

THE BEAUTY OF SRI LANKA IS DISPLAYED IN LOS ANGELES

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America Sri Lanka Photographic Art Society Los Angeles (ASPAS), in association with the Consulate General of Sri Lanka in Los Angeles, will hold 'The Beauty of Sri Lanka' the third annual photographic Exhibition on April 22nd and 23rd 2023 at the Art Gallery of the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) in commemoration of the Earth Day 2023 and the 75th anniversary of the Diplomatic Relations between Sri Lanka and the United States.

The Exhibition under the theme of 'Sri Lanka in Focus' is designed to promote tourism in Sri Lanka. As such, it will depict the scenic beauty of the Island as well as the 2500-year-old historical and cultural heritage of Sri Lanka. This Exhibition is also designed to introduce viewers to a range of issues that currently impact the environment. Commemorating Earth Day 2023, the keynote speaker Prof. Glen MacDonald, a distinguished Professor of Ecology and Geography, will address such concerns.

The Exhibition will include a series of related events, including a seminar, lectures, and a cultural performance led by Sandani S Kahandugoda, Director of Cultural Affairs (ASPAS), an exponent of Sri Lankan traditional dance forms, and former lead dancer of famed Chithrasena dance Academy; along with Waruna Hemachandra, an exponent of former traditional drumming who toured several countries with the Chithrasena dance Academy. Thath Jith Dance School students, directed by Prasanna Yamasinghe, will also perform. There will also be a screening of the award-winning wildlife documentary "The Great Elephant Gathering of Asia," a film directed by Mr. Dilum Alagiyawanna on the annual elephant gathering at the Minneriya National Park. As exhibitors and participants of the seminars and lectures, ASPAS has invited several specialists from Sri

Lanka whose presence will enhance the exhibition program attracting the American public to the event.

Having left Sri Lanka many years back and immigrated to the United States, several generations of Sri Lankan Americans are now living in America. Some of the youth and children have yet to have the opportunity even to visit Sri Lanka, and this photo exhibition allows them to be exposed to the aesthetic beauty and the cultural heritage of Sri Lanka and encourages them to learn more about their motherland.

The Exhibition consists of several award-winning rare photographs of the National Parks of Sri Lanka (Yala, Wilpattu, Udawalawa, Horton Planes), and the last of the remaining rainforests in the world, Sinharaja Forest, in Sri Lanka. The ancient cities of Sri Lanka, with architectural gems among the many ruins that are part of the cultural and religious heritage of the nation, and blend with the tropical fauna and flora being exhibited, also form an integral part of the Exhibition. There will also be an emphasis on the village life of Sri Lanka by way of depicting the farmers in the rice fields harvesting the crop, tea pickers, and rubber tappers. Also on display will be the festivals of various communities, such as the Kandy Perahere, (Pageant), and the rituals, such as mask and devil dancing and fire walking. There will also display studies of people of every community in their traditional clothing, including the Vedda community.

The Exhibition will feature such outstanding photographs of Sri Lanka's beauty and heritage as seen through the creative eyes of Suriya Jayalath Perera, an award-winning Nature Photographer, formerly a project Officer in the Department of Wildlife Conservation in Sri Lanka. Mr. Perera is the president of the America Sri Lanka Photographic Art Society and is credited with holding the first-ever Sri Lankan photographic exhibition in the United States. He has been commended by the Nature Conservancy of America for his contribution towards protecting the environment. He has demonstrated a sensitivity to the animal and human life surrounding the pristine environs he has captured through his expert lens. His

painstaking research work over two and a half years of residence in the Yala area originally carried out for his master's thesis is recently published with a historical narration of the people and places of the region in an attractively published coffee table book titled 'Kingdom of Ruhuna: Home of the Yala National Park.' that will also be launched at the Exhibition.

He will be joined by six leading Sri Lankan photographers who will bring their award-winning masterpieces all the way from Sri Lanka to Los Angeles for this unique Exhibition. They are Mr. Lakshitha Karunarathna, who will make a presentation on Wildlife Photography, a Fellow of the British Royal Photographic Society (FRPS) who has won coveted awards and commendations including the Grand Prize at the Natures Best Photography Awards in the United States, and the Grand Prize at the Africa Photographer of the Year Awards in South Africa; Mr. Chitral Jayatilake, who will make a presentation on the tourist attractions of Sri Lanka is the head of Nature Trails at Cinnamon Hotels and has published four books celebrating the natural world in Sri Lanka and assisted in twenty-one documentary productions in Sri Lanka including the BBC Blue Planet II sperm whale's sequence; Ms. Hiranthi De Silva is the Senior Vice President Wholesale Banking at Union Bank of Colombo PLC, uses the love for photography to escape from the stresses of her professional life who was the first lady president of the Photographic Society of Sri Lanka during the year 2016/17. and Mr. K.G Keerthiratne, AFAIP, ANPAS, FNPAS who served as the Director of Exhibition, as well as Director of Publications and Social Service of the National Photographic Society, who held his first colour photography exhibition in 1998 at the National Art Gallery, consisting of 100 wildlife and environmental photographs.

They will be accompanied by Mr. Shantha Jayalath, the Manager of America Sri Lanka Photographic Society in the Sri Lanka Branch as the Program Coordinator, and Mr. Prabhath Rathnayaka, Head of News Lanka, Department of Information, as Media Director for the Exhibition. During their visit, they will also participate in programs

organized by the ASPAS, including a Photography Workshop, a media conference, and a visit to Yosemite National Park.

They will be joined by three outstanding Sri Lankan photographers, Andy Samarasena, trained at the New York Institute of Photography, is a photojournalist specializing in landscapes and wildlife for several U.S. publications; Mr. Sanjaya Warnasuriya is the Director of Education (ASPAS), and a self-taught photographer who has travelled to many parts of the world to observe and document animal behaviour in their habitats as well as interactions with humans; and Shantha Weerasinghe (FNPAS), the Director Exhibition (ASPAS) was the exhibition secretary of the National Photographic Society and held his Exhibition in 1975 at Lionel Wendt Art Gallery in Sri Lanka. He won first prize at the UNESCO Southeast Asian Photography Competition.

In marking Earth Day 2023, Certificates will be awarded to the winners of a photo competition taken during a 'Sepulveda Wildlife Park Bird Walk' conducted by Mr. Andy Samarasena and organized by the America Sri Lanka Photographic Art Society with the assistance of the National Audubon Society of America, Los Angeles. In commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of Diplomatic relations between the United States and Sri Lanka, a section of the exhibition will be devoted to the display of historical photographs and media records.

The Exhibition will be ceremonially opened to the public on April 22nd at 11.00 am and run through to Sunday 23rd, 5 pm. Many distinguished guests are expected to participate in the opening ceremony, led by the chief guest for the Exhibition, Dr. Lalith Chandradasa, Consul General of Sri Lanka, in Los Angeles, who will address the audience marking the 75th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between Sri Lanka and the United States. The program will be presented by Ms. Medini Rathnayake. The exhibition hours will be 11.00 am to 5.00 pm and the entrance is free.