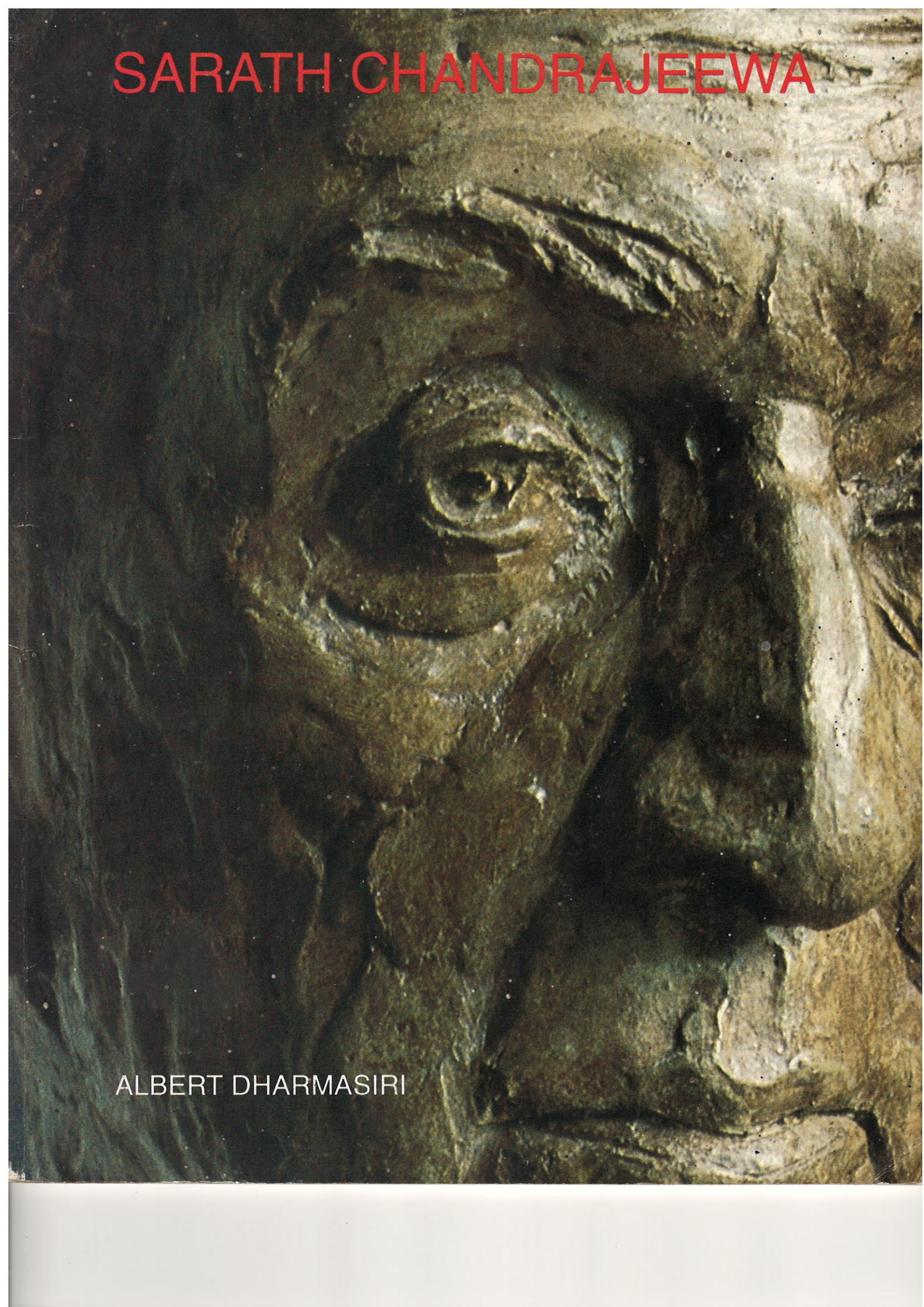


SARATH CHANDRAJEEWA

ALBERT DHARMASIRI



**CONTEMPORARY ART AND CRAFTS
ASSOCIATION OF SRI LANKA**

Objects of the Association:

Identifying artists and craftsmen and making people aware of the value of their creations and works.

Taking necessary steps to provide the required capital, know-how and technology for improving the knowledge and skills of artists and craftsmen.

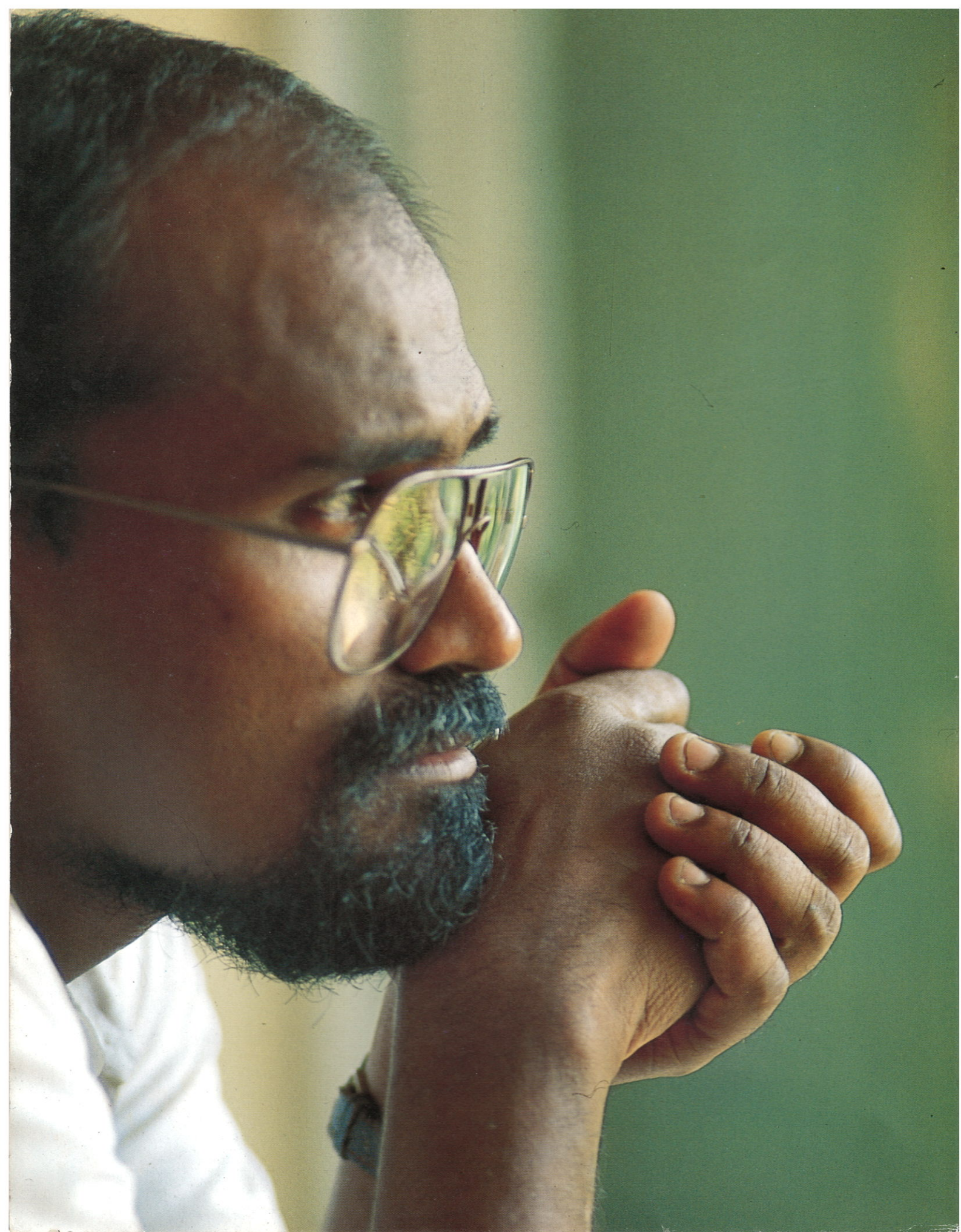
Encouraging artists and craftsmen to present works of high quality which conform to high international standards.

