

SRI SRI LANKA

Artworks by Pala Pothupitiye

TARQ

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INTRODUCTION

It gives us great pleasure to announce Sri Lankan artist, Pala Pothupitiye's first solo exhibition in India at TARQ. Titled "Sri Sri Lanka", the exhibition primarily features a suite of Pala's celebrated maps, on both paper and canvas. Each map delves into Sri Lanka's rich historical past, and with each map, the artist attempts to decode another aspect of the nation's fraught identity. The artist works with maps carefully modifying and manipulating the image of Sri Lanka that is familiar to the viewer in its conventional form,

but in this case has morphed beyond recognition.

"Sri Sri Lanka" will also include a set of sculptures that further examine the post-colonial Sri Lankan identity, through the lens of a cartographer. It is through these maps and sculptures that the exhibition provides an insight to the politically biased, and often subjective notions of map-making.

Hena Kapadia,
Gallery Director, TARQ

SRI SRI LANKA: MAPPING POST-COLONIAL CEYLON

Sri Lanka, the paradise destination, is an amalgamation of multiple layers of passages that have made the island country subject to chosen or imposed identities, which, under the contemporary narratives of cosmopolitanism are intentionally hidden or buried under its turbulent past. Due to its strategic and somewhat isolated location in the Arabian Sea, 'Lanka' and its history have imprints of influences from India, though this history is not always alluded to (Meyer 2003, 19), as well as the Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch and the British, all of whom stopped at her shores during their North-South or West-East expeditions. These maritime routes resulted in the exploitation of Lanka's natural resources and its natives, and initiated a pattern of immigration and emigration that is similar to the current global movements. These external interferences have created conflicts that are now deeply embedded in its history, the scars of which

often surface in contemporary times: scars, which tell the story of the great losses to the island, most importantly, its identity. The emergence of rigid identities, be it religious or regional, complete with its share of accompanying centuries of imperial rule, friction and violence have pushed Sri Lanka to create an international identity in its newly-found freedom. It is also perhaps the case that these scars of colonialism and religious conflicts demand that Sri Lanka re-looks at herself, in this case, through the eyes of a cartographer who questions his own traditional as well as academic upbringing in a politically-charged nation that, from his artistic vantage point, fails to address the venerated title – 'Sri' – the country is known for.

Meyer, Eric. 2003. 'Insular Identity'. In Sri Lanka: Biography of an Island – Between Local & Global, p.p.19-40. Viator Publications (Pvt) Ltd. Negombo, Sri Lanka.



CEYLON – Speech Bubbles and Thought Bubbles
Archival digital print, acrylic, ink and pencil on paper
17 x 12 inches
2015

SRI LANKA PROFILE-TIME LINE

NOTE: The sources to the time line are Western, the records and perspectives of the Sri Lankan source, however, may differ.

BC

A CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

5th Century BC Indo-Aryan migrants from northern India settle on the island; the Sinhalese emerge as the most powerful of the various clans

161-137 BC Ruler Dutthagamani unites the different states of Sri Lanka into a single kingdom

993 AD - 1055 AD Sri Lanka remains under constant threat from South Indian kingdoms such as the Cholas, who take control of Anuradhapura for a short period and lay the foundations for Shaivite worship

1254 - 1324 AD The Rajarata declines as a kingdom. The irrigation canals and water tanks fall into disrepair leading to malaria and the first mass movement of people from central Sri Lanka to the coastal areas near Colombo. Marco Polo visits the island

1518 AD King of Kotte forced to agree to give cinnamon as tribute, each year, to the Portuguese. He is overthrown by his three sons

BEGINNING OF THE EUROPEAN INTEREST

1597 AD Native capital moves to Kandy, holds out against European invaders for next 200 years

1796 AD Dutch surrender to British. Britain starts bringing in Tamil laborers from southern India to work in tea, coffee and coconut plantations

1815 AD Last king of Kandy is deposed and exiled to India

1844 AD British introduce wide-ranging reforms. English is made the official language and the administration reformed. Slavery is abolished

1870 Coffee crops devastated by Coffee Blight

1919 AD The Ceylon National Congress is formed

February 4, 1948 Sri Lanka becomes independent

RISE OF NATIONALISM - TOWARDS FREEDOM

MODERN SRI LANKA

1950s AD Ethnic and religious conflicts escalate. Sinhalese want to reassert their culture, language, schools and Buddhist religion

1954 AD Birth of Velupillai Prabhakaran

1965 AD Birth of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna by Rohanna Wijeweera

1972 AD Ceylon changes its name to Republic of Sri Lanka. Buddhism becomes country's primary religion. Tamil minority further antagonised

