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PRESS RELEASE

Archiving Creative Futures with “All Right Angles” Workshop

Between September 23 to 26, 2023, young artists living in and working across Sri Lanka converged on Lunuganga—architect Geoffrey Bawa’s garden estate in Bentota—for a residential workshop facilitated by the Geoffrey Bawa Trust (GBT).

“All Right Angles” brought together a select group of ten participants to spend four days learning from and collaborating with local and international experts, organised in partnership with Colomboscope and Kālam (Jaffna) and supported by the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) Sri Lanka branch. EUNIC Sri Lanka consists of the Alliance Française with the support of the French Embassy to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, the Goethe-Institut, the British Council, the Italian Embassy, and the Dutch Embassy.

“All Right Angles” is part of a larger series entitled “Creative Island – From Forest School to Sensory Architectures,” aimed at incubating emerging creative talent that began with the inaugural “Forest School” session held at Ellerton Bungalow in Kandy. “The workshop was an amazing opportunity to build on Lunuganga’s legacy as a place where artists, architects and makers across disciplines come together. We were delighted to be able to host a young group across disciplines and exchange skills and reflections,” said Shayari de Silva, Chief Curator of the Geoffrey Bawa Trust.

The programme featured a range of activities, including guided tours of the garden through both architectural and ecological lenses, active reading sessions at the “To Lunuganga” reading room hosted by Colomboscope, stargazing, and a special screening of Clara’s Kraft Isono’s feature-length film ‘Bawa’s Garden’ (2022).

“Immersing myself in the ‘All Right Angles’ residence programme at Geoffrey Bawa’s Lunuganga garden was an enchanting journey of architectural discovery,” said designer and artist Randika de Silva, who took part in the workshop. She cited the “profound connection between architecture and the lush landscape of Lunuganga” as a particularly inspirational setting for the weekend.

Dance artist, educator, and choreographer Umeshi Rajeendra (Sri Lanka) and architect and visual researcher Setareh Noorani (Netherlands) each led immersive seminars using the garden as a medium for engagement. Rajeendra invited participants to contemplate the concept of bodies as “repositories of knowledge” through “deep listening and somatic improvisational movement practices” throughout the garden. “These exercises shifted between individual and the

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collective, shaping and re-shaping the narrative as an experiential pluralistic deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge,” said Rajeendra of her session.

Meanwhile, Noorani equipped participants with abstract tools to reimagine reality and explore speculative counter-archives, derived from what she calls her “own impetus to create such spaces for continued, horizontal exchange and communal resilience.” Of her time at Lunuganga and within the Bawa residences, which she called “no less than transformative,” Noorani said, “One needs to allow inspiration to enter their daily life, and to hold such space—where urgency to transmit knowledge to a younger generation takes forefront—is a very large task.”

Workshop attendees also had the opportunity to learn from their peers through a sharing session in which they delved into their own creative practices. Founding members of the “We Are From Here” initiative Firi Rahman and Parilojithan Ramanathan then presented their work of archiving communal testimonies in the rapidly-gentrifying neighbourhood of Slave Island. “This experience has heightened our enthusiasm for more collaborative knowledge-sharing events and opportunities to connect with younger, curious participants. We are excited to continue opening doors to such enriching experiences and fostering a culture of learning and exchange,” said the pair on the impact of the workshop.

Participants departed the garden with a host of new connections and tools with which to refine their individual creative practices. Through its emphasis on cultivating talent within young Sri Lankan creatives, “All Right Angles” served as a contemporary response to Lunuganga’s storied history as a foundational site for artistic exploration and innovation.

“Creative Island – From Forest School to Sensory Architectures” is a project by EUNIC Sri Lanka and Colomboscope, the Geoffrey Bawa Trust and Kālam (Jaffna). EUNIC – European Union National Institutes for Culture – is Europe’s network of national cultural institutes and organisations, with 36 members from all EU member states and associated countries. EUNIC Sri Lanka - consisting of the Alliance Française with the support of the French Embassy to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, the Goethe-Institut, the British Council, the Italian Embassy, and the Dutch Embassy – adopts an integrated approach to building cultural relations and creative collaborations and supporting diversity.

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