

**Assessment of the Dynamics in the
Community of Artists in the Maldives:
The Report Submitted by the Theertha
International Artists' Collective**

**Anoli Perera
Jagath Weerasinghe**

25th October 2006

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the National Art Gallery of Maldives, its Assistant Director Mr. Mohamed Hilmy and Curator, Mr. Mamduh Waheed for inviting us and providing their hospitality to conduct a survey of the artists community and its dynamics in the Maldives. We like to thank them particularly for connecting us with artists and facilitating our task.

In this report, we have made our observations, initial conclusions and have come up with some possible ideas and strategies for supporting the art scene to evolve into a more dynamic one. We have tried to be objective while maintaining a constructive criticality in our observations. We would like you to consider our observations and assessments as a point of departure for further reflection and evaluation of the situation that prevails in the artists' community and to consider relevant strategies to promote innovation .

We hope our observations contribute toward supporting group initiatives and further defining the role of the National Art Gallery within the overall art scene in Maldives.

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Introduction

Background to our Observation Visit

In April 2006, Mr. Mamduh Waheed, Curator of the National Art Gallery, Maldives initiated a discussion through email communication with Anoli Perera to link up with Theertha International Artists Collective (Theertha) in order to get an insight into Theertha activities and to seek the possibility of setting up a link for future artists/ knowledge exchanges.

As a result of this initial connection, Mr. Waheed made a private visit to Theertha to meet its members and discuss the situation of contemporary art in Maldives at length. At the same time, his intention was to get an understanding of the 'background and context' that led to the formation of Theertha and its present activities. He was also hoping to explore a possible collaboration between Maldives and Sri Lanka in terms of art exchange that would stimulate the Maldivian art community. The discussions held with Theertha members and Mr. Waheed looked into the possibilities of inviting senior artists from Sri Lanka to work with the Maldivian artists and for Theertha to include Maldivian artists in their international programs.

To initiate this process of art exchange, Theertha invited artist, Fathimath Zuhura to take part in the International Women Artists' Residency 2006 held in August in Colombo. Theertha viewed her visit and her performance at the residency very positively. To strengthen the links further, Mr. Hussain Shihab, State Minister for Arts and Mr. Mohamed Hilmy, the Asst. Director of National Art Gallery visited Theertha in September 2006 where further discussions were held to work out strategies for possible future exchange of artists between Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Our subsequent visit to Maldives from 18th to 21st September 2006 was undertaken as a step to give a larger input by Theertha in terms of identifying strategies for stimulating discussion and debate within the local art scene in Maldives to support its transformation and innovation.

Role of Theertha in the Survey Visit

During our visit, we were functioning on the following capacities:

- a) As assessors and critical observers of the contemporary artist community and the overall art scene in the Maldives.
- b) As resource persons to give input to artists and stimulate discussion and self-reflection.

- c) As evaluators to give our ideas and recommendation on stimulating group dynamics among artists and what role National Art Gallery can play in contributing to innovation among artists.

Format of presenting our comments

Our comments are organised under 3 sections. They are as follows:

Section 1: Observations on the artists' community

Section 2: Key Factors that need to be addressed to support innovation and progress within the art community in Male'.

Section 3: Role of the National Art Gallery

Section 1

Observation on Artists' Community

The three days we spent in Male were filled with discussions and viewing artists' presentations, meeting with artists and studio visits.

The introduction to Male's art community came through Mr. Waheed and Mr. Hilmy. During our visit we met artists Nina Manik, Egan Mohamed Badeeu, Ahamed Nimad (Andu), Aminath Hilmy, Ahamed Naeem, Afzal Shafiu Hassan (Afu), Ahamed Shuja and Hussain Afeef. In addition, we also visited Maafushi Island where we met a number of local artists. We also visited the studios of several artists (see Annexure 1). To get a sense of the nature of the art market, we also visited a number of shops where the work produced by the artists were sold.