1983 AD 13 soldiers killed in LTTE ambush, sparking anti-Tamil riots leading to the deaths of several hundred Tamils. Start of 'First Eelam War'. Civil war intensifies

1985 AD First attempt at peace talks between government and LTTE fails

1990 AD Indian troops leave after getting bogged down in fighting in the north. Violence between Sri Lankan army and separatists escalates. 'Second Eelam War' begins

1993 AD President Premadasa assassinated in LTTE bomb attack

2002 February Government and Tamil Tiger rebels sign a Norwegian-mediated ceasefire

2004 December More than 30,000 people killed in a tsunami. Coastal communities devastated

2009 Tamil Tigers defeated

WAR AND DIPLOMACY

PEACE MOVES

3rd Century BC Beginning of Tamil migration from India

260 BC Buddhism introduced into Sri Lanka by Arahanth Mahinda. King Tissa adopts it at his capital in Anuradhapura, which becomes the seat for Buddhism in ancient Sri Lanka

Circa 510 The writing of the Mahavamsa begins

14th century Islam takes root on the island

1073 AD Native Sinhalese defeat the Cholas; new capital established at Polonnaruwa

1505 AD Portuguese arrive in Colombo, marking the beginning of European interest

ARRIVAL OF THE PORTUGUESE IN SRI LANKA (Ceilao)

1551 AD King Bhuvankbahu was assassinated; the Portuguese installed Dharmapala, a 'puppet ruler' in Kotte. By mid-16th century, many natives including the king become Catholic. Dharmapala is baptised as Dom Joao Dharmapala, breaking an 1850-year-old tradition as a Christian king sat on a Sinhalese throne

1551 AD Dutch attack and capture Colombo. They continue trading and ruling over ports

1802 AD Ceylon (the British name for the island) becomes a Crown Colony

1833 AD The island is united under one British administration ('Captured by the British' as per Sri Lankan perspective)

19th century British create coffee plantations and reduce import duties on coffee in Britain. Exports of Sri Lankan coffee booms. Laborers bought from India

1946 AD Birth of United National Party (UNP) by Don Stephen Senanayake

Late-19th century Tea replaces coffee. Also, rubber and coconut gain importance. Hinduism and Buddhism are revived. Sinhalese nationalism grows

DUTCH COLONIALISM IN SRI LANKA (Ceylan)

1949 AD Indian Tamil plantation workers deprived of citizenship

1951 AD Birth of Sri Lanka Freedom Party by Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike

1956 AD Solomon Bandaranaike elected on wave of Sinhalese nationalism

SINHALA NATIONALISM

1971 AD Nationalisation process begins by the ruling party. Sinhalese Marxist uprising led by students and activists (JVP)

1975-76 AD The LTTE (the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), known as the Tamil Tigers, is formed to fight for an independent Tamil state. The Governor of Jaffna is assassinated

1984 AD By 1984, 459,000 Tamils migrate back to India

ETHNIC TENSIONS

1987 AD India signs agreement with Sri Lanka to resolve ethnic tensions. The Indian army is welcomed with resistance

1991 AD LTTE implicated in assassination of Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi in southern India

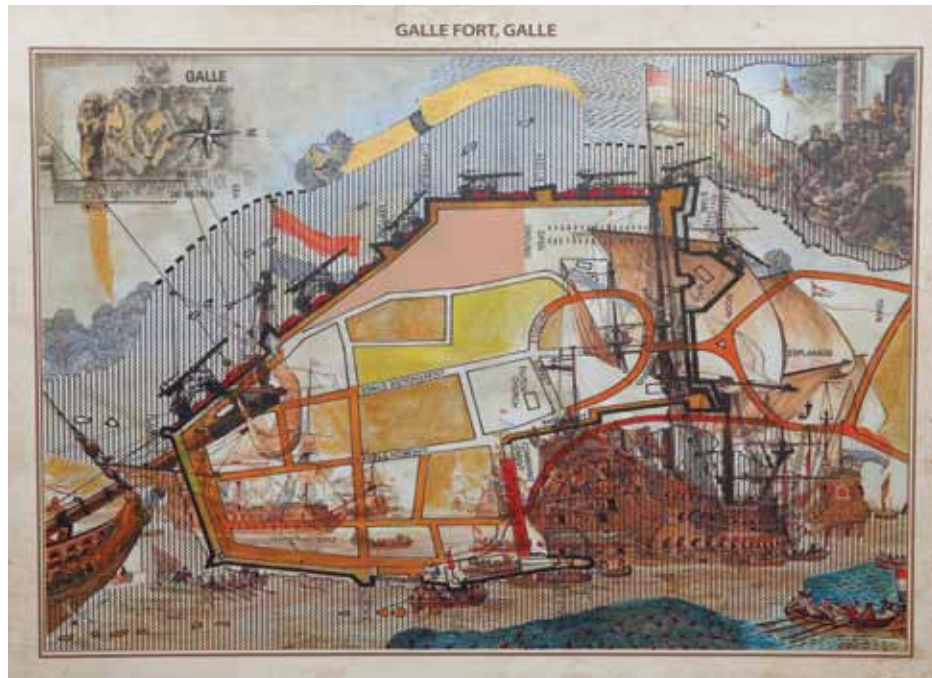
2003 Tigers pull out of talks. Ceasefire holds

