# An arty treat

Posted on

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**For the lover of art, the many galleries in Colombo house stunning collections of art. These paintings, sculptures and creations of both the masters of art and emerging artists, not only showcase their skills, but also present to the discerning public, the art collector and buyer, a rare treat. We browsed through some of these galleries to see what each of them had in store for those who adore art.**

***By Madhushala Senaratne | Photography by Menaka Aravinda***

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**Paradise Road Galleries**

Stunning pieces of art at Paradise Road Galleries Portraying a definite style

Rich art adorns the walls of the Paradise Road Galleries. Set at the entrance to The Gallery Café, visitors are given the opportunity to take a good look at these striking images as they wander across the large open spaces. They are contemporary art, and each portrays the definite style of the artist. The theme and signature varies depending on the artist whose work is displayed here at a given hour.

This space was once the office of the renowned architect Geoffrey Bawa. The gallery was opened in 1998, after Shanth Fernando, Chairman of the Paradise Road

Galleries converted this into a space for artists – both established and young – to showcase their work. “This has become one of the most sought after galleries in Colombo because we have consistently shown good art,” he explains.

Portraying a definite style

An ardent art collector, Fernando says that he takes pride in selecting the art himself and conducting exhibitions. Works are selected based on the artists’ strengths and identity. He adds, “we look for artists who have a definite or signature style.”

Among the artists who regularly exhibit their work at Paradise Road Galleries are Jagath Ravindra, Vajira Gunawardena, Jagath Weerasinghe, Sanjeewa Kumara, Kingsley Gunathilake, J C Ratnayake, Pramith Geekiyanage, Sanjay Seneviratne, Mahen Perera and Anup Vega. Exhibitions held at the Paradise Road Galleries go on for three weeks and currently Mahen Perera is showcasing his work at the gallery until June 7, 2010.

Artists also have the opportunity to gain more exposure and showcase their work to the right audience. Discerning art collectors and potential buyers are invited, and an individual catalogue is also published for the artist and exhibition. Many artists have benefited immensely from these exhibitions, especially, when they make contact with art enthusiasts, who, in turn, have gone on to promote their work.

Open 10 am to midnight Paradise Road Galleries, 2 Alfred House Road, Off Alfred House Gardens, Colombo 3 (+94 11) 258 2162, info@paradiseroadsl.com, paradiseroadsl.com

**Saskia Fernando Gallery**

Exciting works at the Saskia
Fernando Gallery

Artists have left their mark on the outer walls of the Saskia Fernando Gallery, beckoning the curious traveller to find out what is inside. An array of exciting paintings hang on the walls. Sculptures and installations stand alongside these.

Having opened its doors just over a year ago, the Saskia Fernando Gallery promotes

contemporary Sri Lankan art. This, as Saskia Fernando states, refers to Sri Lankan by origin or Sri Lankan by way of expressing. “The majority of artists I represent are Sri Lankan, they paint Sri Lankan concepts or spend a considerable amount of time here,” she adds. Work of both established and emerging artists, male and female are displayed here.

“I work with around 20 artists, but there are 10 artists whom I represent full time and I carry a selection of their work with me at all times. Therefore, anybody who is looking for work from that particular artist can come to me,” she says, adding that the younger artists are always something to watch out for.

Installations are among the creative works displayed here

Published art books are also available here. The gallery does not hold many exhibitions, but rather seeks to support the artists all year round. However, Saskia Fernando Gallery continuously presents new work to the discerning viewer, while also providing more international level exposure to the artists featured at the gallery. Expressing her views on the local art industry, she says it’s growing quite fast and the need for galleries is also increasing. She adds, there are a handful of very good artists and galleries that art enthusiasts should watch out for.

Open Wednesday to Saturday from 10 am to 7 pm and Sundays from 12 noon to 6 pm Saskia Fernando Gallery, 61 Dharmapala Mawatha, Colombo 7, (+94 11) 742 9010, info@saskiafernandogallery.com, saskiafernandogallery.com

**Barefoot Gallery Colombo**

Bold and vivid colours decorate the walls leading towards the Barefoot Gallery

Striking images of local and international artists and photographers are among the displays that can be found at Barefoot Gallery Colombo. Nazreen Sansoni, Director, Barefoot Gallery, believes that in order to truly appreciate the works displayed here, one needs to take a glimpse at the gallery’s past.

Barbara Sansoni, the founder of Barefoot, was herself a painter. “She had a strong

instinct for colours. Art was her first love," recalls Nazreen. In the 1950s and '60s, a few of the artists would often meet at her house. However, there was a need for a small exhibition space and thus the Colombo Gallery was founded. It was reopened as 706 at its current location with an exhibition by George Claessen in 1993. From thereon, the gallery evolved and acquired the name, Barefoot Gallery Colombo.

This is one of the first commercial art galleries, says Nazreen. Over the years, the gallery has provided a space for artists and photographers to showcase their works and has hosted numerous international level exhibitions including the World Press Photo Exhibition, 'Portraits of Commitment' by Shahidul Alam, the University of Kelaniya Annual Degree exhibition, and travelling exhibitions brought to Colombo by international organisations such as the Public Affairs office of the United States of America, the Brazilian Embassy and the Italian Embassy.

