

True Being

Catharina Anton, Hema Shironi, Vincent Vimal

This exhibition brings together the work of three artists who exhibited in "Being and Becoming" exhibition curated by me in May 2018, at Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo. The exhibition emerged from a year-long discussion with each of the artists about the process and questions that surround working as an artist after the security and structure of the academy are no longer there. In their professional quest to pursue careers as a full time working contemporary artists, exhibiting their work and being part of a network of discussions remains key. Curating and participating in this exhibition arose as part of this pursuit. The Being and Becoming exhibition was the last in a series of exhibitions that includes 'Self-Portraits' curated by T. Shanaathanan in 2017 and which began in 2015 with Seven Conversations, jointly curated with Sharmini Pereira. The first exhibition outlined the curatorial framework as a series of related questions. These questions have remained in play throughout all three exhibitions.

"What does it mean to be a practicing contemporary artist? Beyond motivation, techniques, influences and intention what else is involved? To be an artist today involves sustaining a practice where you are actively involved in the process of art making. Though this sounds straightforward it is probably one of the greatest challenges facing any artist no matter how outstanding they may be. It is probably too the reason why so many artists end up choosing to move onto more stable career paths after they graduate, favoring a job in advertising, teaching or IT rather than enduring what it means to set up a practice and sustain it. Yet why should the process of making art end up being any different to any other profession? As an audience we are accustomed to seeing the final artwork by an artist, often in a gallery; on occasion in a studio. But what does it entail to have a studio, let alone a gallery, least one that acts on an artists' behalf, represents you to collectors, nurtures your creativity, exercises your critical sensibilities and supports your professional development through discussion, opportunities and introductions? What are the mechanisms that encourage you to take risks when you are outside the freedom of an educational structure? How do you research your work be this watching films, travelling, reading or any other number of activities that develop ideas when you are not supported to do so? Such are the questions that face all new graduates when they complete their Fine Art training. When we decided to curate this exhibition these questions informed our starting point." ('Seven Conversations', curated by T. Shanaathanan and Sharmini Pereira, Saskia Fernando Gallery, 2015)

All ten artists were in 'Being and Becoming' undertook a yearlong critical practice after their completion of their degree, with the express purpose of committing themselves to a learning experience that would in time, train them to work as professional contemporary artists. Coming from 5 districts across the country, Jaffna, became their home, and was the location of a collective learning experience that involved self-reflection, dialogic learning, critical thinking and an intellectual immersion into issues involved in contemporary art making in today's society. In the process of their learning experience, three main questions continued to be discussed: what to express, how to express and why to express. The title of this exhibition emerged from the works that these young graduates' produced and the ideas, views and experiences they shared in their journey. Together, they represent multiplicities and complexities of being and becoming in post war Sri Lanka, attentive to art histories, lived experiences, family pressures, gender inequalities, the politics of the art market and the dynamics of patronage.

T. Shanaathanan 2018

Catharina Anton Born: 1991, Jaffna Education: 2016 B.F.A Painting,
University of Jaffna

"Although coral reefs look like rocks and dead bodies they are living beings. They breathe, grow and reproduce. They represent life in an invisible way. When I started doing self-portraits, when I started understanding my being, I realized that I am a coral in an ocean".



Self Portrait I, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 150cm x 45cm



Self Portrait II, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 150cm x 45cm



Self Portrait III, 2018, Acrylic on Canvas, 150cm x 45cm

Francis Joseph Hemashironi Born: 1991, Kandy Education: 2016 B.F.A
Painting, University of Jaffna

"My works are about a process of self questioning; who am I? Why was I
born?, why do I live ?, where am I going?. This contributes to an
understanding about myself. I find many of my answers suggest a
surreal self and location."



Dear Self I, 2019, embroidery on cloth, 3cm x 3cm



Dear Self II, 2018, embroidery on cloth, 3cm x 3cm



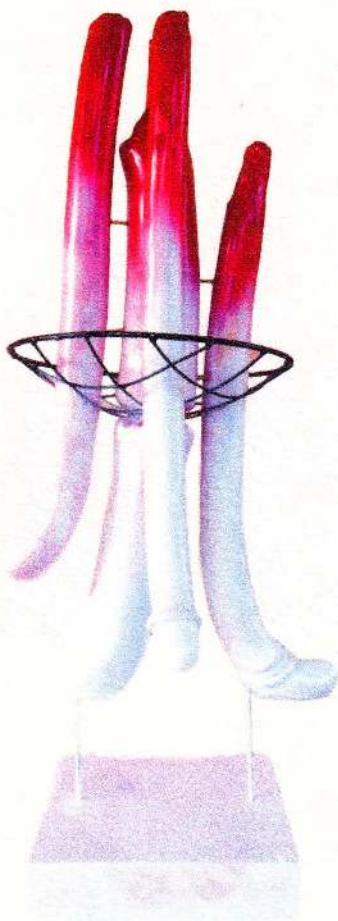
Dear Self III, 2018, embroidery on cloth, 3cm x 3cm

Vincent Chanthiradas Vimal Born: 1991, Jaffna Education: 2016 B.F.A
Sculpture, University of Jaffna

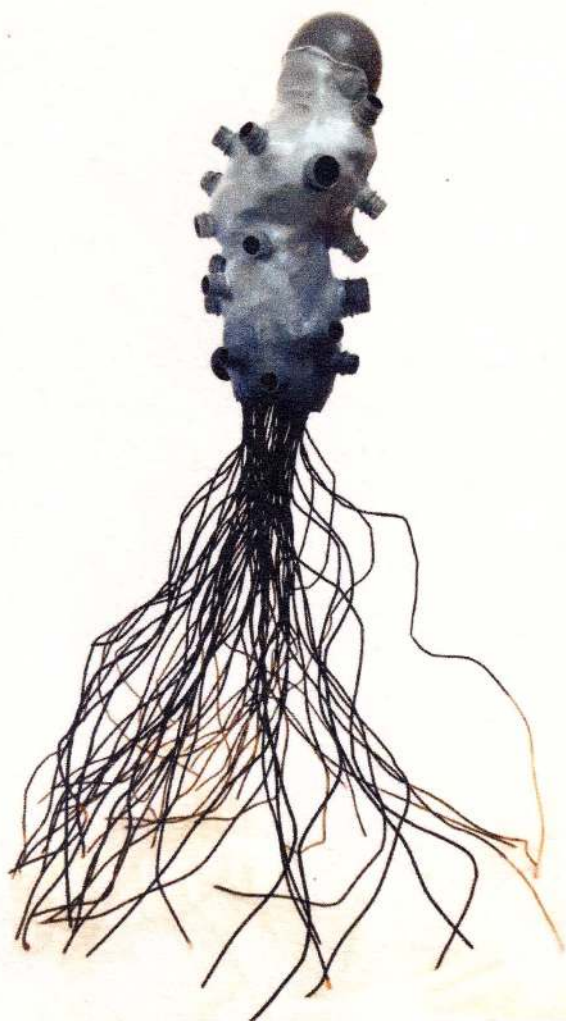
"Violence creates more violence. Destruction is the end of violent activities. Violence is registered in the human body, physically and mentally. When a body becomes a target of violence, it suffers from pain and scars. Similarly, industrial waste and plastics became a pain to the living environment. Through art I try to transform plastic and other throw away objects into art objects.



Stress, 2018, mixed media, 71cm x 48.5cm



Filter, 2018, mixed media, 87.5cm x 26cm



Untitled, 2018, mixed media, 111cm x 65cm

4th / 11th July 2018

Art Gallery

Art Circle, Department of Fine Arts University of Jaffna