Our observation based on what we have seen in artists' presentations, discussions with artists and others who are connected with art/art management are as follows:

1) Skills in handling paint, and drawing:

After observing most of the artists' work, it was obvious to us that the majority of them have acquired a good grasp of the painting and drawing techniques, particularly in handling oil, watercolour and ink. We were very impressed by the kind of technical mastery and the method of investigation in the works of Aminath Hilmy. We were further impressed by Afzal Shafiu Hassan's skill in watercolours, particularly for designing stamps and the meticulous carvings done by Ahmed Nimad. Obviously, there are opportunities for studying (or self studying) the techniques in art making available for artists within Male. As we understand, the National Centre for the Arts offers classes for learning the techniques of painting. We also noted that some artists have received overseas training in visual arts. **What we did not see is the diversification in the use of art techniques and art making methods going beyond the conventional art techniques such as oil on canvas, water colour, acrylic etc.**

2) Catering for the tourist market by most artists:

The overwhelming dependency on the tourist market for inspiration and for financial possibilities tend to curtail artists' tendencies toward experimentation for their own satisfaction or to make art that represents a self reflective and critical side of the artist. We did not observe much variation in the compositional aspects even when painting the most popular and repetitive themes such as fauna, flora

and seascapes. Artists capturing different perspectives or interpretations of these popular themes in their works were rare. The tourist market, which to a large extent sustains the Maldivian art practice, has unfortunately also stifled any possibilities of innovation and experimentation within the artists' community. Egan Mohamed Badeeu's case is a good example of this situation. His earlier compositions did try to go against the norms of conventional compositional balance, and tried to experiment with an alternative approach by trying to capture his subject matter 'in fleeting moments' rather than doing a staged composition. However, we see that this approach was not pursued with concentration to develop it as his signature style and remained as an experimental exercise done occasionally. A similar situation was seen in the works done by artists we met in Maafushi island whose art largely remain repetitive in terms of theme and composition. This is largely due to the lack of other support structures and evaluative or endorsement systems to inspire artists to do otherwise. Lack of exhibition space, absence of critical debate within the artists' community and among the general public and the lack of recognition of innovative art by art institutions has contributed to perpetuating this situation. We could not see any dynamism within the art community that would work to counter the enormous influence by the tourist market. Therefore, the immediate saleability of art in the tourist market as a simple commodity has in many ways become the criteria for measuring quality and success of artists.

3) Art lacks representation of the complexity of contemporary Male or Maldivian life:

At present, Maldives as a country is undergoing a transformation in the political sphere, which has created obvious anxieties, discontent and frictions. At the same time, it has experienced progress and triumphs. At a cultural and social level, globalisation, tourism and trade have made imprints in the life styles, tastes, consumption practices, attitudes and behaviour of many people. The visual landscape in Male itself presents a colourful, contradictory and synthesised scenario of this diversity and complexity of contemporary Maldivian life. However, the representation of this diversity and complexity as well as emotions of social, cultural and political transformations is completely missing in the works of artists whose portfolios we viewed. In other words, social, cultural and political realities are missing from their work, which nevertheless might have offered interesting alternative themes for artistic representation.

4) Most artists work in isolation and are not exposed to constructive critical evaluations or get input from each other about their work:

It seems that opportunities to get together in order to work on group dynamics or group art projects are minimal within the art community. This also may be a consequence of not having an art school that offers a 3-4 year degree program

or art educational set-up that would allow artists to go through long-term art programs. If such systems existed, they would ideally get opportunities to get into groups and to bond with each other that would have led to networking among artists. In most comparable cases around the world, artists mature within these peer groups individually, professionally and politically through a process of critical input and discussion happening among the members. We felt that such a critical input and discussion would have made a positive impact on the works of artist Nina Manik as well as many others.

