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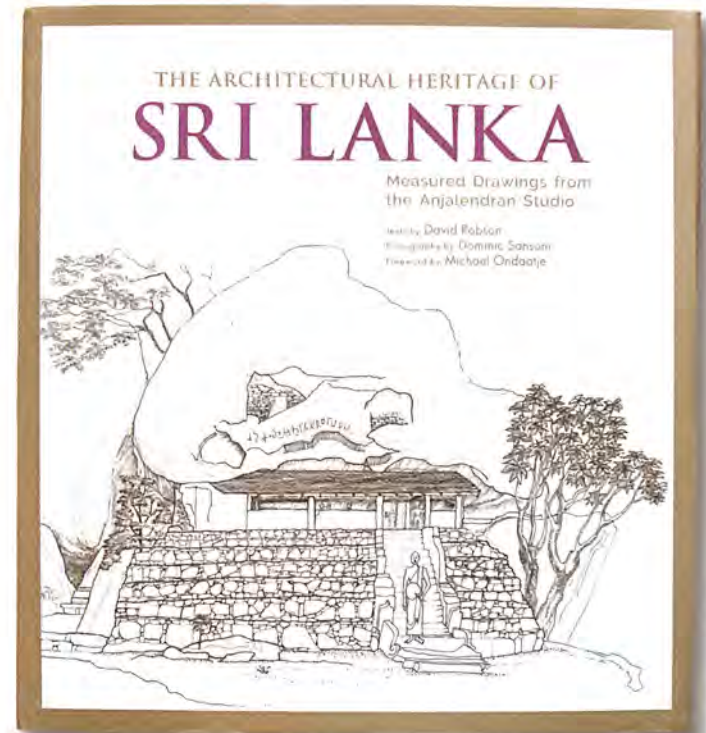
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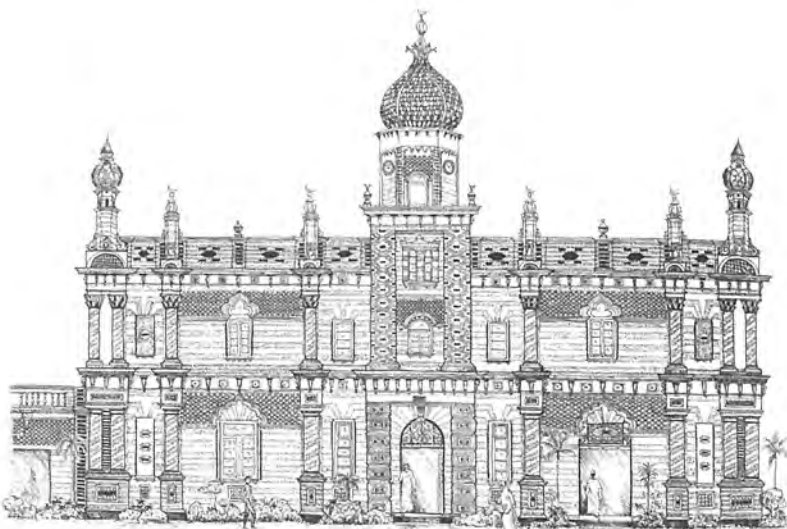




THREE DECADES OF RECORDING AN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

The Architectural Heritage Of Sri Lanka: Measured Drawings from the Anjalendran Studio, is a culmination of a 30 year period of recorded drawings. It is a celebration of Sri Lanka's rich architectural heritage as well as the art of drawing itself. This review provides insights into the book and stresses its importance to ensure that heritage is preserved for posterity.

