will take you gladly
Nor ask more of you.

You may sit beside me
Silent as a breath
Only those who stay dead
Shall remember death.

And if you come I will be silent
Nor speak harsh words to you.
I will not ask you why, now.
Or how, or what you do.

We shall sit here, softly
Beneath two different years
And the rich earth between us
Shall drink our tears.

– Audre Lorde, *If You Come Softly*

Mushroomings

For the full programme, follow our website and social media channels

CONVERSATIONS, WALKS, AND WORKSHOPS

Wetland Walks with Small Cat Advocacy and Research (SCAR)

Colombo, a city of contrasts, holds a remarkable secret that few are aware of. With over 277 species of fauna and 250 species of flora, Colombo's urban wetlands are diverse and thriving ecosystems that act as the beating heart of this ever-changing metropolitan landscape. This series of Wetland Walks led by SCAR (Small Cat Advocacy and Research) and envisioned for Colomboscope audiences embark on dynamic learning trails across the city's mangroves and water bodies.

Urban Wetland Walk at Beddegana Wetland Park

This Wetland Walk takes you on an educational trail with artist Firi Rahman to foster a better understanding of urban habitats and wildlife around Colombo's wetlands, while introducing the conservation work of SCAR (Small Cat Advocacy and Research).

Night Walk at Thalangama Lake

During this excursion you'll explore the transitions in a wetland habitat by night time, while also looking out for the elusive fishing cat, and more lakeside inhabitants—learning all about the ethics of night-time wildlife viewing.

Shared Tides | Residency Showcase and Talk

Connected by a conflicted past, but also by the continuums of shared waters, language, cuisine, cultures, climatic conditions, fishing systems, art, and dance forms—Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka have a long, shared history. Shared Tides is an attempt to relook at the very notion of borders, citizenship, and identity cross-shared by these two geographies.

The residency showcase presents the projects of Kiranmayi Veeramani and Subthiḡa M from Tamil Nadu, and Lojithan Ram and Tharmapalan Tilaxan from Sri Lanka. The four lens-based artists worked with local resources on the respective other side of the shore to develop cross-cultural bodies of work on shared histories, cultures, and environments.

The Shared Tides residency program is supported by Goethe-Institut Chennai and Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka and organised by the Chennai Photo Biennale Foundation and Kālam Jaffna.

Wetland Scavenger Hunt at Diyasaru Wetland Park

This distinctive scavenger hunt is a fun-filled eco adventure, putting you into the shoes of a Wildlife Biologist.

Conversations with the Forest Gods | Parrotfish Collective

Parrotfish Collective is a group of conservation professionals and wildlife enthusiasts turned conservation communicators, who re-communicate science in visual and creative ways. The collective focuses on developing engaging educational content that bridges the gap between conservation professionals on the frontlines and the public. Their mission is to inspire and empower communities with knowledge that can be mobilised towards environmental protection and provide the impetus to achieve lasting change.

At Colomboscope, Parrotfish Collective is facilitating a workshop that introduces participants to urgent conservation issues and how these can be communicated in an accessible manner, while examining how urban citizens connect with multispecies ecology and diverse territories. Participants will be invited to reimagine a paradisaic relationship with the forest and reverence via examining nature worship practices that have prevailed in the island and sustained by Indigenous ways of life, for centuries, through ceremonies, healing practices, festivals held in old-growth forests and the sacred realm of forest spirits.

I am because we are | CoCA - Symbiosis Activation

CoCa, Collective of Contemporary Artists, is the first pioneering art organisation in Sri Lanka that focuses on ecology-based socially engaged, sustainable art forms and practices connected with mind, society, and environment. Local and international award-winning artists Poornima Jayasinghe and Chinthaka Thenuwara are the co-founders of the collective.

The CoCa activation at Colomboscope invites young minds to free roaming explorations using games based on ecological principles, journaling, and exercises around conservation, trust building, and reuse in everyday life—attuning to the eight senses from the auditory to the olfactory.

Distributing the Forest | Zine-making workshop with BLAK C.O.R.E. & The Packet

Participants will work together with members of the artist collective The Packet, Kieren Karripul and Trent Walter (BLAK C.O.R.E.) to think and learn together about how we can distribute/duplicate the forest of thoughts, relations, materials, and situatedness in the form of a zine. Through this reflexive and playful approach, various textual, drawing, and printing processes will be used to compose pages that will be combined into a publication.

