

# Farewell Sri Lanka

**B**o Lambert, a molecular geneticist by profession, presently professor of Environmental Medicine and Genetic Toxicology at the Medical School of the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm Sweden, will hold an exhibition of photographs titled 'Farewell Sri Lanka' on March 16-19 from 10 am to 4.30 pm at the Swedish residence at 62 Vajira Road, Colombo 5.

Professor Lambert is a devoted photographer, who has presented single pictures or small collections of photographs at exhibitions in several locations around the world.

This collection of photographs from his 14 months visit to Sri Lanka is his first solo-exhibition.

Professor Lambert has earlier presented his picture video-show Sri Lanka-Cuba, at the Institute for International Relations in 2003, and at the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies in 2004.

"It seems that through history, every traveller setting foot on Sri Lanka is enchanted by this island, and feels that he has to document his feelings, in writing, painting or photography. In this regard, I am not an exception. Also the great Sri Lankan artists have of course, done the same. For me, the work of photographers Lionel Wendt, Nihal Fernando and Dominic Sansoni are out-

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standing, to mention just three among numerous prominent Sri Lanka photographers. My picture exhibition is simply another witness to the beauty and complexity of this island and its inhabitants. Of course, the tsunami of December 26 last year added a very tragic and dramatic aspect to my Sri Lankan encounter, and I have not been able to refrain from adding a set of tsunami pictures to the exhibition," he said.

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myself about the people and its history and culture. I have used my camera to depict and frame-in what captured my eyes along the road, motives that I thought are keys to the understanding of the nature of this country and its people. Admittedly, my pictures are seen through the eyes of a foreigner, a newcomer who new very little about Sri Lanka when arriving here. Many of my pictures are probably conventional in the sense that they focus motives that seem to have fascinated every newcomer to Sri Lanka through the centuries, the landscapes, the nature, the people at leisure and work, the stupas and temples. However, in other pictures I have tried to capture details, nature close ups, expressive faces, trying to find the essentials below the surface.

"I have tried to capture the beauty of the Sri Lankan nature and landscapes, the grand scener-

ies as well as the tiny details. I have tried to depict the magnificent architecture of Geoffrey Bawa, and the mysterious atmosphere at his home in Lunuganga. But I have also tried to find the sources of his designs in the countryside temples, where the roofs, the windows, doors and arcades show the great architectural legacy of Sri Lanka, so masterly developed by Bawa.

"Buddhist temples and Hindu kovils are ubiquitous in Sri Lanka, and of course exotic to the western eye. Gods, Buddha and temples appear frequently among my pictures. Back in time, Kasyapa, another master architect built Sigiriya, unique by beauty and history, so much depicted, but challenging for any photographer who gets to see it, climb it and inhale the atmosphere up there on the top.

"I have also focused on another grand old man of Sri Lanka who knew how to transform and develop the cultural heritage, Chitrassena, and his skilled and eminent family members, Vajira, Upeka, Angelica. Several pictures attempts to show some of the delight that these dance masters convey to their audience.

"The beauty of the fishing villages with their multi-coloured, graceful boats flying on the sea, and the tea estates with their colourful tea pluckers have always attracted



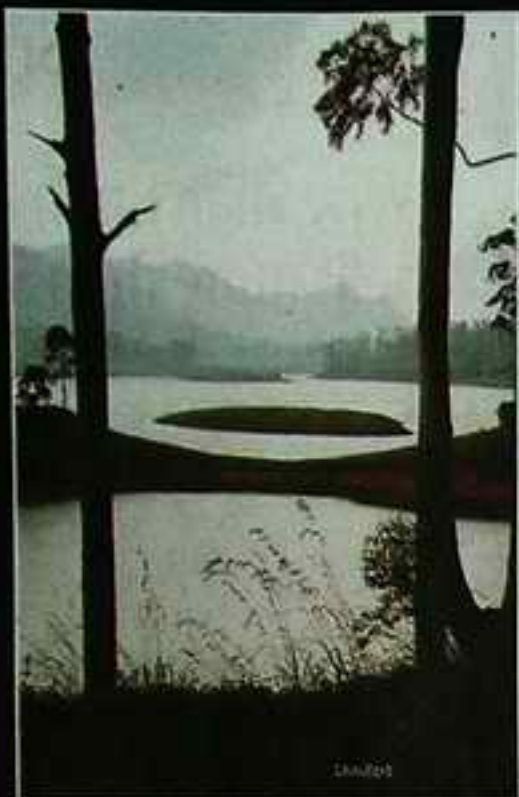
photographers, but there is also hardship to be seen, and poverty. The rubber plantation, the choir factory, the drummer's and tailor's workshops, the garbage site at Bloemendhal with its poor inhabitants, are other places I have visited, and depicted.

"But most of all, I have tried to picture peoples faces, men and women at work, children in school and at play, and, alas, also some of those leaders who the cruel history of this country has turned into statues and monuments, e.g. Neelum Theruchelvam. There are many hundreds of faces that I have photographed, persons I have met, eyes that I have looked into. In one picture, called My Sri Lanka

Map, or Fare Well Sri Lanka, I have collected 130 faces, each of whom I will always remember.

"For me, this picture exhibition is a great gift from the Sri Lankan people, a gift that I appreciate very much, and which I will always bring with me. It will try to share my experiences with friends and public in Sweden, for whom these pictures will certainly seem more exotic than to the Sri Lankan.

"This picture exhibition is my farewell to Sri Lanka and its people, and to 15 months of continuous delight and surprise, serendipity indeed. But it is not only a good bye. It is also my wish to the people of Sri Lanka to fare well along the path to peace and prosperity."



Castlereigh



Ann Margaret, St. Michael's Lane, Colombo



Beira Lake, Colombo



St. Mary's Church, Mullaitivu



Before the tsunami at Nilaveli beach