

Christopher Kulendran Thomas

When Platitudes Become Form

15/3/13 - 20/4/13

Artworks by some of Sri Lanka's most celebrated young artists are re-configured by Christopher Kulendran Thomas for the Western art market as part of the ongoing enterprise *When Platitudes Become Form*. This re-marketing of the South of the island's recent peacetime contemporary art boom channels funds that are not under government control to establish a media platform for resistance in the formerly Tamil-occupied territories of the North of the country from where his family originates.

Purchasing artworks through Sri Lanka's most prominent new galleries, Thomas physically translates what counts as 'contemporary' there into what is expected of the 'contemporary' at the heart of art-imperial power. Exploiting the difference, Thomas' overall composition takes as its materials the whole system by which art is distributed.

Christopher Kulendran Thomas was born in London in 1979 after his parents fled escalating conflict within Sri Lanka. The ensuing civil war ended brutally in 2009 as the Sri Lankan government leveraged international interests to comprehensively defeat the Tamil Tigers. Now, as the North of the island is about to be sold off to the international backers of Sri Lanka's genocide, the economy is booming and with it a new context of Contemporary Art has emerged in the South. The capital Colombo's first Western-style commercial galleries have very quickly established Contemporary Art – as in the developed world – as the highest benchmark of connoisseurial consumerism in what is now one of the world's fastest growing small economies.

When Platitudes Become Form attempts to undercut the mechanics of globalization. Cultural exchange is explicitly perverted by the underlying colonial trading patterns that it usually masks. Art here is ecologically contingent within its networked reality, setting in motion a conspiracy of consequences that extends beyond the work's as yet visible horizons.