PERFORMANCES

skanda swaroopayak | SpaceEka

SpaceEka is an artist residency situated in Maharagama, Colombo, comprising a diverse collective of artists hailing from various artistic disciplines, ethnicities, and genders. SpaceEka recognized the paramount significance of providing artists with a safe space to live, practice, and share knowledge. The SpaceEka team created an environment that fosters a deep exploration of the philosophical underpinnings surrounding one's existence as a human being. It became a hub for sharing knowledge and, most crucially, for navigating the complexities of artistic creation amidst life's challenges.

skanda swaroopayak is a sound and movement exploration over the course of an evening conceived by SpaceEka together with several artists, filmmakers, and musicians. It sets forth a sentient immersion into the inextricable relationship between the natural world and human lives as a temporal continuum. Through preparatory cohabitation at the residency space, this process-led evening anticipates the forest woven within the human mind, unfurling freely across the SpaceEka Artists' Residency.

SONIC ACTS AND LISTENING EXPERIENCES

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. For its tenth edition, KACHA KACHA brings together poets, rappers, beatmakers, and a lively and fun full band. Returning to the Government Service Sports Club, participants include Dinoj M, SajaS, Nida Admani, Mishal Mazin, Mayun Kalu & Uvindu Perera, Xyren, Ka(ra)mi and Orange Mango.

With the support of the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia



Terra Pulse | Norient with Coco Em and Ka(ra)mi

Shifting the pulse from Kenya and Swiss wintertime for a tropical January evening, Colomboscope takes great joy to present a session with cross-oceanic allies on the decks—facilitated through a festival season collaboration with the global platform NORIENT. This rare musical collaboration brings the freshest sounds from Nairobi to Paris for a shake down at Colombo's SNAFU—dream project (in the making) of the multi-talented crew behind Jambutek and Pettah Interchange.

Nairobi-based DJ, filmmaker, and Artistic Director of the 13. Norient Festival, Coco Em will be unleashing her contagious blend of genres from kudoro, linga, hip hop to afro house to electrify from ears to feet. She will be joined for an elevating set by Swiss artist, DJ and producer of Haitian-Hungarian origin, Ka(ra)mi, adding soul, house and Caribbean influences to the mix. The only thing we can foresee is that this night will be over sooner than anyone is ready.

Norient is an audiovisual gallery and a community (of practice) for the sound of the world: contemporary music, quality journalism, cutting-edge research, projects, and events like the Norient Festival. Norient conceives music, sound, and noise as seismographs of our time, facilitating space and place for thinkers and artists from (currently) 50 countries, to tell new and different stories of the now and tomorrow.

With the support of the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia

N/A | Audio Visual Showcase

Non-Applicable (N/A) is a live electronic music act and audio-visual collaboration involving two experienced practitioners of the form, Nigel Perera and Asvajit. Representing the culmination of a decade-long journey of artistic co-development, the project serves as an outlet for the duo's combined musical output across a multiplicity of genres and stylistic frameworks ranging from dub, jazz, and funk to the many sub-genres of house and techno music. With its emphasis on hardware-based live performances and multifaceted visual experiences, N/A carries a distinctive gradient of resonances that elevate locally made electronic music as an artistic medium.

OPEN AIR CINEMA

WOMEN WARRIORS RECLAIM THE EARTH / *Norient with Coco Em*

Supported by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia

Dr Wangari Maathai once said, "It is the people who must save the environment. It is the people who must make their leaders change. We cannot be intimidated. We must stand up for what we believe in." This is a cinematic tribute to women of colour who continue to speak out, to fight the powers that be, to guard and preserve our environment and to dedicate their lives to create a sacred link for us and our ancestors. From the leafy green forests of Chocó department in 'Songs that flood the river' to the staggering portrait of debris-laden and putrid dump sites in 'Terra Mater', I invite you to witness these powerful works by the women of colour who have taken a stand to heal our earth! Will we stand with them?

TAKING ROOT: THE VISION OF WANGARI MAATHAI

Lisa Merton, Alan Dater | Kenya | 2008 | 81 min.

Growing up in Nairobi in the early 90's, Wangari Maathai was a common household name. One I had made synonymous with bravery and to some extent, madness. Dr Wangari was the only woman I had known who was 'mad' enough to stand up to a dictator's (President Moi) regime, and call it out for its corruption and intolerance to taking care of the environment. She defended the forest with her own body and inspired many more women and men to do the same.

