



Press Release (January 2022)

The Seventh Edition of Colomboscope: Language is Migrant

The seventh edition of the interdisciplinary art festival Colomboscope will open on 20 January 2022 (on invitation with limited capacity). The exhibition and events will be on view to the public and freely accessible from 21 to 30 January 2022. This festival edition brings together over 50 Sri Lankan and international artists, especially fostering South Asian dialogue and encounters with cultural practitioners from the diaspora with exhibitions and events spread over 6 venues across Colombo. Colomboscope 2022 is curated by Anushka Rajendran with artistic director Natasha Ginwala.

Embarking from the words of poet-artist Cecilia Vicuña: ‘Language is Migrant’ – artistic and literary contributions map hybrid belonging, diasporic lineages, and coerced dislocation. Across six chapters, this edition explores how language relations form our selfhood and affinities that outweigh the bind of nationhood and citizenship. Between the counterpoints of stillness and motion we situate practices that critically explore emancipatory and forced mobility—for we cannot deny that the world as we know it is composed of movement at galactic, human, and atomic levels. Artists compose, decipher and perform as vital travelers and storytellers of our times. Often, repairing relations by drawing material articulations from deep losses, silence and erasures while inventing language forms as bridges between communal narratives, official records, and submerged histories.

Colombo Public Library

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

Nearby, the open air **Lak Cafe** at the Viharamahadevi Park hosts the project, ‘The Hearing Voices Café’ bringing together each evening, a series of conversations, acts of recitation, and performances engaging with traditions of voice hearing and the vital role of ‘voice hearers’ in language, art, psychiatry-related resistance and civil rights movements.

Rio Complex

Returning to the Rio Complex, the festival brings to this legendary building several artists' propositions that treat its scarred architecture as a sonic chamber where a multitude of voices, accents, chants, confessions, and whispers flow together like a river. Each room invites forms of recording, bearing witness, time travel, and interventions to mark collective belonging amidst anguish and joy. Projects delve into botanical memory, culinary legacies, aesthetics of sacred life as well as enduring resonances of warfare and incarceration. Language is Migrant engages ways of listening for gaps and crossings between fearless expression and regimes of power enforcing silence.

W A Silva Museum and Printing Press

The W A Silva Museum and Printing Press led by the Akuru Collective in the former home of best-selling author of Sinhalese literature, W A Silva, showcases a complete traditional letterpress and a collection of wood and metal types. Here, artistic presentations include site-responsive works that are in dialogue with the transforming role of print culture and its relation across virtual and analogue systems of staging literature. Contemporary practices challenge the universalism that majoritarian tongues pronounce as the only possible truth. Instead, they assemble statements that are playful, subversive, and investigative acts of reportage.

Barefoot Gallery

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

Lakhmahal Community Library

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

Festival Participants

Language is Migrant participants include Aaraniyam (Sri Lanka), Lawrence Abu Hamdan (United Kingdom / Lebanon), Mounira Al Solh (Netherlands / Lebanon), We Are From Here (Sri Lanka), Abdul Halik Azeed (Sri Lanka), Palash Bhattacharjee (Bangladesh), Muvindu Binoy (Sri Lanka), Shailesh BR (India), Lavkant Chaudhary (Nepal), Jason Dodge (Germany), Liz Fernando (Germany), Dora García (Spain / Norway) with Jayampathi Guruge (Sri Lanka), Aziz Hazara (Afghanistan / Germany), Baaraan Ijlal (India), Omar Kasmani (Germany), Areez Katki (New Zealand), T. Krishnapriya (Sri Lanka), Mariah Lookman (Sri Lanka / Pakistan), Imaad Majeed (Sri Lanka), Danushka Marasinghe (Sri Lanka), Vijitharan Maryathevathas (Sri Lanka), Sharika Navamani (Sri Lanka), Yoshinori Niwa (Japan), Christian Nyampeta (Netherlands / USA), Pınar Öğrenci (Germany / Turkey), Packiyathan Ahilan (Sri Lanka), Rupaneethan Pakkiyarajah (Sri Lanka), Pallavi Paul (India), Rajni Perera (Canada), Saskia Pintelon (Sri Lanka), Mano Prashath (Sri Lanka), Ahilan Ratnamohan (Australia), M. T. F. Rukshana (Sri Lanka), Marinella Senatore (Italy) with Hasanthi Niriella (Sri Lanka) and Ashley Fargnoli (Sri Lanka), Hema Shironi (Sri Lanka), Hanusha Somasundaram (Sri Lanka), Pangrok Sulap (Malaysia), Anojan Suntharam (Sri Lanka), Slavs and Tatars (Germany), Thisath Thoradeniya (Sri Lanka), A Thousand Channels (United Kingdom), Iffath Neetha Uthumalebbe (Sri Lanka), Cecilia Vicuña (Chile / USA), T. Vinoja (Sri Lanka), Elin Már Øyen Vister (Norway), Omer Wasim (Pakistan), Jagath Weerasinghe (Sri Lanka), Belinda Zhawi (United Kingdom).

Additional contributors to *Reading in Tongues*, Colomboscope’s Reading Room at Lakmahal Community Library include Indran Amirthanayagam, Kadak Collective, Mythri Jegathesan, kal, Kumari Kumaragamage, Mantiq of the Mantis, The Packet, SCROLL: Projects on Paper, Mounira Al Solh and Nada Ghosn, T. Thajendran, Bombay Underground.

Anushka Rajendran, Festival Curator

Anushka Rajendran is an independent curator and writer based in Delhi. Her ongoing curatorial research traces how the notion of public has acquired alternative significance to contemporary art in recent years, as well as the aesthetics of engagement within exhibition frameworks. This is informed by her previous research on responses by artists living in India in the 1990s to political and cultural trauma which has since expanded to encompass the South Asia region. She is the curator of Prameya Art Foundation, Delhi and other curatorial projects include Kochi Muziris Biennale 2018 (India), Asian Art Biennial 2021 (Taiwan), and Colomboscope 2022 (Sri Lanka).

Natasha Ginwala, Artistic Director

Natasha Ginwala is Associate Curator at Gropius Bau, Berlin, Artistic Director of Colomboscope and Co-Artistic Director of the 13th Gwangju Biennale with Defne Ayas, 2021. Ginwala has curated Contour Biennale 8, *Polyphonic Worlds: Justice as Medium* and was part of the curatorial team of documenta 14, 2017. Other recent projects include *Bani Abidi: The Man Who Talked Until He Disappeared* at MCA Chicago (with Hoor al Qasimi and Bana Kattan), 2021; *Arrival, Incision. Indian Modernism as Peripatetic Itinerary* in the framework of ‘Hello World. Revising a Collection’ at Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, 2018; *Riots: Slow Cancellation of the Future* at ifa Gallery Berlin and Stuttgart, 2018; *My East is Your West* at the 56th Venice Biennale, 2015; and *Corruption: Everybody Knows* with e-flux,

New York, 2015. Ginwala was a member of the artistic team for the 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2014, and has co-curated *The Museum of Rhythm*, at Taipei Biennial 2012 and at Muzeum Sztuki, Lodz, 2016-17. Ginwala writes on contemporary art and visual culture in various periodicals and has contributed to numerous publications.

Media Contact

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