1995 AD Rebels sink naval craft - 'Third Eelam War' begins

2009 Rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran killed after a lifetime of fighting for a Tamil state

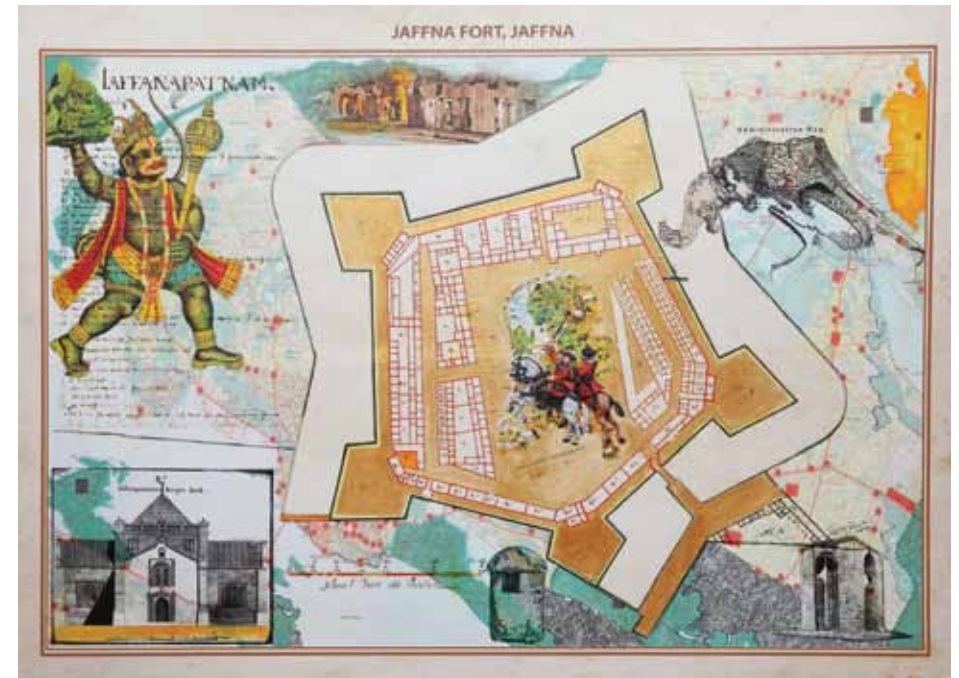
2015 January Maithripala Sirisena becomes President