In the spirit of Dr. Wangari Maathai, the first African woman and environmentalist to receive a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and the creator of the Green Belt Movement, Taking Root celebrates her vision. In 1977, Maathai initiated a tree-planting movement to address environmental degradation, which evolved into a nationwide effort promoting environmental conservation, human rights, and democracy.

SONGS THAT FLOOD THE RIVER

German Arango | Colombia | 2021 | 72 min.

Set in the green and lush, biodiverse background of the Chocó department of Colombia, a group of Afro Colombian women write and sing songs to cope with the devastating impact of armed conflict in Colombia and to wish those who are deceased as a result of war, a good journey into the hereafter. The songs sound like prayers. They are mortuary rituals.

'Songs that Flood the River' focuses on the life of Oneida, an Afro-Colombian woman from the Chocó department. Oneida finds solace in singing Alabaos as a means of communal healing. This story delves into the aftermath of the Bojayá massacre, highlighting the resilience of the community and the role of these songs in preserving cultural heritage.

TERRA MATER (MOTHER LAND)

Kandarama Gahigiri | Rwanda | 2023 | 10 min.

Supported by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia

"Technology and waste, in our lands, our systems, our bones. Wandering our spaces, she cannot help but wonder, where is the space for healing?" Whose responsibility is it to take care of the earth? In the first few minutes of Terra Mater, I am both in awe and repulsed by the beautifully composed shot of an overflowing dumpsite. This powerful short film by a good friend, Kantarama Gahigiri, forces us to see the magnitude of our destruction of the planet.

Terra Mater is an immediate and urgent message for a world exacerbated by global capitalism and modernism. It is a protest against capitalist ideologies and instincts. The film also emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity, demonstrated starkly by the global impact of crises such as Covid-19.

GHOST 2561-2565 / Korakrit Arunanondchai & Christina Li

Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka

From the forest to the sea, from air to stone, a ghost dwells within and embodies a time which comes alive to us through fictions. These historical and emergent narratives transform individual experiences into shared realities that survive beyond the realm of the living.

The films brought together in this screening were selected from the two editions of Ghost, a video and performance art series that occurs every three years in Bangkok, Thailand. The first edition, Ghost 2561 (2018) was curated by founder and artist Korakrit Arunanondchai; the subsequent edition Ghost 2565: Live Without Dead Time (2022) was curated by Christina Li. In this collection, we witness how natural and manufactured subjects can haunt and possess novel forms of life, and knowledge. Intricately intertwined with our past and future, they exist alongside the silent breathing of the world, under the decomposing ground under our feet, and in the atmosphere of the sky above us—where spirit remains.

LUMAPIT SA AKIN, PARAISO (COME TO ME, PARADISE)

Stephanie Comilang | Canada and Germany | 2016 | 25 min.

Lumapit Sa Akin, Paraiso (Come to Me Paradise) is a science fiction documentary set against the backdrop of Hong Kong, where Filipina migrant workers occupy Central on Sundays. The film is narrated from the perspective of Paraiso, a ghost played by a drone who speaks of the isolation of being uprooted and thrown into a new place. Paraiso awaits her reprieve every Sunday, when she is finally able to interact with the women and feel her purpose—which is to transmit their vlogs, photos, and messages back home. Only when the women gather en masse is the signal strong enough for them to summon Paraiso for upload. The rest of the week, Paraiso is forced back into isolation and is left in an existential rut.

WA'ANAK WITU WATU

Natasha Tontey | North Sulawesi, Indonesia | 2021 | 24 min.

Wa'anak Witu Watu is co-produced by Other Futures and transmediale.

Researched and speculated in North Sulawesi where it was once believed that the first person was a woman and gave birth through a stone, Wa'anak Witu Watu investigates the fiction, myth, and cosmology of the Minahasan and their relation to the geo entity stone. The indigenous practice of the Minahasa tribe—where humans celebrate their form of communication with stone—is understood as only a pre-institutionalised religious practice and categorised as animist belief. However, people living there see themselves practising monotheism. There are almost no boundaries between Life and Non-Life in Minahasa cosmology. Wa'anak Witu Watu sees the dynamics of the Minahasa worldview through the perspective of digital culture, speculating on its potential for imagining an alternative society based on a reciprocity that brings together animate and inanimate realms.