Working in close collaboration with local and foreign art associations.

Orientating arts and crafts towards social development.

SARATH CHANDRAJEEWA

96/06/26



SARATH CHANDRAJEEWA

ALBERT DHARMASIRI

Photographs by
Nihal Fernando
STUDIO TIMES

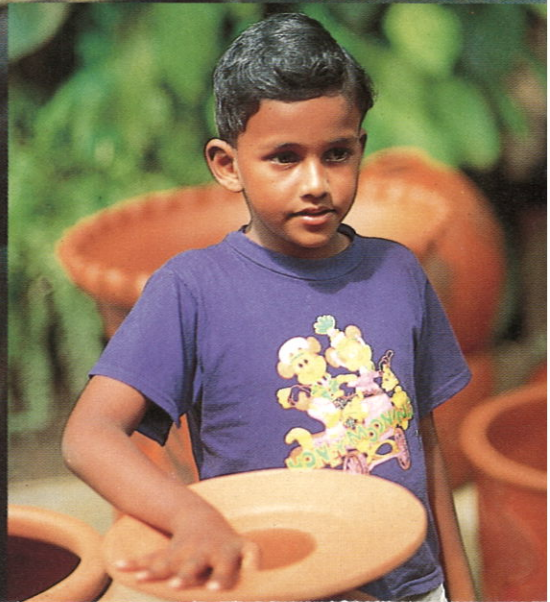
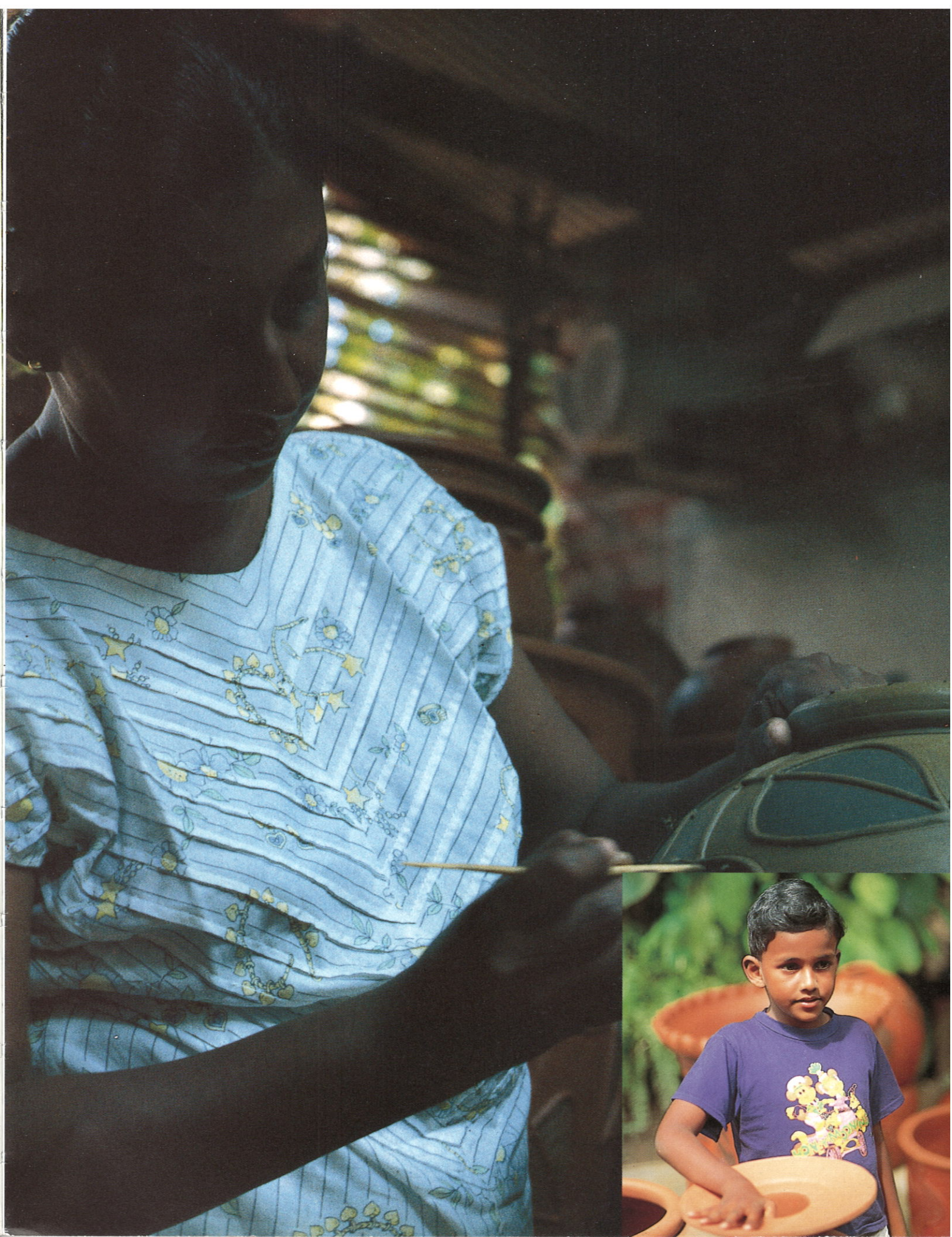
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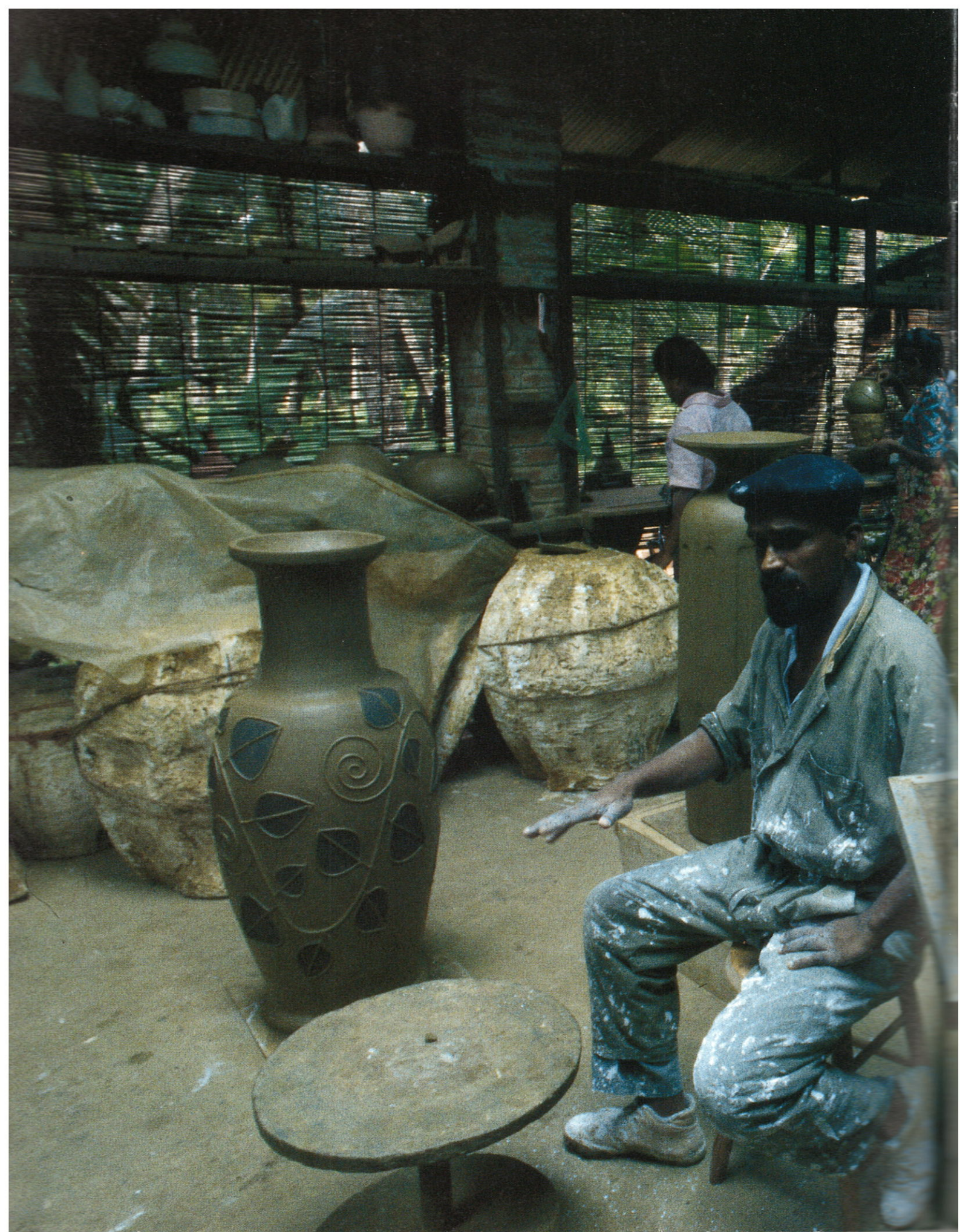
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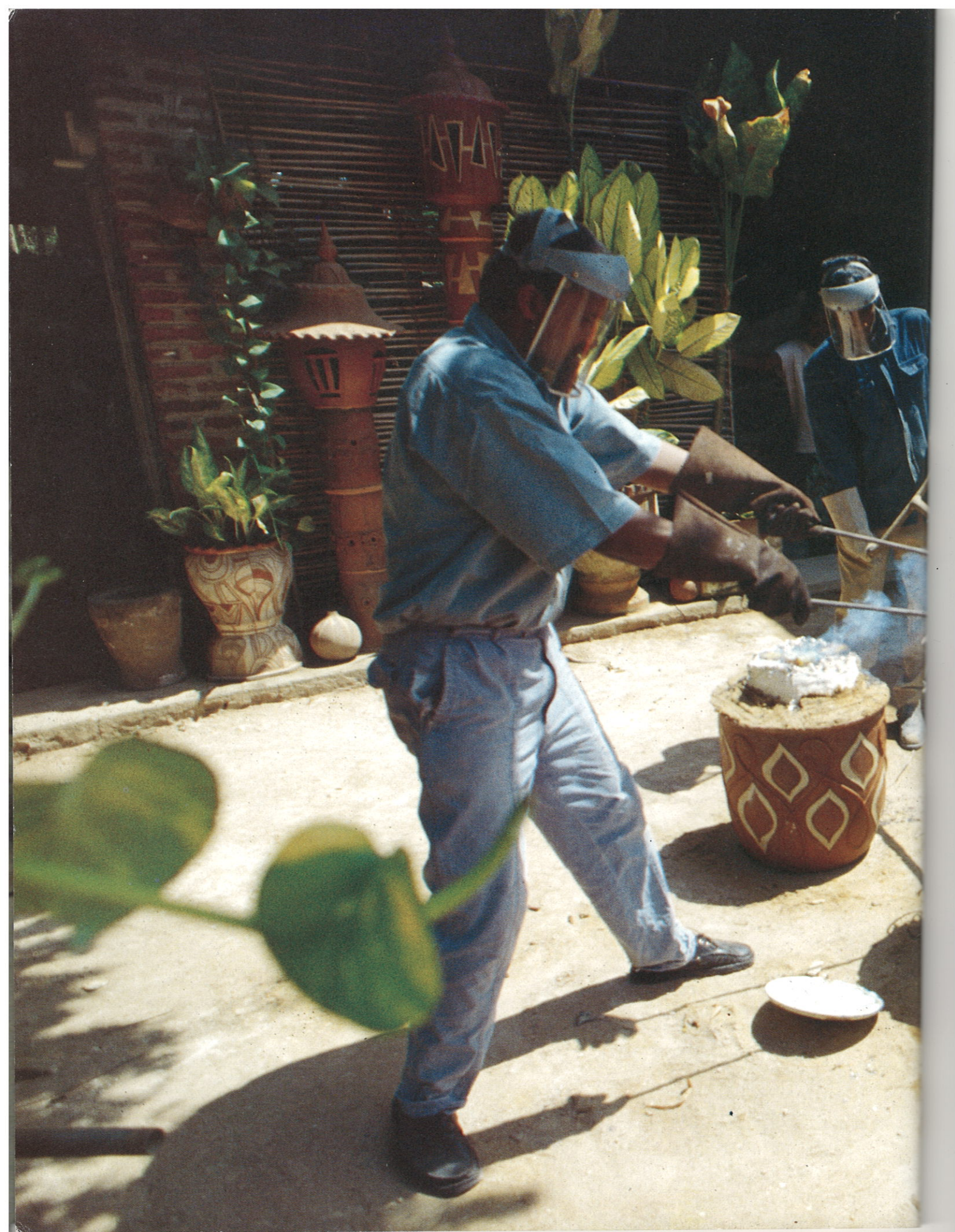
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book gives an excellent picture of the development Sarath Chandrajeewa's art has undergone from his beginnings to what he is creating today. He started his artistic career as a painter; but he soon decided to change medias. He took up sculpture. His portraits are penetrating studies of human beings. The publication of this book coincides with his exhibition of hundred portrait sculptures to be held at the National Art Gallery, Colombo from 19th to 24th April, 1994.

This task would not have been possible without the co-operation of many friends and colleagues. In particular I must thank Mr. Albert Dharmasiri for editing the book and Mr. Nihal Fernando for the excellent photographs.

Harold Peiris
President

Contemporary Art and Crafts Association of Sri Lanka.