5) Disconnection from traditional art and craft:

There seem to be a disconnection from the craft and traditional art practices mostly due to lack of support or interest in pursuing such practices within local communities. One reason among many others for this lack of interest is the easy and cheap importation of craft items from Indonesia, China, Sri Lanka and India, which are labelled and sold as Maldivian craft. During our visit to the Maafushi Island we were able to observe curios and craft items for sale at the shops that largely cater for tourists. We did not see a fair representation of local handicraft or locally made items that had some connection to traditional craft or decorative arts. Instead what we found was an overwhelming collection of foreign products (some labelled 'Made in Maldives') that simulated some sort of traditional and local look. The explanation for the lack of locally made craft was that if items are locally made they couldn't compete with foreign curios that are cheaper. It seems that this market disadvantage, the psychology created by the tourist market and the lack of governmental and institutional support to revive traditional craft has somehow seriously contributed to disconnecting communities from their past expressions of art. This sadly has denied the contemporary artists of the possibility of referring to their traditional art or being inspired by them.

Therefore, the situation of Maldivian contemporary art is that, **on the one hand it is disconnected from contemporary socio-cultural expressions and on the other it is disconnected from the country's historical cultural expressions. Both were due to the repercussions of the overwhelming influence of the tourist market.**

Section 2

Key Factors that need to be Addressed to Support Innovation and Progress within the Art Community in Male.

A. Art Education:

At present, it is clear that art education largely depends on the art classes offered by the National Art Centre and other educational opportunities available overseas (for a privileged few). This education, mostly focussing on teaching drawing and painting skills, provides the art student with the necessary basic technical skills. As much as technical skills are important for an artist, it is also imperative to support the artist on the development of the perceptual and conceptual skills in order to inspire innovation and experimentation in the art practice. Therefore, it is important to provide a broader training that also includes art history, theory, criticism that would give insight into other diverse art practises and ideologies. The idea is for artists to draw from many sources of art knowledge for developing their concepts, themes as well as methodologies in art making.

In the absence of a formal university or art collage that offers a holistic art education, one way to address what is lacking in the existing art education is to introduce other programs that would supplement what is missing. Although this is not going to be an absolute substitute for formal long-term academic art programs that are usually offered by university systems, it would help to fill certain gaps in the existing system of art education momentarily.

Therefore, there need to be a serious effort to formulate programs such as the following by the art institutional structures that already exist (i.e. National Art Gallery/ National Art Centre):

Art history and art theory-

- ✘ Organizing lecture series and discussion forums on art history focussing on art trends (i.e. Pop Art, 90s art Movement in Sri Lanka, Contemporary Pakistani Women Artists, Indian Late Modern Art, Chinese Art of 1980s to Present, etc) that would be relevant to the local art context.
- ✘ Setting up regularly sustained film programs that would show international art movements and trends with special reference to Asia.
- ✘ Developing a serious reference library on art that would include books as well as digital images (DVDs, Videos etc)

Promotion of critical thinking and writing:

- ✘ Organizing art colloquiums conducted by invited art academics for artists who are interested in critical writing on art and want to develop their writing skills.
- ✘ Setting up public forums where artists can present their portfolios to a critical audience.
- ✘ Introduction of newsletters, a magazine and other publications where artists could write and express their opinions, engage in art investigations and compile written documentaries.
- ✘ Linking up with international institutions (museums, art schools, and alternative art bodies) that offer critical writing forums or collaborating with them to formulate special programs for Maldivian artists.

Provide exposure to diverse art practises and ideologies:

- ✘ Organizing international art workshops that would bring international artists to Maldives that would give local artists opportunities to work together with them and exchange knowledge.
- ✘ Organizing art residencies that would bring international artist/ artists who can work with a selected number of local artists to do collaborative work and community work for longer periods of time in Maldives.
- ✘ Participation of Maldivian artists in regional and international art workshops.
- ✘ Presentation of international and regional exhibitions of contemporary art in the Maldives.

Promoting broader and qualitative art education at school level.