Text Channa Daswatte



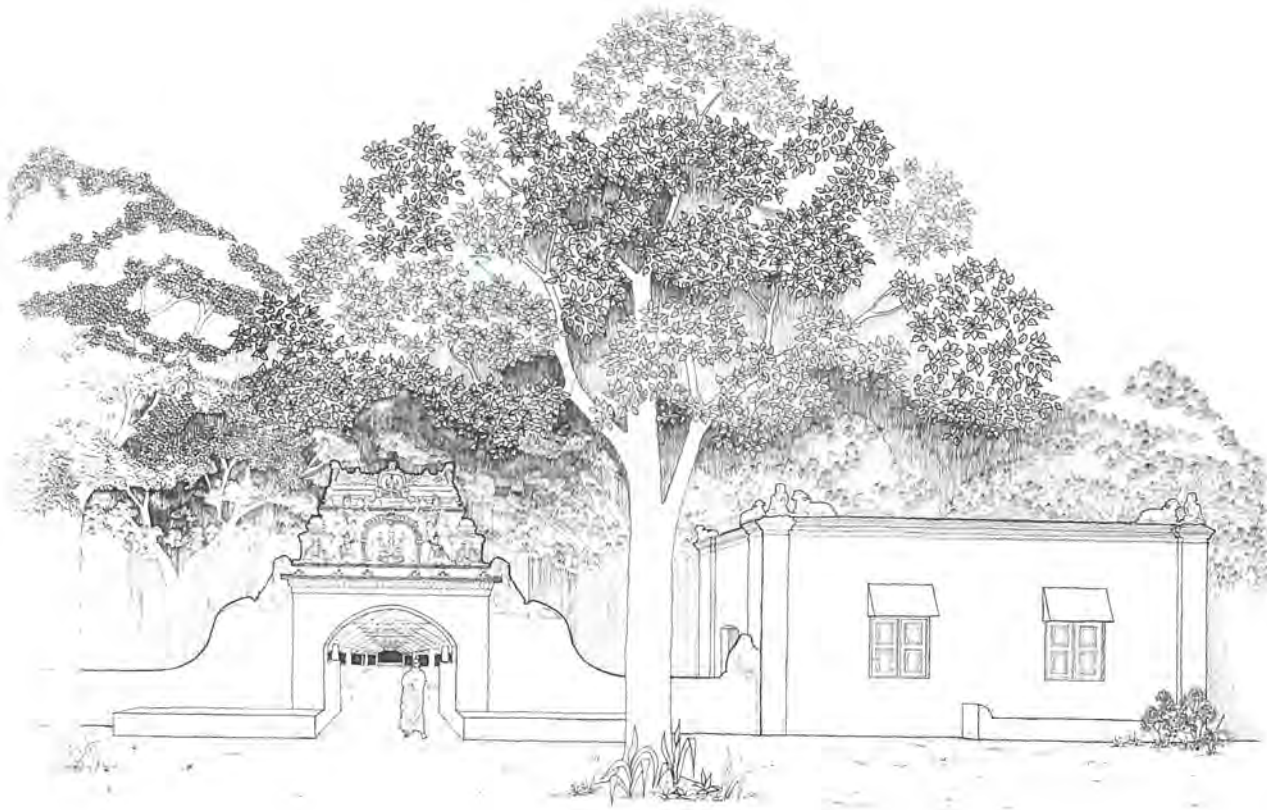
"The Architectural Heritage Of Sri Lanka: Measured Drawings from the Anjalendran Studio" is the result of a rekindled interest in recording buildings, Anjalendran claims, on a trip to Kurunegala in the traditional New Year holiday of April 1989. Having assisted collating the canonical "Architecture of an Island" by Barbara Sansoni, Ronald Lewcock and Laki Senanayake, he was already familiar with the process.

A few months into my working in his studio Anjalendran had 'discovered' that my parents lived in Kurunegala and was determined to 'explore' a district he had never really known. Armed with a copy of the Register of Ancient Monuments, and a one inch to the mile map of the Kurunegala district provided by Athula Amarasekera, our other travelling companion, Anjalendran was picked up at the Kurunegala railway station and immediately set out on his journey. At the end

the four days we spent over that holiday, we had travelled through 15 centuries of everyday life and saw no less than 24 monuments.

Little gems of buildings we saw on that trip were drawn up in my first foray into perspective line drawings some of which are reproduced in this book, whilst others we have never found again even on a subsequent return journey in 1992 with Michael Ondaatje. Ondaatje's foreword speaks of the glories of travelling with Anjalendran and touches on the congruency of gathering ideas that architects and writers must do by observing the world around them and then uniting these into some recognisable forms and experiences.

From the 5th Century forest monastery at Arankele and the bodhigara at Nilakgama to tampita viharas, monasteries, ambalamas and preaching halls of the 17th to 19th Century, what we saw on that journey were all exquisite permutations of multiple traditions