Opposite page: Armature for the sculpture 'Follow Me', at Sri Lanka Military Academy
Diyatalawa, 1993, 18ft high

Illustrations (pp 2 to 9)

Sarath Chandrajeewa in a pensive mood (p2)

Janaki Ranmutugala, artist's wife; inset: their son Poorna with pottery (p5)

Sarath Chandrajeewa in his studio (pp 6-7)

Sarath Chandrajeewa and his assistants engaged in bronze casting (pp 8-9)



INTRODUCTION

Albert Dharmasiri

Sarath Chandrajeewa stands alone as the only sculptor of the new generation who really works hard to find an individual artistic expression within the language of modern Sri Lankan art. He constantly probes the roots of traditional national culture; but he does not seek to follow his predecessors. Chandrajeewa is a creative, rebellious and resolute person who fully exposes his character in his artistic creations.

This exhibition presents to the public a comprehensive range of the work of Chandrajeewa as a portrait sculptor. They are not commissioned portraits. Each portrait is a formal exercise and a tribute to a friend or an eminent person who has excelled in his or her respective field. The aim of the sculptor is not to obtain what is called 'a speaking likeness' or to present a documentary account of the features of the sitter. His portraits are subjective and impressionistic; they are informed by an inner vitality that springs from the versatility of the sculptor. Sculptural portraits of Chandrajeewa are spiritual descendants of the work of Tissa Ranasinghe who revolutionised the trend of twentieth century modern sculpture of Sri Lanka.

One writes with hesitation about the development of a sculptor whose contribution is so far from finished. Chandrajeewa's evolution is unlike that of most young sculptors of the day. He is a successful professional as well as a creative sculptor. His professional success as a sculptor depends on his portrait sculptures and the monumental sculptures he has successfully completed. His success as a professional portrait sculptor has overshadowed the creative sculptor in him. He constantly experiments with modern sculptural forms, materials and techniques.

The ancient art of pottery is another art form that drew Chandrajeewa's attention; he studied its history and explored the resources of the medium. He brought drastic changes into the art of the potter by introducing non-traditional pottery forms appropriate to diverse contemporary demands.

Sarath Chandrajeewa is an artist with many talents. He has spoken with rare candour to Albert Dharmasiri who questioned him on various matters pertaining to his artistic career. The following extracts are from the interview:

A.D. In December 1990, you and your wife Janaki held perhaps the most sensational exhibition of pottery and terracotta objects in the National Art Gallery. The most striking feature in your creations is the successful integration of the utilitarian purpose with aesthetic appeal. You have elevated a mere craft to an art form. Can you give any sort of description of your involvement with pottery?

Opposite page:
Studio entrance showing pottery





S.C. I entered the Government College of Art and Art Crafts in 1973 and successfully completed a three year course in drawings and painting. During this period I studied pottery and ceramics under the guidance of Mr. D. P. J. Jayadeva. I have a natural inclination to work in clay. During my art school-days I was staying at Ja-Ela near Seeduwa. Close to Seeduwa is Ambalanmulla, a traditional potters' village. Whenever possible I went to this village and studied the art of the traditional potters with special reference to their firing methods.

After the marriage I shifted my residence in 1981 to Dankotuwa, an area well known for its tile and brick factories. In 1982 we started our own pottery studio. I adopted several measures to overcome the limitations of the village potter. First is the clay. The village potter takes clay from special places in paddy fields to make pots. I simply took prepared clay used for making tiles. It is surprising that I was the first in the area to use prepared clay for making pottery.

In the process of firing according to the traditional method many vessels turn out to be defective due to the primitive nature of the kilns. I studied the method of constructing large kilns used for firing tiles and adopted that technology to make smaller versions appropriate for firing my studio pottery-ware. Thereby accidental imperfections were completely eliminated. In this effort I received the unstinted support and advice of Mr. Sivanadian, Technical Advisor to the Ceramics Corporation.

A.D. Can you give any description of your working methods and techniques?

S.C. Our traditional potters do not experiment with clay. They merely perpetuate an ancient craft. This is the nature of folk art. In my case I am a sculptor first and a potter afterwards. In addition to the potter's wheel, I use several other innovative techniques as well as casting, coiling and slab building methods. These processes enable me to construct large size pots.

A.D. The art of pottery seems to have had a long history in this island. *Visuddhi-marga-sannaya* refers to the potter's wheel (*saka poruwa*) and the tools (*katu*) which were used to draw lines on the clay. *Saddharma-ratnavaliya* refers many times to painted pottery. A reference is made in the *Mahavamsa*, to the use of painted vases in the reign of Devanampiyatissa (307 B.C.) I have often suspected that with many of your pottery forms, certain traditional forms had been there at the back of your mind at least, as prototypes of design. Do you think this has been the case?



Above and opposite page top: Pottery
Opposite page bottom: sculpture (terra-cotta)

S.C. Yes, I think it is quite possible. Because I have been studying the indigenous pottery tradition for several years. Unlike in the case of many other art forms the art of pottery has had an unbroken continuity from the very early times to the present. The wide variety of pottery forms always fascinates me. The form changes according to the utilitarian purpose of the vessel. *Ukul kale* (water pot), *gal-kale* (pot for watering plants), *gas muttiya* (pot for storing toddy), *pili haliya* (pot for keeping cloth), *vella haliya* (pot for boiling cloth) and *mahappalla* (cooking utensil for a large crowd) are only a few examples.

A.D. All creative artists are rebels. In your case the word should be written in heavy capitals. I know your closest relatives resisted your idea of establishing a pottery centre at your residence. You relentlessly fought against their conservative beliefs and finally succeeded in establishing the centre. Are you disturbed by the social injustice endured by some people as a result of casteism?

S.C. Caste has been the basis of social organisation of the Sinhalese from ancient times. The type of occupation followed determined the social status and caste. People still believe in the segregation of castes. Creating a just society is as important as creating new art forms.





Studio Kiln

A.D. In terms of the units of composition, I find a basic relationship between the relief sculptures and your semi-abstract paintings. The treatment of the low-relief terra-cotta mural at the National Youth Centre, Maharagama, is more 'painterly' than 'sculptural'. What is the importance of the square and the circle in your work?

S.C. As a matter of fact, I was selected to follow a major course in painting. However since I could not afford to buy painting materials, I opted for sculpture. I have won many prizes for painting but I have never participated in a single competition for sculpture.

Variants of the circle and the square recur throughout my work. Despite an almost geometrical division of the surface they are essentially not geometrical arrangements. My interest is to create a tension between a few simple forms. The origin of my pictorial language can be traced back to my interest in the diagrams of the ola leaf manuscripts, horoscopes and *yantras*. They contain certain roots of our national art tradition. Forms and shapes in works of art are far more important to me than the illustrative elements.

A.D. A portrait is described as a visual biography. At first the portrait did not appear as a separate entity but as part of a group of individual figures. The realistic portrait as an independent work of art appeared in the fifteenth century. Jacob Epstein (1880-1959), the pre-eminent British sculptor revolutionised the art of portrait sculpture. His portrait sculpture can be said to represent the twentieth century.

The present series of portraits can be considered as your highest achievement as a sculptor. You have observed your models with extraordinary penetration and intensity searching for the individuality that lies behind outward appearances. Could you explain some of the reasons for doing this series of portraits?

S.C. These portraits were executed against a dark chapter in the history of my country. It was a time when human life was worth nothing. My sculptures are an artistic response to underline the fact that human life is priceless. I wanted to draw attention to the inestimable contribution of the individual to the society at large.