Another aspect of art education that needs attention is the training of art teachers by giving them a broader education on art (technique/ art theory & history). Art teachers will be able to contribute to a qualitative improvement in the art teaching process. This can be a way to start impacting on the future generations of artists. This can be done through regular seminars and art training workshops held specifically for art teachers.

B. Acknowledgement and endorsement systems and procedures for encouraging innovation in art:

As mentioned earlier, the overall art production in the Maldives has been tremendously influenced by the tourist industry, and resultant market trends. At present, art is being seen merely as a lucrative item for sale in the tourist market and the market itself has mostly defined and established the quality, style, and themes of artworks. This has made market saleability as the most important

criteria for 'good' or 'successful' art. In order to seriously encourage contemporary Maldivian art and artists to deviate from the structures of influence and evaluation created by tourism, it is important to establish alternative systems of acknowledgement and endorsement for promoting innovation and experimentation (an alternative art practices) within the art community.

Programs to be considered:

- ✘ Providing patronage to solo and group exhibitions organized at national level for innovative artists.
- ✘ Promoting exhibitions that deal with themes and methodologies relevant to contemporary life.
- ✘ Providing special membership schemes in art organizations (E., National Art Gallery, National Art Centre) that would benefit the artists.
- ✘ Providing opportunities for artists to participate in international art events, exhibitions and workshops.
- ✘ Promotion of innovative art through writings and documentation.

Supporting group dynamics

One of the most visible factors in the discourse of contemporary Maldivian art is that there is a huge discrepancy between the imagery, aesthetics and ideology that is visible in art and the reality outside in the streets. The art dwells on the 'exotic' aspect of the Maldives focussed on the seascapes, and the artist functions as the passive recorder of this exotic beauty. The artists need to re-assess their own agency as artists. They need to redefine their 'role' as artists and the 'purpose of art' to accommodate and reflect upon the contemporary socio-political and cultural environment. It is obvious that an ideological shift need to occur within the art field.

It is only through supporting the formation of art groups and their dynamics that would consistently question, self-reflect and critically engage with the society that such an ideological shift can take place. At present, what we observed was a fairly skilled community of artists working in isolation. Strategies need to be drawn to break this isolation of artists, and programs should be implemented to support group dynamics to organically grow within the artists' community. **It is also healthy to promote more than one group, which helps to maintain plurality of ideas among artists.**

Proposed programs for promoting group dynamics among artists:

- ✘ Organizing local workshops to bring artists together for a specified period of time, at the end of which an exhibition will be mounted.
- ✘ Regularly holding discussions on issues important to art.
- ✘ Encouraging artists to organize their own group events by financially supporting program proposals submitted by them. Establishing a fund to support art proposals from artists.
- ✘ Encouraging thematic group exhibitions among artists where they would develop their art ideas through discussions and regular meetings.

Support the revival of traditional art and craft:

As mentioned earlier, what was largely absent from the cultural expressions of Maldives are its traditional art and crafts. Traditional art and crafts do not seem to play an inspirational role in the contemporary art. Artists seem to be totally disconnected from these traditional art practices, especially because of its non-visibility in contemporary life. Serious thought has to be given to reviving the dying or already lost art and craft practices through national level programs. It is important to draw up a policy for the revival and preservation of traditional art/crafts and to protect them from other market influences that might disrupt and hinder its survival. At present, the sense one gets from the reaction of shop owners selling curios and craft items and artists producing locally made crafts are that crafts items imported from elsewhere are so cheap and therefore it is difficult for local craft artists to sell their work at a reasonable price. Difficulty in finding raw material has also affected the practice of craft / traditional art.

Serious efforts have to be made by the artists' community, the existing art institutions and the relevant government authorities to make strategies to popularise the use of local crafts as living art traditions among the public. Awareness programs at school level and national level through media and other publicity campaigns need to be considered. Acknowledgement of senior craft artists from the community at a national level by the government and the art community is also important for inspiration. Regular national level festivals, exhibitions and events that highlight the traditional art and crafts are also important for creating standards and to give encouragement for artists to continue their work.

