

AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR LANKAN STUDIES

WORKSHOP ON
DEVELOPING PERSPECTIVES ON THE ART HISTORIES
OF SRI LANKA

ABSTRACTS & BIOS

Global Towers
27 July 2015

was executed in 1914 as she was suspected to be a spy. Even today, the unsuccessful seductresses appear as Orientalized Night Club dancers of a bygone era, to meet the male gaze wondering in the ambulatory as documented in the *Rēnagala Rajamahāvihāraya* in Alawwa and *Hēnakaduwa Rajamahāvihāraya* in Matara.

T. Sanathanan, University of Jaffna

Tradition and Modernity: Early Twentieth Century Murals of Jaffna

The early records of Jaffna temple paintings appear in Arumuga Navalar's (1822-1879) polemic volumes. However they are not sufficient enough to judge the visual characteristics of these paintings. The visual evidences for these paintings can be traceable from the late 19th century. There are photographic evidences for the wall paintings that existed in Mavidapuram Kandasamy Kovil, Nallur Sattanathar Sivan Kovil, Keerimalai Madam and Thavady Ambalavanar Murugamoorthy Kovil. Similarly non-religious colonial subjects appear in the murals of Bankshall street warehouse. Thavady Muttaiah Thuraisamy painted most of these paintings. His son Thuraisamy Apputhurai decorated the Siva shrine in Urumpirai with his paintings in the 1920s. These paintings are the oldest extant examples of Jaffna temple murals. The later period murals were at Vannai Vaitheeswaran Kovil, Vannai Perumal Kovil and still visible in Valvertithurai Sivan Kovil and Muthumari Amman Kovil. Similarly post 1980s temple murals could be seen in many temples around the peninsular. This presentation by *focusing* on the murals done by Thavady M. Thuraisamy and his son Apputhurai, attempts to read their visual style in the context of the changing visual traditions through European intervention. By comparing these murals' visual style with the mechanically reproduced images in circulation, the visuals of touring theater companies, and the mural tradition of post-Nayaka period South India, the project tries to unpack the ways in which the dialog between modernity and tradition took place in the sites of temple painting.

Sharmini Pereira, Raking Leaves & Independent Curator

Altered States: The Idea of Landscape in Contemporary Art in Sri Lanka

When we look at the development of Sri Lankan contemporary art it is often discussed as a histography of artists and movements or traditions. This paper sets out to probe what emerges when a specific thematic is examined, namely that of the landscape. Focusing on how artists and movements have individually addressed the landscape, the paper also addresses the idea of a landscape in reference to it being a tradition, as well as a stimulus around which questions of location, place, nation, and identity are inscribed.