AD



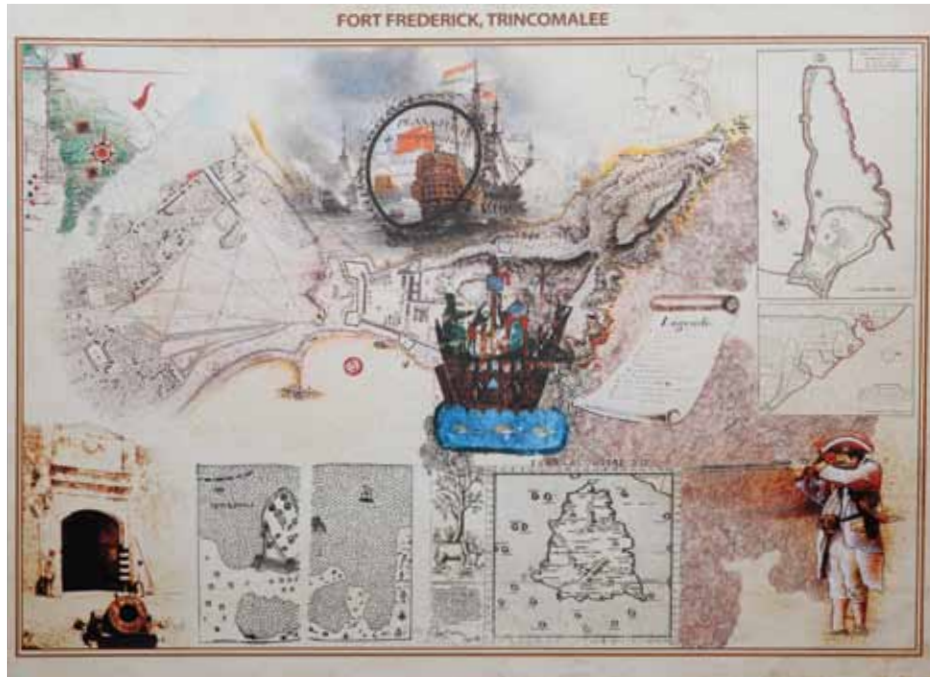
Ports and Forts – Galle Fort

Archival print, inks, acrylic and pencil on canvas
 22 x 29.6 inches
 2015



Ports and Forts – Jaffna Fort

Archival print, inks, acrylic and pencil on canvas
 22 x 29.6 inches
 2015



Ports and Forts –Fort Frederick, Trincomalee
 Archival print, inks, acrylic and pencil on canvas
 22 x 29.6 inches
 2015

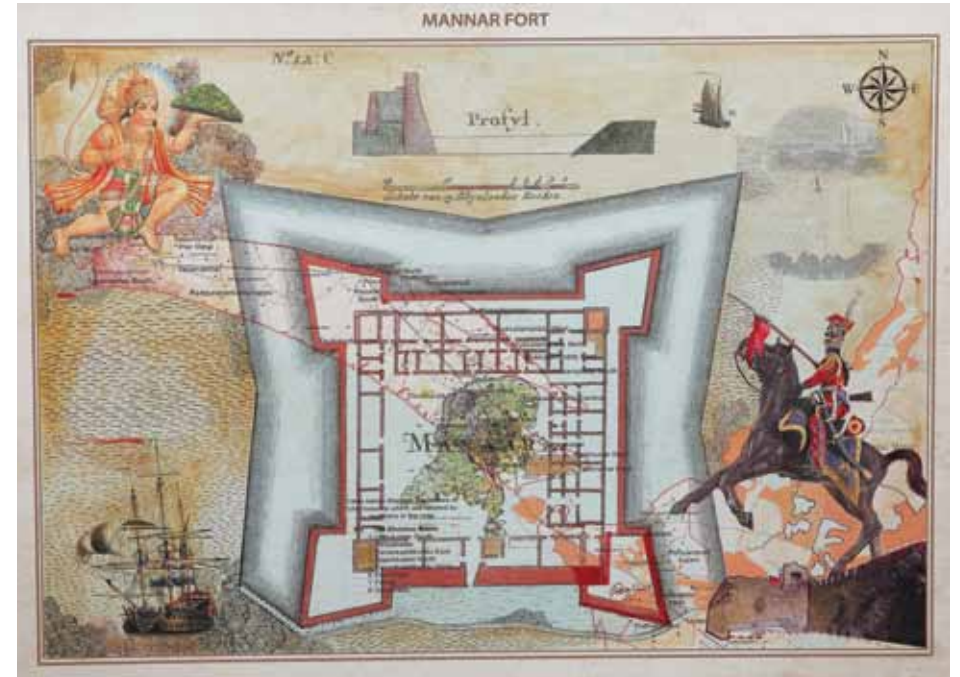


Ports and Forts – Negombo Fort
 Archival print, inks, acrylic and pencil on canvas
 22 x 29.6 inches
 2015