In addition, there need to be a serious effort to undertake research and document the craft traditions and traditional art practices which can be accessible to the public as well as for academic researchers from around the world interested in the Maldives.

Section 3

Role of the National Art Gallery

After many discussions with Mr. Mohamed Hilmy and Mr. Mamduh Waheed we have been able to get an insight into the current situation of the National Art Gallery, and feel it could play a pivotal role in contributing positively toward the improvement of the overall art scene in the Maldives. One has to consider the fact that having a National Art Gallery alone is a positive development in the artists' community. Therefore, to ensure that its contribution to the artists' community is an effective one, the role of the National Art Gallery has to be defined in relation to the needs of the contemporary art environment. We feel that the National Art Gallery can undertake multiple tasks as a national institution for the promotion of art.

A. Promoting innovative trends in art and showcasing contemporary art

The National Art Gallery can play a large and dynamic role in stimulating a general interest in arts among artists and the public as well as in encouraging and directing innovation and experimentation in contemporary art by ensuring that its exhibition program includes cutting edge and innovative art by contemporary artists. Such exhibitions can be thematically curated which could address topics that are relevant to the contemporary socio-cultural environment. This can also be a way of highlighting artistic trends, ideologies and art making methods that are visible within the art community. At the same time, its exhibition program should include art events in regional and international venues that would showcase contemporary art trends from the Maldives.

The National Art Gallery would also need to consider systems and procedures for acknowledging art and artists in order to stimulate a healthy evolution of the art community. This is also relevant to the revival of craft and traditional art where it is important to organize nationally significant exhibitions on craft and traditional art and felicitation exhibitions for senior local craft artists who have done significant work.

B. Defining key moments and trends in the art history of Maldives.

It is important for the art community, the future generations of artists as well as the public to know about the country's art history. Understanding the art historical process in relation to the country's socio-cultural and political backdrops would allow artists and the public to understand the art's relevance and its existence beyond touristy considerations. In order to do this, one has to undertake research and compilation of art history in a systematic way. Organizing retrospective exhibitions of key artists and to curate exhibitions highlighting and investigating

certain nuances and stylistic variations of certain moments in history would be an effective way to educate the public on the Maldivian art history, its evolution and its key players.

Such an exercise would also be important in building art audiences within the public who are informed on art and can contribute to critical public level debates.

C. Compiling and disseminating contemporary art knowledge and building its own art archive (art collection).

At a national level, it is significant to have a serious database and archive that provide information on the country's art history, artists, art events and other related topics where artists, scholars, academics and interested members of the public can access. This would need a substantial research and documentation process that could continuously update information. In order for art to be accepted as a serious field of knowledge by the public, it is necessary to first present it as historically evolved, systematically analysed and studied subject with its own theoretical premises and dynamics. It is in this seriousness that local art and art history should be presented. At the same time, the public needs to be aware of art as a serious expression of one's own culture that is defined by so many other factors and influences that would reflect the needs of contemporary society. **As much as the art of the past is a constituent component of the cultural heritage of the present, contemporary art also needs to be presented as the heritage of the future.**

Potential Activities for the National Art Gallery:

- ✘ Compilation of a digital art archive and building up the Gallery's own permanent art collection as a way of endorsing the importance of art at the national level. It would also set examples, standards and guidance for other art collectors to follow and for art audiences to critically look at art.
- ✘ Undertaking the publication of books, catalogues, digital documentation and other compilations on art in both Divehi and English should be considered as an important means of making art knowledge and art history available at a public level. In addition, regular publication of newsletters and /or art magazines would help bring the current debates on art within the art community and in other parts of the world to a public discourse. This would also help build and sustain a critical audience and a critically engaging art community.
- ✘ As part of the publishing program, seminars, lectures, colloquiums and writing workshops on critical writing can be organized to encourage artists and others to develop their skills in critical writing such as exhibition reviews (list of potential programs for developing critical writing is listed in

Section 2: main heading: - art education, subheading: - critical thinking and writing).

