



**THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA**

## **“Artistic heritage and painting techniques of ancient Painters”**

**by**

**Dr.Janani Seneviratne and Mr.Tuvins Amarasingha**  
**The Monthly Lecture Series No: 170 of the National Trust**

**Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 6.00 pm**

**at the Auditorium of the College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka,  
No. 6, Independence Avenue, Colombo 7.**

(For those who join online: [https://www.youtube.com/live/bhYWFhBbJTI?si=N2u\\_kObqPizpxgwn](https://www.youtube.com/live/bhYWFhBbJTI?si=N2u_kObqPizpxgwn))

The art of painting in Sri Lanka has a rich history, dating back over 2,000 years, with its origins in Buddhist wall paintings. While prehistoric cave paintings in Sri Lanka have not been documented, the painting techniques of the ‘Vaddas’ are often considered to resemble those of early humans. Buddhist painting styles evolved over time, beginning in the B.C. period and developing through the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. Notable styles like those from Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa (12th–13th centuries A.D.) utilized techniques such as Tempera, made from oil or plant extracts mixed with lime. During the Kandyan era, which began around the 18th century, the style shifted to using smooth pottery surfaces for paintings. The Southern style, also known as the low-country style, emerged in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, distinct from other regional styles, and is classified as the Maritime or Southern School Style by Senaka Bandaranayake. This style was characterized by its creativity and independence, reflecting the cultural features of the southern region. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Southern style showed signs of transition towards modern painting techniques, with changes in the painting surfaces and the blending of influences from the Kandyan period. Scientific analysis has been used to examine the pigment mixtures in these paintings, helping to uncover the specific techniques used by painters of different regions, including the Southern and Kandyan painters. Despite the scarcity of written records, these analyses reveal unique characteristics of the Southern style, as well as its connection to earlier Kandyan methods. Furthermore, both Kandyan and Southern paintings often featured vertical divisions, with narrow strips between them to describe the scenes depicted.



Dr.Janani Seneviratne and Mr.Tuvins Amarasingha currently serve as Archaeologist and Archaeological Research officers at the Department of Archaeology.

**The National Trust – Sri Lanka conducts monthly lectures generally on the last working Thursday of each month. The lectures are open to the members and the general public.**

Further information can be obtained from the Trust Office Tel.0112682730/ 0719566929