Ports and Forts – Batticaloa Fort

Archival print, inks, acrylic and pencil on canvas
 22 x 29.6 inches
 2015



Ports and Forts – Mannar Fort

Archival print, inks, acrylic and pencil on canvas
 22 x 29.6 inches
 2015

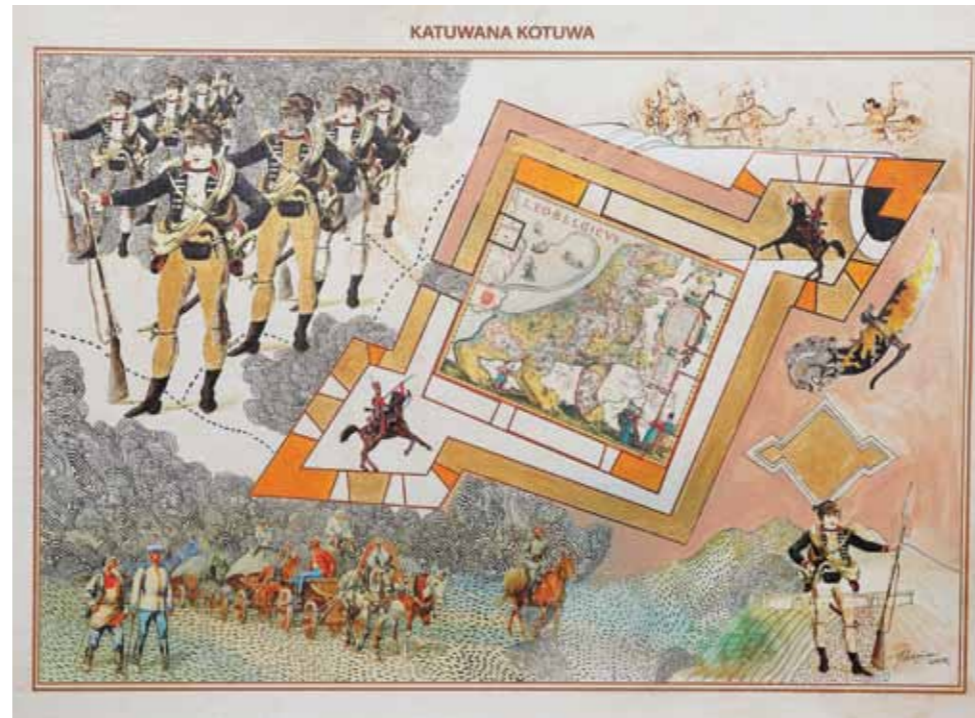


Degree Holder

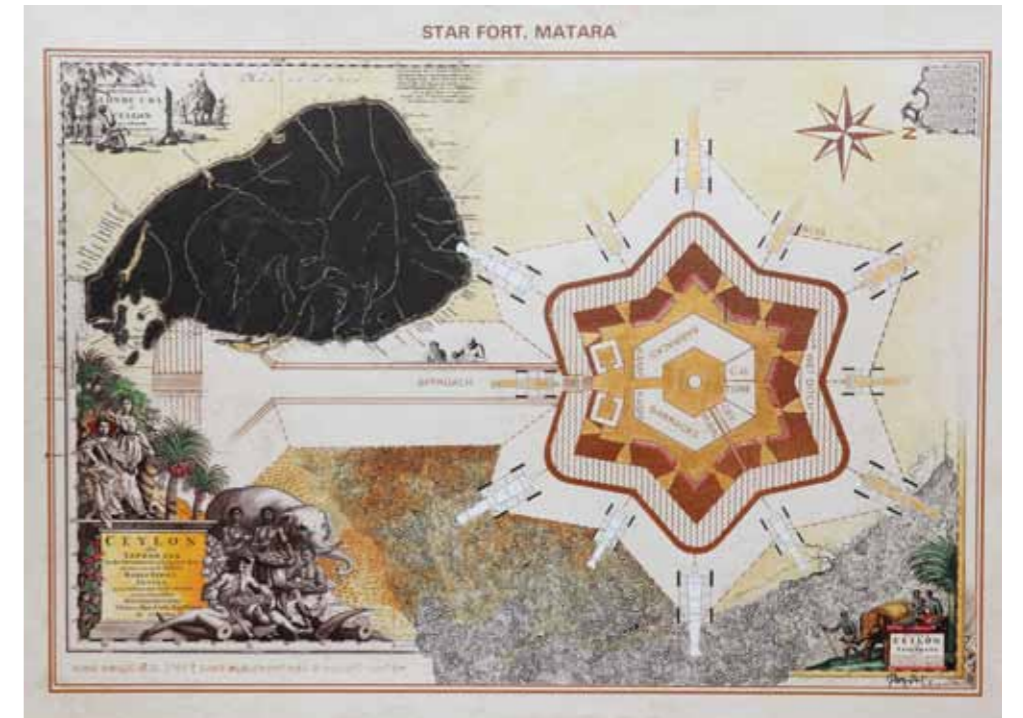
Archival digital print, acrylic and ink on canvas

38 x 26 inches

2015



Ports and Forts – Katuwana Kotuwa
Archival print, inks, acrylic and pencil on canvas
22 x 29.6 inches
2015



Ports and Forts – Star Fort, Matara
Archival print, inks, acrylic and pencil on canvas
22 x 29.6 inches
2015

Power and Pride

Ready-made knife, acrylic-metallic colour paint, metal sheets of tar barrels, iron and copper
27 x 8.5 x 3 inches
2015





Cloak Maps – 1
Printed maps, acrylic and ink, and protective varnish on galvanised metal
17.5 x 12 x 5 inches
2015