Two events in my life were instrumental in evoking an interest in portrait sculpture. When I was a student at the Government College of Fine Arts in 1976, Mr. Lev Karbel, the famous Russian sculptor, who did the bronze statue of Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, demonstrated to the students various



Sarath Chandrajeewa modelling
the portrait of Tissahamy



Sarath Chandrajeewa with
Uruwarige Tissahamy and his son.

stages of modelling a portrait. I was greatly impressed by the facility with which he worked. My encounter with the portrait bronzes of Mr. Tissa Ranasinghe, is another contributory factor in my development as portrait sculptor. My visit to the Rodin Museum in Paris remains another exhilarating experience.

I work very fast, by modelling a bust in one sitting, the duration of which ranges from one to four hours. A sculptor has to be in full command of all his materials. Working direct from a live model who has never been an artist's model gives you confidence in yourself.

A.D. When did you learn to cast in bronze?

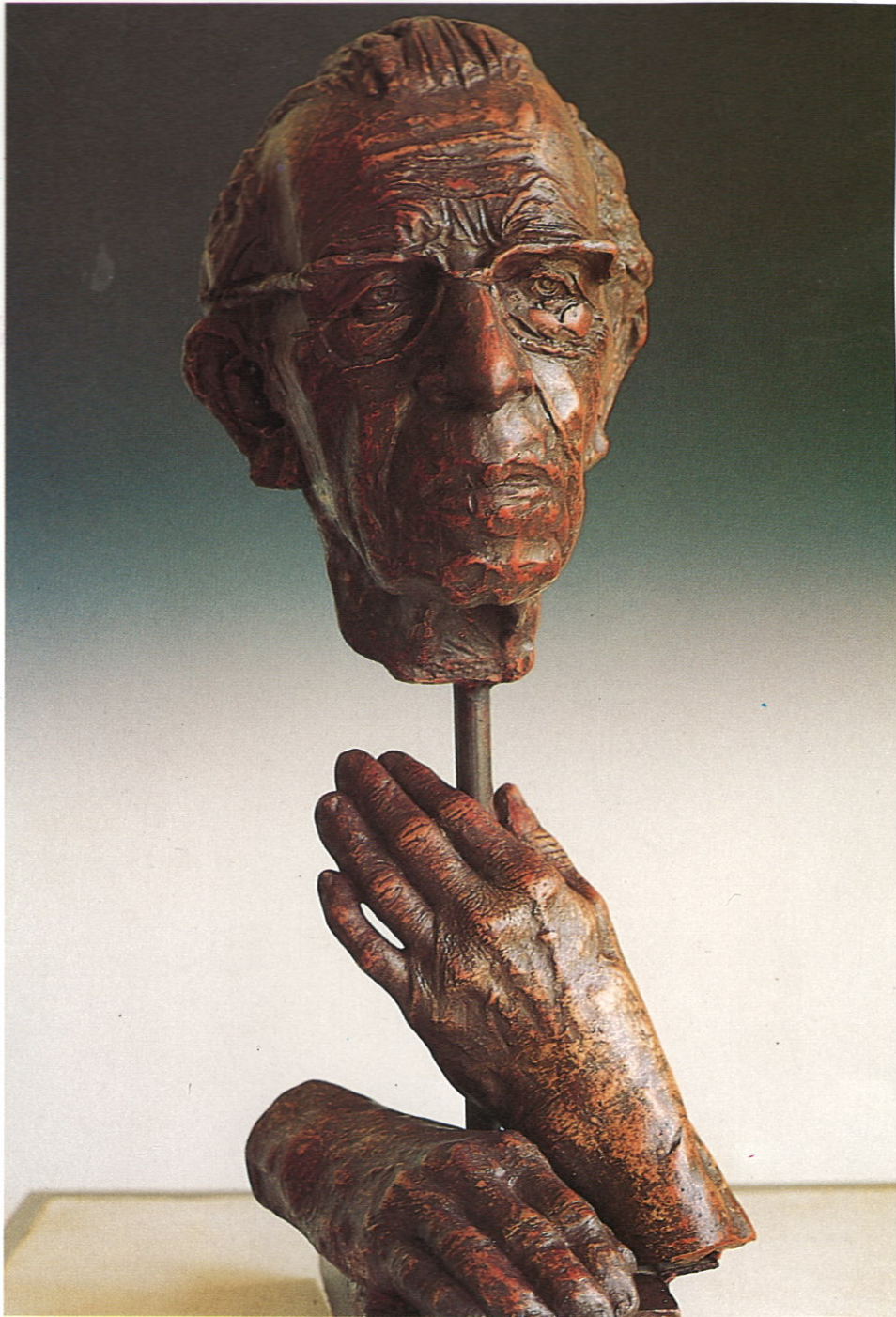
S.D. There is no government or private institution which teaches bronze casting for sculptors. Few individuals who know guard it as a top secret. In 1971 Mr. Tissa Ranasinghe wanted to start a bronze foundry at the Government College of Art and Art Crafts when he was its Principal. Unfortunately various obstructions led to his resignation from the College.

After leaving the art school, I joined the National Youth Services Council in 1979 as a Youth Services Officer. During this period I borrowed books on casting from the art school. Those books had been donated by Mr. Tissa Ranasinghe to the library in 1986. During one of his visits to Sri Lanka I met Mr. Tissa Ranasinghe who was teaching bronze casting at the Royal College of Art, London. He invited me to come to London to learn bronze casting at the Royal College. When I conveyed this to Mr. Charitha Ratwatte, then Chairman of the National Youth Services Council, he graciously granted me a scholarship to go to the Royal College of Art, London.

All my artistic endeavours would not have been possible without the ideas, advice and knowledge of Mr. Harold Pieris. I must thank profusely for his support and encouragement throughout all my creative projects.



Enlightenment of the Buddha Oil painting, 1988, size 46x36 ins



Dr. P. R. Anthonis, 1991, bronze (hands cast from life), height 23 ins.



Rev. Prof. Walpola Rahula, 1991, cement, height 22 ins.



Geoffrey Bawa, 1991 bronze mounted on granite, height 26 ins.



Dr. Arthur C Clarke 1992, glass powder with resin and plastics, height 24 1/2 ins.



Prof. Senake Bandaranayake, 1991, cement mounted on 'kibok' height 18 ins.



Nihal Fernando, 1991, bronze, height 19 1/2 ins.



George Keyt 1991, cement, height 19 1/2 ins.



Albert Dharmasiri 1991, bronze, height 19 1/2 ins.



S. Panibharata, 1991, cement, height 24 ins.



Dr. S. J. Stephen, 1991, glass with resin, height 23 ins.



Dr. R. P. Jayewardene, 1991, cement, height 23 ins.



Prof. E. R. Sarachchandra, 1991, cement, height 23 ins.



Dr. N. H. Kulasinghe, 1991, bronze mounted on concrete, height 18 ins.



Henry Jayasena, 1991, cement, height 19 1/2 ins.