D. Facilitate international art exchange

International art exchange through supporting the mobility of artists between different countries is an effective way of getting exposure, experiences and learning of 'other's art'. In the past, both in the South Asia region and elsewhere in the world, international art exchanges have helped support new trends and ideologies in art-making and to connect with larger communities of international artists in different places of the world. While there are certain negative effects of this, there are many positive contributions such as expanding artist networks, accessing current knowledge on art, exposure to more opportunities, new ideas etc.

As mentioned in Section 2 under the main heading 'Art Education' and subheading 'Provide exposure to diverse art practises and ideologies', there are a number of activities (international workshops, art residencies etc) that can effectively facilitate the mobility of artists and exchange.

While the National Art Gallery can be a catalyst in the facilitation of international art exchange programs, we also feel that its role should be more as a 'supporter' rather than 'organizer' of international art exchange events. We would like to highlight this aspect looking at the Sri Lankan experience. We have seen that when state institutions become organizers the events tend to end up as bureaucratic endeavours rather than effective art exchange situations. Another pitfall is that such an eventuality might make the artists' community to become too dependent on art institutions for their sustenance and well-being.

Therefore, our recommendation would be for the National Art Gallery **to support group dynamics among artists** that would in turn ensure that the responsibility of organizing art exchange events would be borne by these groups themselves. In such a situation, the National Art Gallery should be able to provide financial support and guidance to artists and art groups. The National Art Gallery could also play an important role in the mobility of artists by connecting local artists with international artists and art organizations by a process of artists' nominations for events outside of the Maldives.

E. Building in-house resources to support the tasks identified above:

In order to carry out the above-identified tasks efficiently and to serve the artist community's needs in the Maldives, it is important to recognize that the clarity of the overall vision, management structure, certain crucial expertise and

methodologies within the National Art Gallery need to be established. We have identified below certain key areas that would need serious attention:

1. Human resource development for gallery staff through formal and informal long-term and short-term training should be viewed as a priority. In offering such training, the National Art Gallery needs to keep in mind the areas it hopes to concentrate on in the future (Eg., Curating of exhibitions, publication, library building etc). The National Art Gallery needs to promote specialization among its staff rather than allowing everybody to do everything, and provide special training that would allow them to function effectively. **This is also a way of recognizing that art management demands certain expertise and serious attention as a field of study and practice.**

2. Emphasize curatorial strategies. The National Art Gallery needs to draw up clear curatorial strategies that would ensure the quality and presentation of exhibitions , which would reflect the overall standard of operation of the National Art Gallery.

3. Develop an exhibition policy. The exhibitions organized by the National Art Gallery need to be formulated according to the larger vision of the National Art Gallery. Local exhibition program should take into consideration highlighting art historical markers, reflecting contemporary realities while projecting possibilities for the future. International exhibitions should be informed by formal knowledge of art-historical processes specifically in the subcontinent and the wider Asia region. In relation to international exhibitions, it is an option to undertake joint projects with similar art bodies from other countries, which would also contribute positively toward cost sharing and in building up networks. However, when such collaborative events are undertaken, care should be taken to make sure that the exhibition programs are formulated to satisfy the National Art Gallery standards in terms of their content, format and relevance to the local context.

Exhibition programs should have a serious research component as part of the preparation for the event, and the larger program should include workshops, seminars and lectures where the public could get involved other than being spectators.

Exhibition policy should include:

- Clearly defined criteria of exhibitions.
- Themes of exhibitions that National Art Gallery undertakes or hopes to undertake.
- A clearly defined selection process for exhibition projects.
- Responsibilities of the National Art Gallery /partners/ staff/ artists.
- Logistics of implementation of exhibition projects.
- Public relations and outreach program strategies to reach target audiences.