Cloak Maps – 2

Printed maps, acrylic and ink, and protective varnish on galvanised metal

17.5 x 12 x 5 inches

2015



Cloak Maps – 3
 Printed maps, acrylic and ink,
 and protective varnish on
 galvanised metal
 17.5 x 12 x 5 inches
 2015



May 18th 2009

Ink and pencil on government-printed map

25.75 x 36 inches

2009



Manipay Map

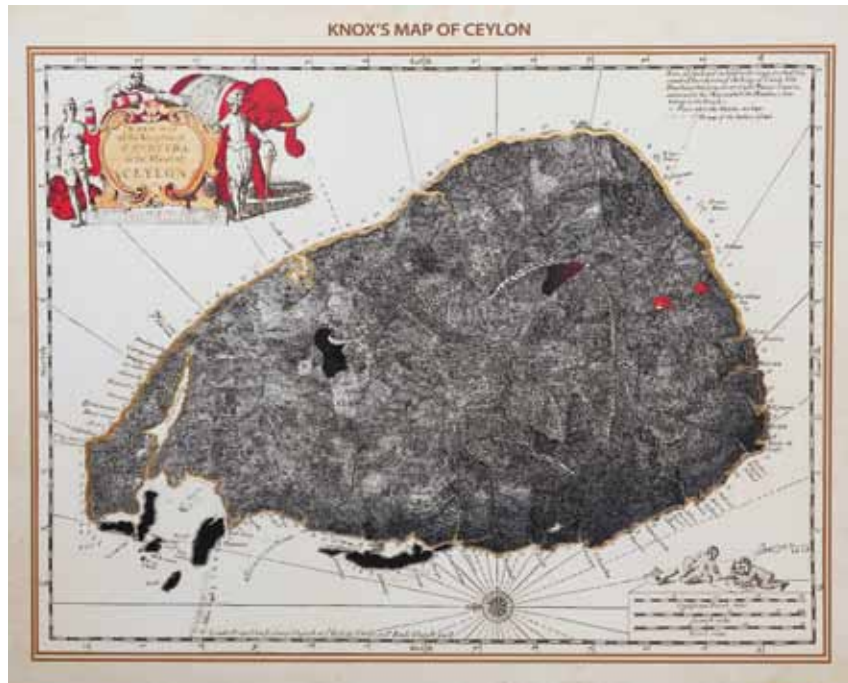
Ink, pencil and Japanese rice paper on government-printed map

25.75 x 36 inches

2015

Iranamadu Map – Tissa Still Deer-Hunting
Ink, pencil and Japanese rice paper on government-printed map
25.75 x 36 inches
2015