Rev. Marcelline Jayakody, 1991, cement, height 25 ins.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

- 1955 Born in Nuwara Eliya, 6th June.
- 1972 Gold Medal and First Prize, All Ceylon Buddhist Students Art Exhibition.
- 1973 Certificate of Merit, Ceylon Society of Arts Annual Exhibition.
Highly commended (Traditional Arts), Ceylon Society of Arts.
- 1974 Certificate of Merit, Ceylon Tourist Board Art Competition.
- 1975 Two prizes and Certificates of Merit Y.M.C.A. All Ceylon Art Exhibition in association with Rotary Club.
- 1976 Three year certificate in Drawing and Painting, Institute of Aesthetic Studies, University of Kelaniya.
Certificate of Merit, National Youth Services Council Poster Competition.
- 1978 Bachelor of Fine Arts (Sculpture), Institute of Aesthetic Studies, University of Kelaniya.
- 1979-91 Held the position of Youth Services Officer in the National Youth Services Council.
- 1980 Visited Universities of Fine Arts, Art Galleries, Museums and Artists' Studios in Japan. (Sponsored by the National Youth Services Council of Sri Lanka).
- 1985 Certificates of Merit, Poster Exhibition for the World Environment Day.
- 1986 Two paintings Highly Commended, Ceylon Society of Arts.
Painting titled, 'After the Praying Hour', selected for the collection of the Lalitha Kala Academy from the Sixth Triennial Exhibition, held in New Delhi, India.
- 1987 Commissioned to do 18ft high monumental sculpture in front of the National Youth Centre of Sri Lanka, Maharagama.
Commissioned to make two large terra-cotta murals, measuring 35x6 ins and 14x7 ins respectively for the National Youth Centre, Maharagama.

Commissioned to paint six portraits in oil colours, of former Chairmen of NYSC.

Commissioned to do a 12ft high statue of late Munidasa Cumaratunga to be installed near the main road, Matara.

1988 Completed a one year post-graduate course in bronze casting at the Department of Sculpture, Royal College of Art, London.

Travelled for one month in France and Italy visiting Museums and Art Galleries. (Sponsored by the National Youth Services Council of Sri Lanka).

Exhibited the painting titled, 'Meditation', in the Fourth Asian Biennial Exhibition, Bangladesh.

1989 The painting titled 'Boundary', was exhibited in the Seventh Triennial Exhibition, New Delhi, India.

The Youth Award (bronze) was designed for the National Youth Centre, Maharagama.

1990 Exhibition titled, 'Creations of Terra-cotta' was held at the National Art Gallery, Colombo.



Sculpture (mixed media) 1978

- 1991 Appointed lecturer, Dept. of Art and Sculpture,
Institute of Aesthetic Studies, University of Kelaniya.
- Director, Terra-cotta Industries (Pvt.) Ltd.
- Commissioned to do 4ft high bust of late Dr. C. W. W.
Kannangara for the National Institute of Education,
Maharagama.
- Commissioned to do 6ft high bust of late Dr. S. A.
Wickramasingha, installed at Uyanwatta, Matara.
- 1992 Appointed Visiting Instructor at the Post-graduate
Institute of Archaeology.
- Participated in the Exhibition of Painting and
Sculpture at Jones International showroom.
- Commissioned to do 15ft high unknown soldiers'
monument (concrete) for the Panagoda Army Camp.
- Commissioned to do the portrait of Christopher
Ondaatjie (bronze) Canada.
- Commissioned to do a terra-cotta relief (12x5ft) for
Maxi House, Wennappuwa.
- Commissioned to do a portrait (bronze) of late
Dr. Colvin R. de Silva for the Law Library, Colombo.
- Designed an award for the Organization of
Independent Literature in Sri Lanka.
- 1993 Commissioned to do the monumental sculpture
'Follow Me', 18ft high, for the Sri Lanka Military
Academy, Diyatalawa.
- 1993 Awarded the Cultural Prize by the Japan Sri Lanka
Friendship Cultural Fund.

Address: R. M. S. Chandrajeewa, "Hevana", Lihiriyagama, Via Dankotuwa, Sri Lanka.



R. M. Sarath Chandrajeewa
Sculptor Artist

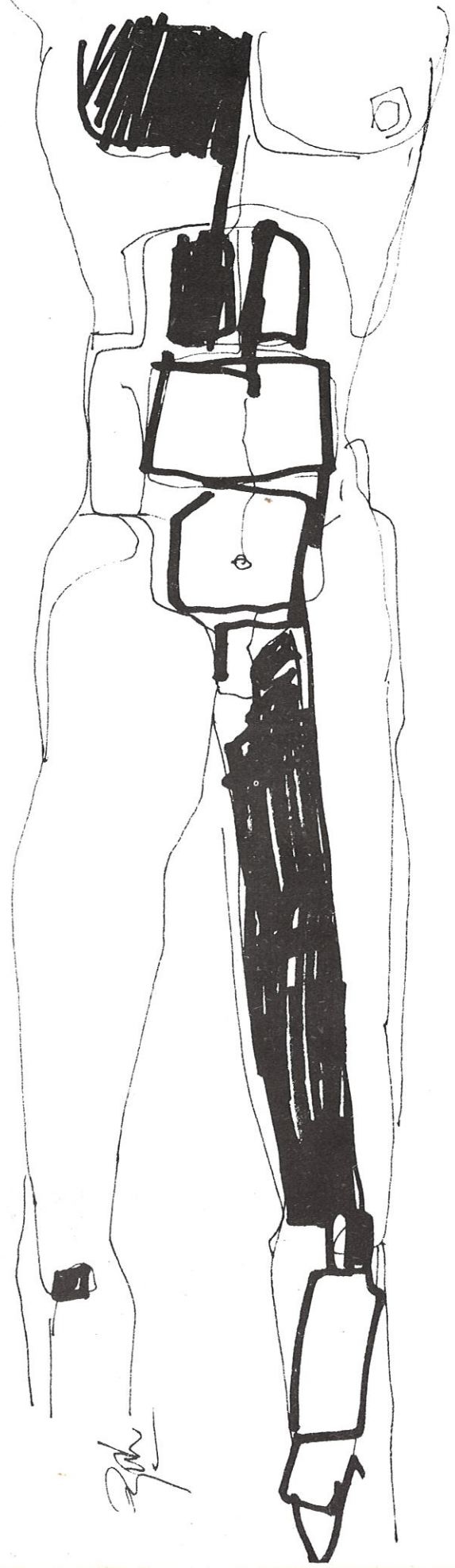
BFA (Sri Lanka), Dip RCA (London), MFA (Moscow)
Department of Art and Sculpture, Institute of
Aesthetic Studies, University of Kelaniya
46, Horton Place, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka.
Tel. (01) 693933