MANGOSTEEN

Tulapop Saenjaroen | Thailand | 2022 | 39 min.

Commissioned by Ghost Foundation and OPEN FIELD.

ResearMangosteen tells the story of Earth, a young man who returns to his hometown, Rayong, where his sister, Ink, runs a fruit processing factory. During a casual meeting, Earth finds out that his definition of the term 'future' is drastically different from his sister's. The more he tries to involve himself in the fruit juice business, the less he feels needed there. Earth eventually decides to distance himself from the family operation and resumes his old hobby, writing a violent, psychic, irrational, abstract, gory, and unrealistic novel.

LHAI TORN

Chantana Tirapachart | Thailand | 9 min.

The illuminated boat procession or Lai Reua Fai is a tradition that was created by people in northeast Thailand. The local people called it 'Heua Fai'. It has been practised to mark the end of Buddhist Lent on the 15th day of the waxing moon on the 11th lunar month. The procession is held for many reasons of belief such as worshipping the Buddha's footprints and Baka Phrom, to sacrifice for Phra That Chulamane, to be thankful to the Goddess of Water, and to pay respect to the Goddess of Fire.

TRACES OF THE VANISHING FOREST / DIFF on the Road

Supported by Goethe-Institut New Delhi

Dharamshala International Film Festival's peripatetic and constantly changing programme—DIFF On the Road—brings curated selections of films to venues and locations across India and beyond. DIFF On the Road was envisioned as part of the festival's mandate to build networks of cinematic solidarity in South Asia and to extend the space for discourse around independent cinema.

In keeping with Colomboscope's thematic concern for this edition, DIFF On the Road showcases two films that delve deeply into the myths, legends, and spirits of disappearing forests, and their lingering impact on those forced to migrate to the concrete jungles of urban worlds.

THE FEVER

Dir. Maya Da-Rin | Brazil | 2019 | 98 min.

Brazilian director Maya Da-Rin's multi-layered, dreamlike feature debut, *The Fever*, subtly tracks the growing alienation of Justino, a member of an indigenous Brazilian tribe, now displaced from his forest home and earning a living as a security guard in the city of Manaus. A mysterious fever overcomes him even as events in the present force him to confront his increasingly tenuous links with his ancestral home.

AN INVOCATION TO THE EARTH

Dir. Yeo Siew Hua | Singapore | 2020 | 16 min.

Supported by Goethe-Institut, Sri Lanka

Singaporean director, screenwriter and visual artist, Yeo Siew Hua's experimental short, confronts climate collapse through the lens of pre-colonial folktales and animistic rituals from a tropical rain forest in Southeast Asia. Through spoken spells and bodily entanglements, the video conjures up the fallen environmental defenders of a region ridden with ecological threats in the hope that their spirits will be reborn once again.

Visitor Information

FESTIVAL DATES

19th – 28th January, 2024

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

All venues open from 10 AM till 7 PM during the festival period

For Mushroomings' information refer to the printed handout and festival website. Reach out to Colomboscope volunteers onsite for any inquiries.

FESTIVAL VENUES

JDA Parera Gallery

46 Horton Place, Colombo 7

Part of this venue is wheelchair accessible

Barefoot Gallery

704 Colombo - Galle Main Rd, Colombo 3

This venue is wheelchair accessible

Colombo Public Library (Garden)

15 Sir Marcus Fernando Mawatha, Colombo 7

Part of this venue is wheelchair accessible

SNAFU

147a Kynsey Rd, Colombo 7

Part of this venue is wheelchair accessible

Festival Code of Conduct

AS YOU PREPARE to join us for the festival this year, we ask that you endorse this 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 set of values 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!

Acknowledgements

Like the Tree of Life, this Colomboscope edition has grown organically through entanglements of older and newer dialogues with artists and cultural partners across the island as well as disparate corners of the world.

Our endeavour towards South Asian 'archipelagic' collaborations has manifested through guest curators Sarker Protick of Chobi Mela and Pathshala (Bangladesh) and Hit Man Gurung and Sheelasha Rajbhandari from Artree Nepal. Their artistic visions composed a lively and intuitively driven curatorial process. Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation (DBF), Rockbund Art Museum, Art Jameel, Ishara Art Foundation, 421, and long-term collaborator Gujral Foundation have played a crucial role in greatly enhancing this regionally spirited conversation. This compendium is realised with the enthusiastic support of the Art South Asia Project (ASAP).