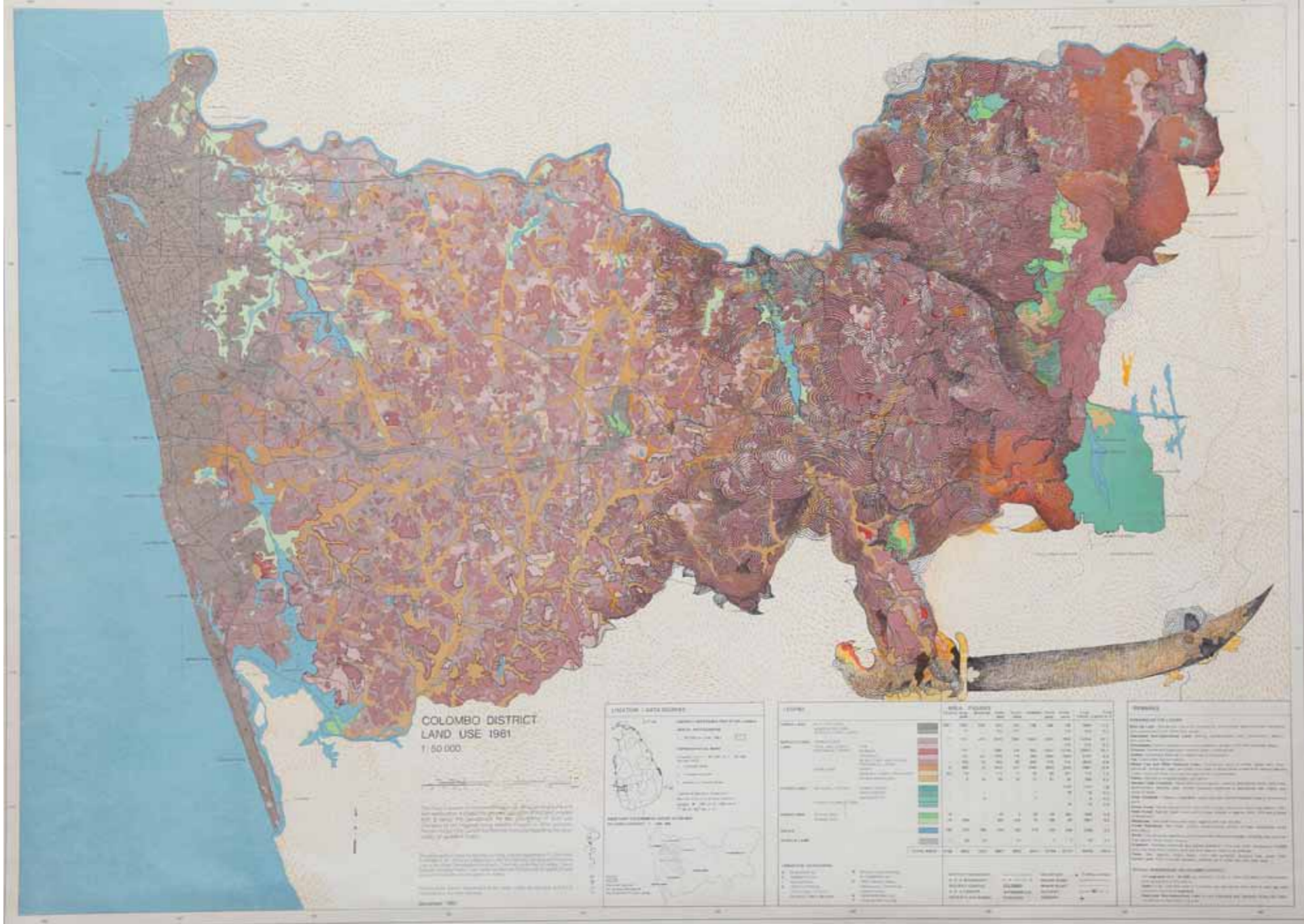
Knox's Map of Ceylon

Archival digital print, ink, acrylic and pencil on paper
22 x 28 inches
2015



City of Colombo

Colour pencil and ink on government-printed map
35 x 20 inches
2015



Colombo Land Use
Pencil and ink on paper
38 x 27 inches
2015

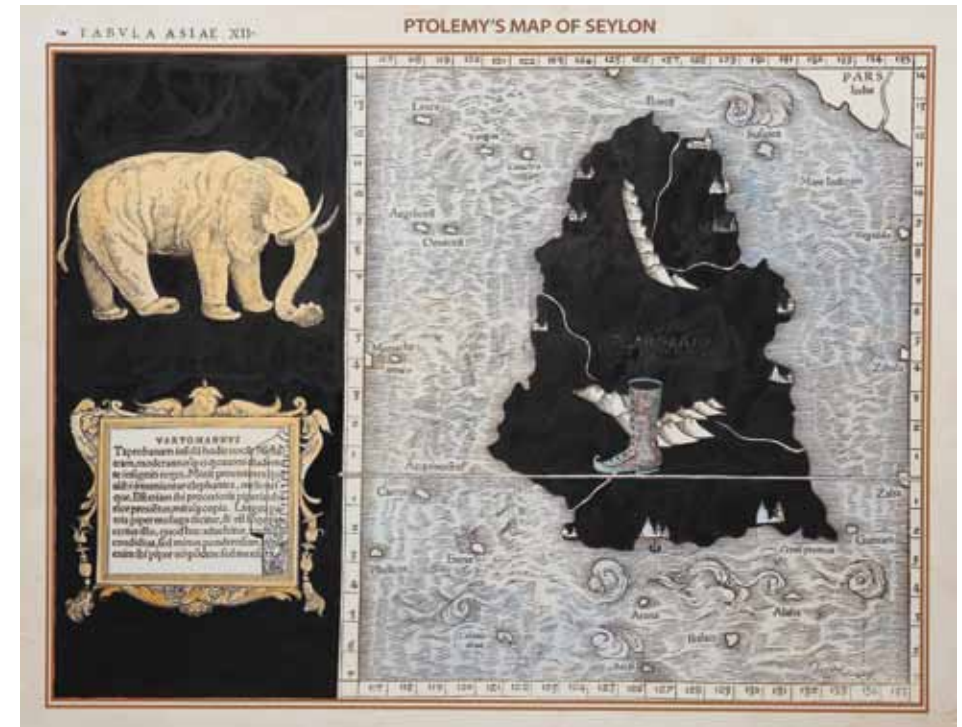


City of Colombo
Colour pencil and ink on government-printed map
35 x 20 inches
2015



Ptolemy's Map of Seylon – 1

Archival digital print, ink, acrylic and pencil on paper
22 x 28 inches
2015



Ptolemy's Map of Ceylon – 2

Archival digital print, ink, acrylic and pencil on paper
22 x 28 inches
2015

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Pala Pothupitiye (b.1972) is a Colombo-based artist with a degree in Fine Arts from the Visual and Performance Art University, Colombo. Raised in a village of traditional southern Sri Lankan craft-artists, his work incorporates and reinterprets the material and philosophical content of traditional art. He is one of the core members of Theertha, an autonomous, artist-led non-profit initiative in Colombo.