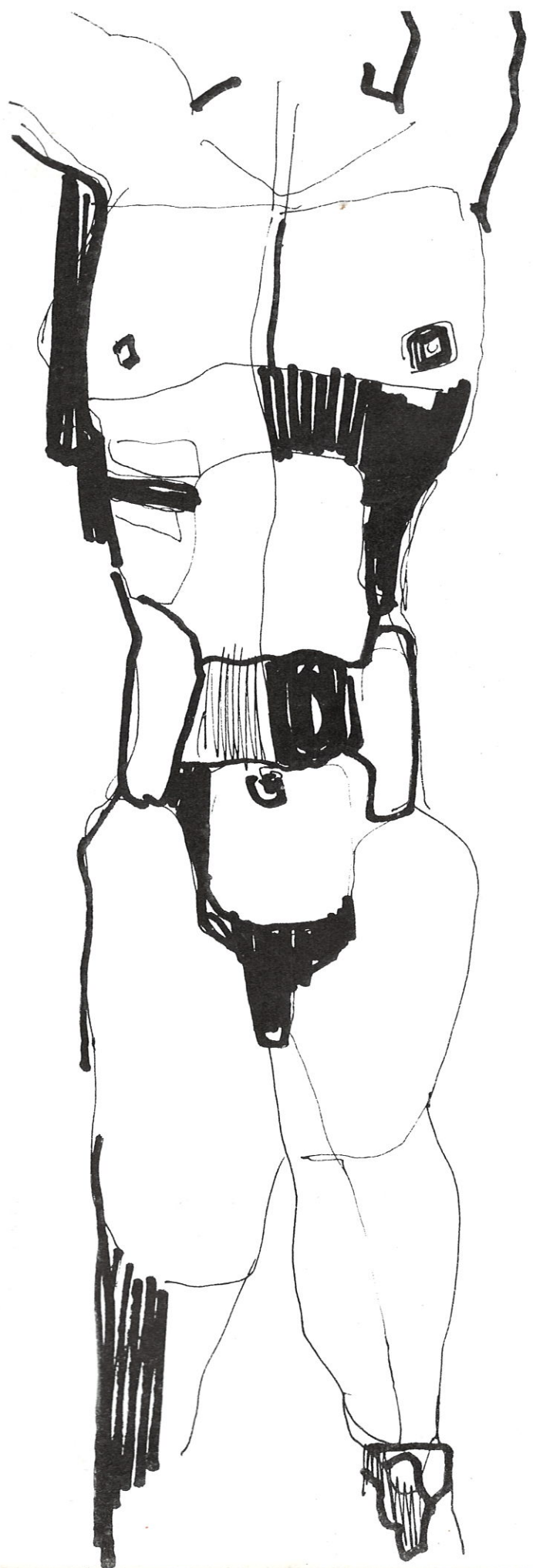
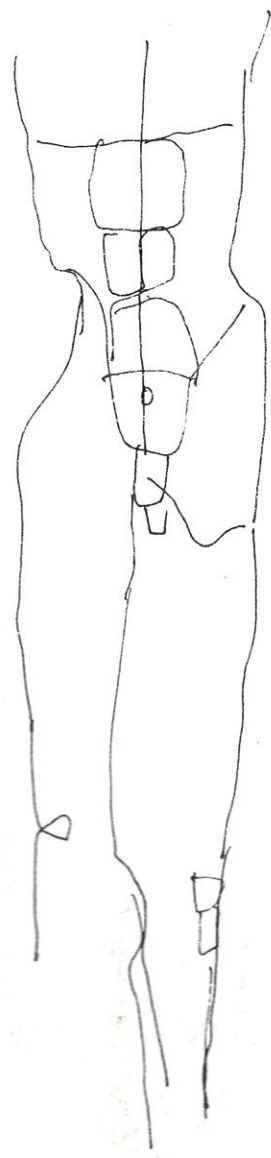


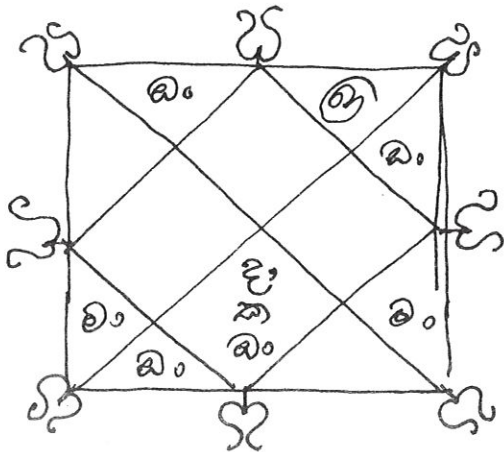
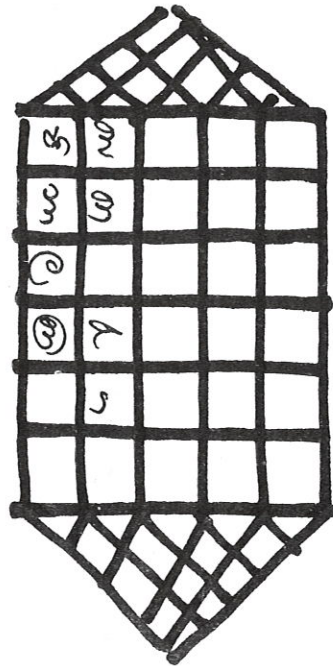
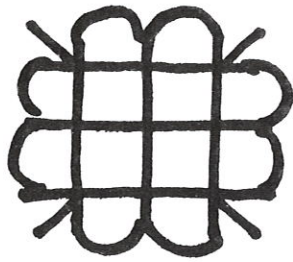
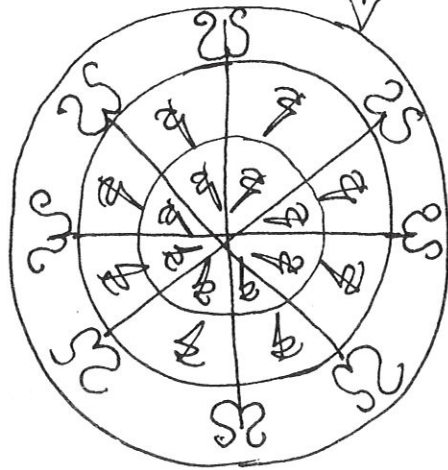
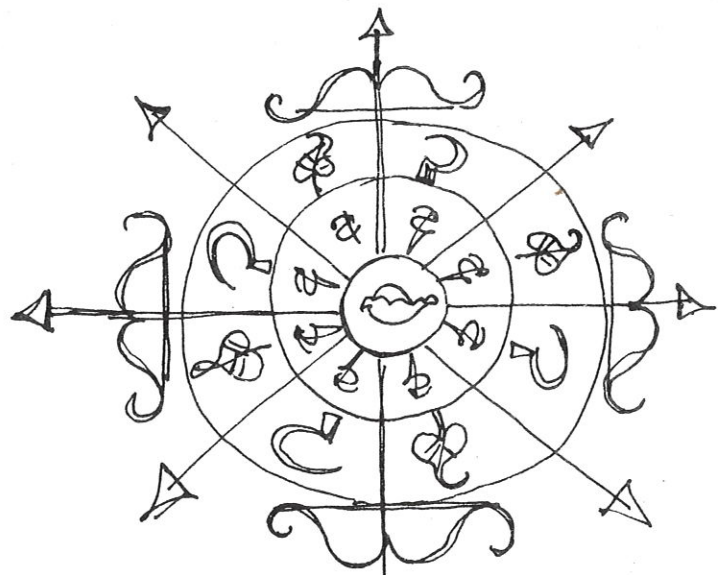
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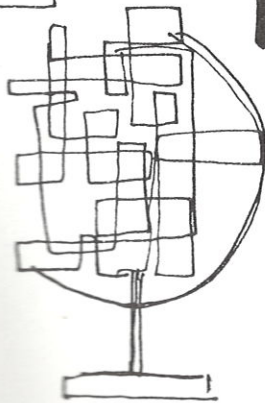
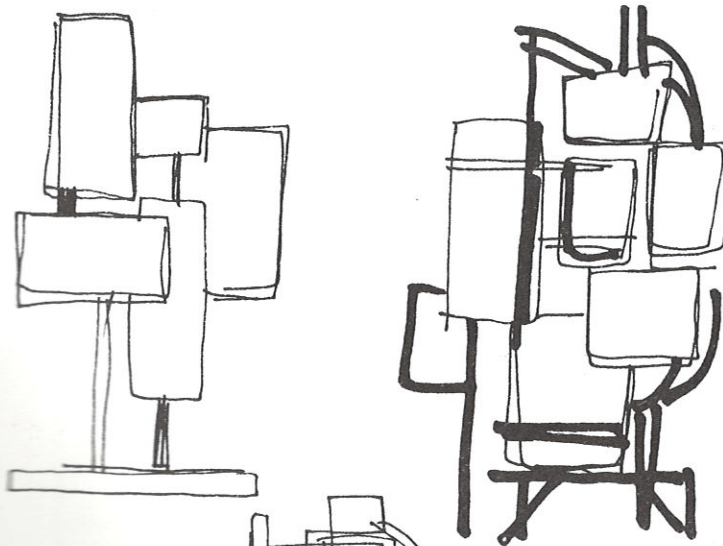
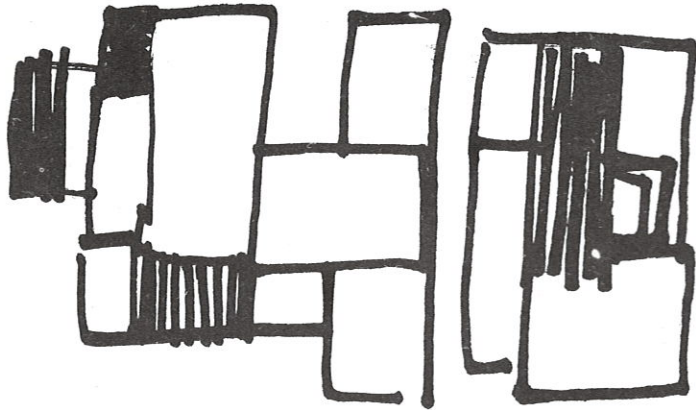
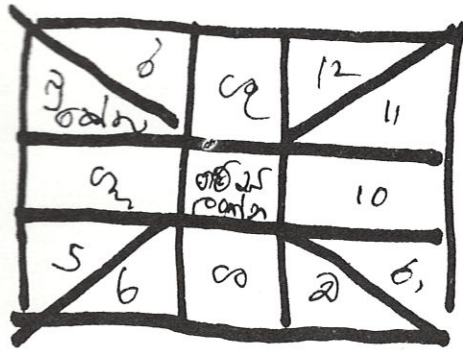