- Publication and documentation policies.

4. Financial Management: It is important for the National Art Gallery to convince its funding bodies of its vision and role emphasising that it has specific methodologies, staff structures and requirements that are different to other national bodies. The National Art Gallery needs to first identify its 'expense categories' to support its tasks and projects and need to plan ahead to work out financial necessities. It may be important to have expense headings such as 'artists mobility', survey visits, staff skills development, local initiatives and outreach activities' that would give manoeuvring flexibility in financially supporting programs.

Concluding Comments

We realize that some of the ideas, tasks and methods of work we have highlighted may already be in implementation within the National Art Gallery. By stating the above we have only tried to emphasise their importance and relevance as fundamentally interconnected activities.

We would also like to highlight that our observations are made on the basis of a short period of experience, and therefore we may have missed certain other nuances, dynamics and characteristics of the art community. We also did not include any insights into the current state policy towards contemporary art because of our unfamiliarity with it. Therefore, we have not covered the local artists' reactions and attitudes toward state policies and artists' involvements or relationships with state patronage (other than of National Art Gallery).

We observe that at present, the Maldivian art community is in the threshold of a defining moment politically, which has its effects in the social and cultural sphere. We also feel that the art community is in a position to absorb the anxieties and pressures of the changes that are already happening within the Maldivian society and use it to fuel their artistic energies. What the artists' community needs is the support and direction to take the first few steps. We strongly feel that suitable collaborations between the National Art Gallery and artists' community could provide this initial stimulation.

We would like to conclude our report with the following comment that we think is relevant when thinking about the future of the art situation in the Maldives:

“In South Asia with its anomalies in their bureaucratic structure, democratic methods and procedures, it is always the individual that make breakthroughs in development and progress. We have seen such breakthroughs and great inspirators in individuals like Mohammad Yunus, the founder of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and Nobel Prize winner of 2006. Therefore, while the institutional structures can support, it is the individual (the artist) who needs to realize his/her potential as a catalyst for change and innovation.”

Annexure 1

Itinerary of the visit of Sri Lankan Artist from Theertha International Artists Collective: Anoli Perera, Jagath Weerasinghe and Pushpakumara Koralegedara

18 September 2006

- Arrived in Male early morning of 18th September 2006, and was picked up by Mr. Mamduh Whaeed and Mr. Ahmed Naeem at the airport.
- Meeting with Mr. Mohamed Hilmy at the NGA.
- Visited artist, Nina Malik at her house. Her work on paper was very impressive.
- Met artist, Ahmed Nimad (Andhu) at NGA. He is extremely versatile, talented but showed lack of focus. His work inspired by the carvings of a mosque were very interesting. His main approach to art-making has been developed around the idea of recycling.
- Met senior female artist, Amynath Hilmy; amazing work. Her line drawings that created visual situations reminiscent of enchanted forests were extremely interesting and highly exciting.
- Dinner at Central Hotel, hosted by the NGA. Artists Afzal Shafiu (Afu), Fatimath Zuhura, Ahmed Naeem, Mamduh Waheedsome members from the NGA staff and Mr Mohamed Hilmy also participated in the dinner. Traditional Maldivian food was served.

19 September 2006

- Visit to the National Museum in the morning.
- Artists Egan Badeeu, Afzal Shafiu (Afu) and Ahmed Nimad made their presentations at the NGA auditorium.
- Anoli Perera made her presentation.

20 September 2006

- Visit to Mafushi Island. Mr. Mohamed Hilmy, Aminath (NAG staff), Ahmed Nimad (Andhu), Afzal Shafiu (Afu), Ahmed Naeem, and the Chairman of the United Artists of Maldives, Hussain Afeef, accompanied us.
- Talked to several artists, including Mr. Mohamed Luthfee and others.
- Lunch in the Island.
- Met with chief of the island, Mr. Ali Nasheed.

21 September 2006

- Return flight to Colombo.