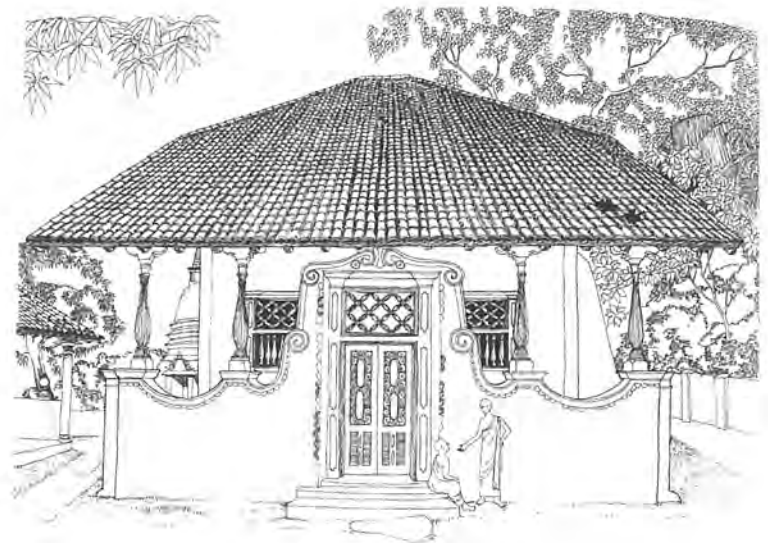
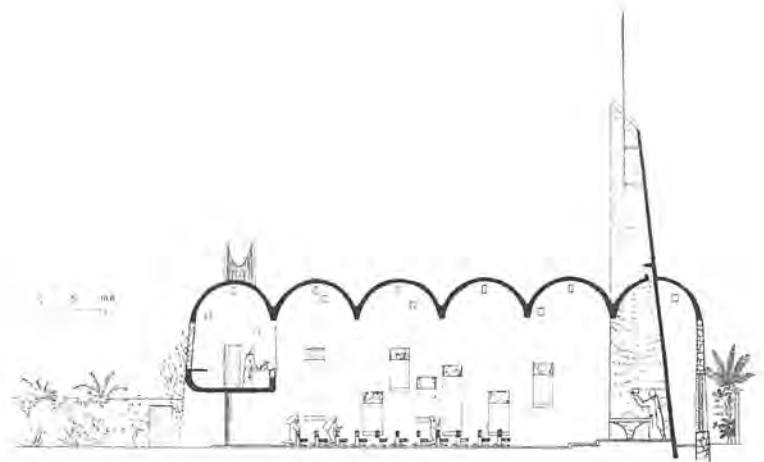
Opposite page: above, The Architectural Heritage of Sri Lanka: Measured Drawings by the Anjalendran Studio; below, Jami-Ul-Alfar Mosque, Colombo, Pettah drawn by Tharaka Subash, 2014. This page: left, Pilgrims' rest, Naguleswaram, Keerimalai drawn by Roven & Gihan, 2014; centre: Jesuit Chapel, Bambalapitiya drawn by Madumantha, 1998; below, Image House, Sri Sudharmamaya Viharaya, Bope drawn by Channa Daswatte, 1998.

of vernacular building now long gone. A tradition where the placement of each wooden peg mattered and craftsmanship in putting something together was celebrated. Much like Anjalendran's own work, each of the structures documented in this volume have a consistency of visual and practical quality that was suited to the environment and economy of the place that it was built in, and every move and each space was thought of carefully and with an aesthetic intent.

Anjalendran continued the practice of these visual and spatial travelogues when he took his university students around on his "experiencing architecture" classes. These trips were as much about seeing buildings while also attempting to reveal the 'hidden' narratives that were more than what was visually present. Anjalendran drew out the stories in these buildings—and still does to this day—as a means of conveying that the appearance of modest ideas yields often-complex results.

The hand invariably observes and follows the lines of structure and space at all scales. Getting each of the buildings drawn by hand began to incise the ideas contained in these spaces, their structures and forms, into the thinking of the person engaged in the task. This process akin to translation might be the inverse of what Juhaani Pallasmaa speaks about in his book, "The Thinking Hand". While the minds of those who began to record these stories wrought in stone, timber and brick were forever changed by these expeditions, the drawings themselves provide an unmatched visual record, an archive of lost monuments perhaps, of a Sri Lankan culture richer than is obvious to most persons.

David Robson skillfully introduces the scope of the book in the preface and then follows with an excellent summary of the history of Sri Lankan architecture from the earliest times to the post independence practice of architecture as a formal profession



Clockwise from left:
C Anjalendran, David
Robson and Dominic
Sansoni at the launch
of the book.

Below: section and plan,
Maha Kappina Walauwe,
Balapitiya drawn by
Kithsiri, Murad, Duminda
& Nilmini, 1990.



on the island. The rest of the book is given entirely to the drawings with short introductions by Robson and arranged in 14 sections following a general historical timeline of the origins of what they illustrate. If the volume represents an illustration of Anjalendran's eclectic interests, what also emerges is the conception of architecture as a discrete object that celebrates inherent craftsmanship and unmatched aesthetic appeal. From 'Ancient buildings and landscapes through 'Buddhist temples', 'Hindu Vernacular buildings', and 'Houses by the Road' to 'Dutch and British Period furniture, it is a wide spectrum of interests. He may also be one of the first people to record contemporary buildings in the work of the pioneers of modernism in Sri Lanka; Andrew Boyd, Minette de Silva, Valentine Gunasekera and Geoffrey Bawa.

The finely wrought drawings by many hands illustrate particular buildings or objects with the conventions of plans, sections and elevations. Some, however, are

accompanied by perspectival and aerial drawings as a tribute to the relationships Anjalendran cultivated with perhaps two generations of students that have had the privilege of being taught by or worked with him. These are accompanied by photographs by another of his traveling companions, the Sri Lankan photographer Dominic Sansoni.

To use pen, pencil and paper in the design and referencing of building today is a dying art. Using these tools to dissect the unnoticed layers of architecture from the past even more so. To draw is to think, one might argue. This volume is a celebration of a time when the human brain was directly connected to the hand as a means of expressing itself. In turn, the hand and its limitations, has a profound effect on what and how we make things. To see and experience these sublime transactions come alive is a great pleasure for anyone interested in the afterlives of Sri Lanka's unmatched architectural heritage. @