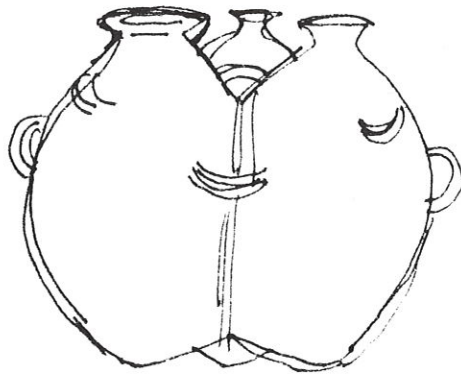
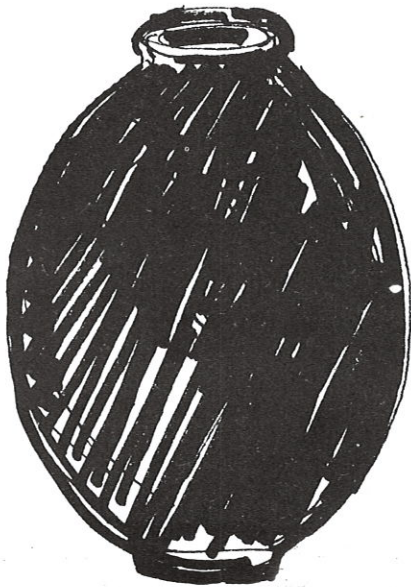
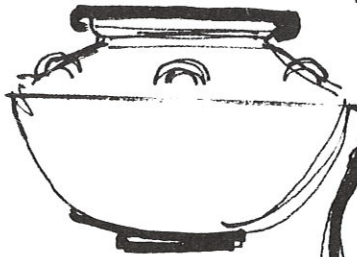
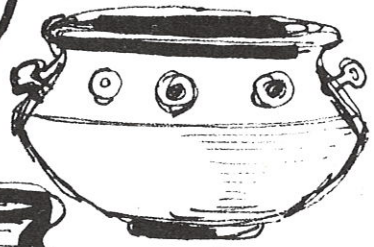
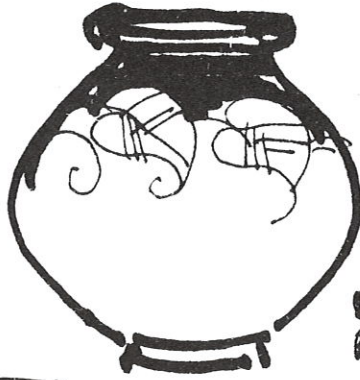
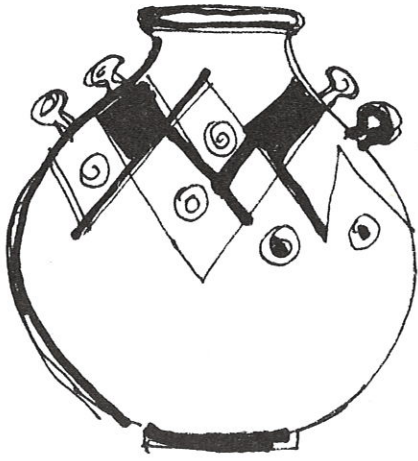
Studies from the sketchbook
of Sarath Chandrajeewa

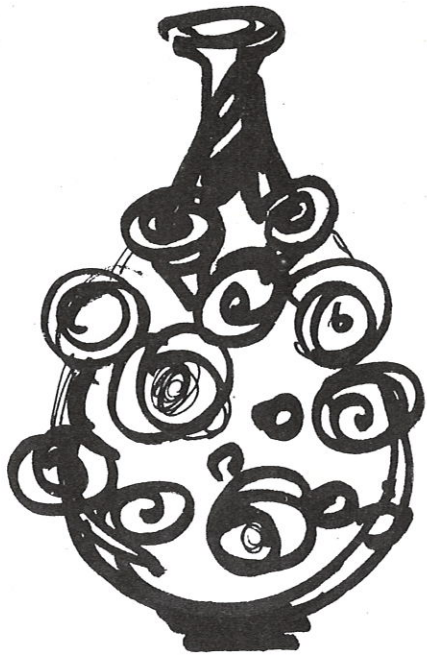












ALBERT DHARMASIRI is a practising painter, graphic artist and art critic. He was head of the Department of Art and Sculpture, Institute of Aesthetic Studies, University of Kelaniya from 1980 to 1983 and 1989 to 1993. He is currently a lecturer in art at the same Institute. In 1993 he was elected to the Executive Committee of the International Association of Art, (UNESCO), at its General Assembly held in Helsinki. He was elected Vice-President IAA (Cultural Region, Asia), in Baghdad in 1986. He held the position of Chairman of the Panel for Painting and Sculpture of the Arts Council of Sri Lanka from 1979 to 1991.