Creative expressions

Artists regularly featured at Barefoot include Alex Stewart, Druvinka Madawela, Nelun Harasgama, Laki Senanayake, Manoranjan Herath and most recently W M P Suadarshana Bandara a lecturer from the Department of Fine Arts, at the University of Peradeniya. In the 1990's this Gallery was host to some of the finest art that has come out of Sri Lanka, spearheaded by Jagath Weerasinghe who introduced the concept of the 'post modern movement' to Sri Lanka. The art at that time questioned traditional roles in society and notions of identity.

The gallery has hosted numerous photographic exhibitions ¬- one of the more memorable ones is – 'War and Peace' an exhibition curated by Kasra Naji president of the Foreign Correspondent's Association in 2004. The exhibition consisted of work produced by five hard working Sri Lankan photojournalists. The idea was to bring out the value of peace by showing photos of the era of war, as well as the past three years of peace. This exhibition took place in 2004, and to date it has been their most successful exhibition yet, gauged by the number of attendees and the comments written in the guest book.

An exciting series of exhibitions are also lined up for June and July. These include an Exhibition of Paintings by Neville Weeraratne and Sybil Keyt, husband and wife, and both junior members of the 43 Group of Artists, an Exhibition of old Ceylonese posters by Aruna Sapramadu and an Exhibition of Paintings by Rachel Motha.

Of the local art industry, Nazreen says, "there is extraordinary talent, but they are

not appreciated as much as I think they should be, by way of financial support.” As for the future, she hints that Barefoot might be converted into a photographic gallery.

Open Monday to Saturday 10 am to 7 pm and Sunday 11 am to 5 pm Barefoot Gallery Colombo, 704 Galle Road, Colombo 3,

(+94 11) 250 5559, barefootgallery@gmail.com, barefootgallery.com

**Segar Gallery**

A collection of abstract, cubist and
figurative paintings at Segar Gallery

The work found here is abstract, figurative and cubist. These are the main features of most of the art of artist and sculptrist Raja Segar, while his ways of experimenting with the refractive effect of light in his paintings can also be seen. Genres used range from water colours to oils, pencil, pen and ink and mixed media and it’s hard to miss the bold and fiery colours, the varied brush strokes, the lines and squares of these works, which depict the everyday lifestyles and habits of Sri Lankans. Once again, modernity is given emphasis at this gallery.

The Segar Gallery will officially open on June 14, 2010 with a solo exhibition featuring the works of Segar. Located in a small space, the gallery consists of around 30 paintings by Segar, as well as a selection of paintings by other artists. Having embarked on this venture after it was requested that a permanent collection of his works are displayed, Segar says, “there are many painters whose work are displayed here. But, it was requested that the gallery be named after me.”

The works of other artists displayed at Segar Gallery, include those of A M M Muruthala, Iromi Wijewardena, Nilu Wijesinghe, Dr Shanaka Kulatunga and Samali Silva.

In addition to the paintings, a variety of postcards, mainly based on Sri Lankan themes are also available within the gallery.

Open 10 am to 7 pm Segar Gallery, Cinnamon Lakeside Hotel, Colombo,

(+94 77) 225 9171,

segargallery@yahoo.co.uk, segar.8m.net

**Theertha Red Dot Gallery**

Exhibits that support the trends of the 90s, depicted at Theertha Red Dot Gallery

Cutting-edge, innovative and experimental contemporary art is what one would find here. The array of exhibits supports the ‘90s Trend’ art and showcases its current interpretations and manifestations.

Exhibitions by artists such as Jagath Weerasinghe, Anoli Perera, Pradeep Chandrasiri, Cora de Lang, Menika van der Pooten, Sybil Wettasinghe and Pala Pothupitiya were featured at Red Dot over the past years. The last gallery season, Pradharshana Wasanthaya 2009, featured Koralegedara Pushpakumara, whose works used hardware material such as barbed wire, transparent tubes and tent covering material, Sarath Kumarasiri, whose work connects architecture, art and heritage, Saman Liyanage with his unusual black and white styles and Aruna Widanarachchi who looks at how the human body is portrayed in the commercial world. In addition, the exhibition ‘Numbed’ by Bandu Manamperi showed fibrerised forms of his own body.

Theertha Red Dot Gallery lays emphasis on works which are contemporary with a sense of critical investigation. It was opened in 2007 expanding the activities of the Theertha International

Artists Collective.

The gallery also features works by international artists, through their international art residency programmes. According to Lalith Manage, the Art Manager at Red Dot, such programmes, conducted on a regular basis, provide the opportunity for local artists to build cross-cultural interaction.

“We strive not just to cater, but also to create dialogue and exposure. Promoting

new art is at the forefront of our work. We also display work that depicts new media and new technology. We have a project called Ape Game, which looks at aspects of village and art, while the ‘Freshly Baked’ series of exhibitions give an opportunity for upcoming artists,” says Manage. The gallery can be visited on prior appointment basis.

Opening times vary depending on exhibitions Theertha International Artists Collective, 36A Baddegana Road South, Pitakotte, (+94 11) 286 5000, theerthaiac@yahoo.com, theertha.org