

Layla Gonaduwa Smelted

By Sarah Hannan

“An artist should evolve from their art and not be stagnant with a concept or style.” – Layla Gonaduwa.

Most of the art enthusiasts in Colombo would have been exposed to her collaborative work at the Colombo Art Biennale held in 2012. This team effort was realised by The Fireflies Artists’ Network which was spearheaded by Theertha’s Women Artists’ Colloquium.

Today Layla Gonaduwa (Layla) is part of the Collective of Contemporary Artists (CoCA) where she functions as an individual artist as well as a team player in creating interactive pieces of art.

I caught up with her while she was busy creating her art for Pettah Interchange Marketplace which is just weeks ahead (August 10). The sweet smell of fresh paint was a breath of fresh air to me and led me right in to her compound.

Since she was on her current project with Pettah Interchange Marketplace, I asked her about the event and her contribution towards the same. “Pettah Interchange Marketplace

is done in collaboration with six artists from CoCA. This time we are creating works of art that merge the diverse ethnicities, personalities and lifestyles of the people from Pettah. Our main objective is to create something visually appealing and at the same time every individual who is a part of the daily life of Pettah can interact with the art and artists during the exhibition,” Layla explained.

This is the second time that Layla is working with CoCA and according to her, it has helped her take her creativity to the public through exhibitions they have taken part in during the last months.

Speaking of her art genre, Layla explained that working with copper and vitreous enamel challenges her creativity in bringing out the beauty of the final piece of art. “It is very addictive and at the same time creates a risk

factor given the material I work with,” she said. Layla further explained that when the vitreous enamel spreads across the base material there is always a 15 to 20 percent chance that the outcome could be beautiful or disastrous.

She explained that though copper is freely available in Sri Lanka it is quite challenging to get the raw material to concoct vitreous enamel to match her palette. “I do use glass that is freely available here but I have to grind the glass well and fire it up to 850 °C (1,562 °F). Still at times it does not bring out the proper texture and colour that I have in mind,” she said.

Layla elaborated further on the challenges she faces when it comes to art supplies in this country.

She gets the Vitreous Enamel from the US, UK, Singapore and China since the colour and texture could be easily worked with. However, one has to pay through their nose to clear these art supplies from Customs.

Layla is also planning her next solo exhibition hopefully in October this year and she says that with all these commissions and team exhibitions she has still not organised time for her personal pieces.

Wrapping up our interesting conversation Layla observed, “It is paramount to have art in an individual’s life. Anyone who is exposed to art would be inspired by it and would look at things from a different perspective”.