Pothupitiye's oeuvre spans several media including sculpture, painting and drawing, with a special focus on the practice of ethnographic mapmaking. His works principally deal with the confrontation of concerns such as colonialism, nationalism, religious extremism and militarism, extending his inquiry to the questions of caste; the distinction between art and craft, between tradition

and modernity; and generating a critique of Eurocentrism.

His solo shows include his participation at 'This is Tomorrow', a special curated section of START Projects for solo artist presentations, START Art Fair, Saatchi Gallery, London (2015); 'Pride and Power' curated by Lalith Manage at Hempel Galleries, Sri Lanka (2014); 'Costume' curated by Dr. Thamotheerampillai Sanathanan at Jaffna University Gallery (2010); and 'Ancestral Dress + My ID' at Theertha Red Dot Gallery, Colombo (2008). 'Sri Lanka: Mapping post-colonial Ceylon' is his first solo exhibition in India.

Furthermore, he has exhibited his works in several curated group shows such as 'RE:BELLION // RE:LIGION // RE:FORM: Artistic Action in times of Crisis', Max-Pechstein-

Museum, Zwickau, Germany (2015); 'Identities: A Visual Engagement', curated by Annoushka Hempel and Lalith Manage, Colombo (2013); and 'Becoming', curated by Suresh Jayaram and Roman Berka at the 2nd Colombo Art Biennale (2012), among others.

He was selected to participate in the 3rd Fukuoka Triennale at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan (2005), and won the first place for the jury award of the Sovereign Asian Art Prize, Hong Kong (2010).

Pothupitiye currently lives and works at the Mullegama Art Center near Colombo, of which he is a founding member – and where he runs his workshop, a residency, and an art school – supporting younger artists and schoolchildren.

EXHIBITIONS

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2015:

This is Tomorrow – solo artist presentations at START Art Fair, Saatchi Gallery, London; organised by Hempel Galleries, Sri Lanka

2014:

Pride and Power, curated by Lalith Manage; Hempel Galleries, Colombo

2010:

Costume, curated by Dr. Thamotheampillai Sanathanan; Jaffna University Gallery

2008:

Ancestral Dress + My ID, Theertha Red Dot Gallery, Colombo

2003:

Ancestral Dress, Gallery 71, Galle Fort

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2015:

RE: BELLION // RE: LIGION

// RE: FORM, Artistic Action in Times of Crisis, curated by Susanne Altmann and Petra Lewey; Max-Pechstein-Museum, Zwickau, Germany

2014:

Displacement Anxieties, curated by Niilofur Farrukh; Chawkandi Art Gallery, Karachi

2013:

Identities: A Visual Engagement at Colomboscope, curated by Annoushka Hempel and Lalith Manage; Colombo

Narratives of Resistance, Gallery Espace, New Delhi

2012:

Becoming, curated by Suresh Jayaram and Roman Berka; the 2nd Colombo Art Biennale, Sri Lanka

2006:

Parallel Realities: Asian Art Now, Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery, UK

2005:

3rd Fukuoka Triennale, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan

Contemporary Sri Lankan Art: Works of Ten Artists, Millesgården Museum Gallery, Sweden

2004:

Aham-Puram, Jaffna Public Library

2002:

Made in IAS, curated by Jagath Weerasinghe; Gallery 706, Colombo

RESIDENCIES & WORKSHOPS

2015 - Ongoing:

A Tale of Two Cities – a cross-cultural exchange project by Gallery Espace, Serendipity Arts Trust and Theertha Artists Collective with artists from India and Sri Lanka

2014:

Vijayanagar Art Residency –

Abhisaran, A JSW Initiative

2006:

Residency Workshop, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore

2005:

Khoj International Artists' Workshop, Mumbai

2004:

Swedish-Sri Lankan Residency Workshop, Colombo

AWARDS

2010:

1st prize, Sovereign Asian Art Prize, Hong Kong

Produced by

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