

Art Way Gallery: The House Of Contemporary Art



The entrance of the Gallery

I walked inside the manor style colonial house confirming the accuracy of one of Thomas Merton's quotes "Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time", because for a minute, I lost myself, amidst the soothing music and the appeasing ambience of the Art Way Gallery.

Words: Manisha Wijegoonawardena Photography: Prabhath Chathuranga

Having passed the gallery on many occasions I had always been fascinated by the sculptures and different pieces of art that were displayed on the front porch and garden area. The visit allowed me to unveil themes and concepts behind those works.

While the soothing flow of music invited us inside we stopped at the entrance verandah to inspect the unusual compilation of items that formed a head of a bull. Inspired by the modern and conventional techniques of paddy ploughing, the artefact is formed by attaching a natural antler of a bull to a part of a landmaster engine we were told. A type of 'assemble art', this is special because of the deep meaning of combining the past and the present.

Inside, there were many more objects categorised as assemble art, taking various forms including a grasshopper, fly, tiger and many more. The walls were covered with drawings from various artists in a range of themes and concepts, from abstract, nature to portraits.

The number of sculptures that were displayed, specially the portrait sculptures, caught my attention. Both portrait sculptures and self-portraits are done at the Gallery; anyone interested will be able to get one done within three days. Most sculptures are formed in a type of ceramic and heated to change colour.

The Gallery showcases work from different artists, who are established with a significant portfolio. Works of artists such as H A Karunaratne who is known for working on abstract expressionism and Achala Gunawardena are also exhibited. However beginners are given the opportunity to conduct exhibitions at the premises with the focus of retaining and evolving art to the next generation. The Gallery also proposes the artists who work with them for local and international competitions as a means of taking Sri Lankan art to the global scenario.

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We met the Gallery's owner Sudath Abeysekera, an artist himself, who gave us an insight to the Gallery. Having completed a degree in Fine Arts from the Institute of Aesthetic Studies at the University of Kelaniya, he opened the gallery together with his wife Achala Gunawardena in order to fill the void in the country for art galleries.

According to Sudath Abeysekera as an initiative to encourage young artists the Gallery conducts art classes for children of all age groups. Adults are also given a chance to bring out their hidden talents through the classes conducted by qualified art teachers.

Opening the doors for art enthusiasts to get a taste of modern, assemble, figurative, performing and installation art by Sri Lankan artists, the Art Way Gallery goes beyond the general norm of an art gallery.

My interest in art heightened during the few hours spent at the Gallery, permitting me to explore the beauty of art, beyond the conventional terms and

enjoy the true beauty hidden amongst these works.

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