FFAI as a global platform supporting pioneering independent arts initiatives has been a foundational resource for Colomboscope's continued journey. Among the founding partners, Goethe-Institut plays a huge role in extending

infrastructure and encouragement at every turn to deepen transregional exchanges through its robust network in South Asia. Pro Helvetia has enabled a festival-to-festival partnership with the brilliant sonic platform and peer-oriented music network Norient. Through Anna Arabindan-Kesson at Princeton University, an inaugural research partnership evolved with Art Hx. There has been further learning and resource sharing with Berlin-based Spore Initiative and BLAK C.O.R.E at the University of Melbourne through generously connecting us to First Nations and indigenous community actors and educators in Australia and Yucatán peninsula.

Local partners and venue hosts are invaluable to the sustenance and relevance of such a platform. Immense gratitude goes to our allies and associates at Barefoot Gallery, J.D.A. Perera Gallery at the University of Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo Public Library, SNAFU, Kālam, Anim8, The Asia Foundation, MMCA, and long-standing media partner Wijeya newspapers.

Extensive thanks go to the country representatives, embassies, high commissions, and arts councils who have placed trust in our creative vision of centering diasporic and increasingly diverse cultural practices.

We are lucky to be surrounded yearlong by the commitment and convivial energies of artists, collectives, and established platforms to nascent artist-led and ecological initiatives that bring a multiverse of perspectives and creative resilience. The festival team: Shahdia Jamaldeen, Vidhi Todi, Marie Waarlo, Jan Ramesh de Saram has been rock steady, ingeniously problem-solving, keeping bad humour, and embracing the logistical rollercoasters behind artistic processes. The visual identity of the festival is a huge artistic undertaking adding a dimension to the curatorial vision, led by Fold Media Collective.

Much gratitude to our incredible production crew, especially Nishantha Hettiarachchi and Sonya Rajendran, who have persevered across venues and performed daily miracles. Special thanks to The Asia Foundation fellow Rhian Paranavitana.

The circle of Festival Patrons, Friends of the Festival and supporting art galleries have assured Colomboscope can manifest thirty commissioned projects and live acts, and continue mentoring young artistic practitioners.

Finally, we owe appreciation to fresh and returning audiences for spending time amidst our wild thinking, communal making, and the spirited encounters that will continue to resonate into unpredictable futures.

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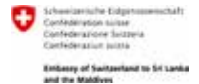
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JHAVERI CONTEMPORARY

SHRINE EMPIRE

project 88



Desiderata

Colomboscope recognizes the Aragalaya movement of 2022 as a radical social experiment and civic demand for political transformation. The people's movement brought together citizens from all walks of life across economic, ethnic, and religious communities with progressive and fearless demands for the end of Rajapaksa family rule—challenging the executive presidential system, economic crimes, militaristic brutality, and the corrupt political class which led the country into a spiralling debt crisis.

Over months, the epicentre of this struggle, GotaGoGama at Galle Face in Colombo became a site of daily protests, youth leadership, creative resurgence with a library, revolutionary art, legal clinics, public assemblies, as well as commemorative spaces across faiths. For a brief period, collective demands for systemic change and people-focused governance brought overwhelming results and added pressure to unshakable behemoths.

The seeming awakening of a broad political consciousness was subsequently crushed and its legacy continues to be erased by the day as the elite old guard ruthlessly transacts power and threatens dissidents. This latest chapter of the people's struggle must not be forgotten because it revealed once again that liberation is an unfinished project in an authoritarian post-war state exploited for corporate interests.

As a cultural platform, Colomboscope stands for inclusive visions of leadership, mutual respect, and polyphonous and equitable futures for this island and beyond. Repressive systems must perish, and the massive calls for change resonate the world over. After all, "What goes too long unchanged destroys itself. The forest is forever because it dies and dies and so lives"



COLOMBOSCOPE

interdisciplinary arts festival

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Tamarra Jayasundera / Thava Thajendran
The Initiative for Practices and Visions of Radical Care
with Myriam Mihindou, Tawfiq Sediqi and Elena Sorokina
Thujiba Vijayalayan / Trent Walter / Venuri Perera and
Eisa Joeson / Zihan Karim

EXHIBITION VENUES

J.D.A. Perera Gallery
Public Library Garden
Barefoot Gallery
SNAFU Project

www.colomboscope.lk