



THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA

“Reversing cultural erasure: looking again at the photographs of E. A. Hornel”

by

Antonia Laurence Allen

The Monthly Lecture Series No: 154 of the National Trust

Wednesday 27th September 2023 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://us02web.zoom.us/j/87283573525>)

This lecture will take you from a small town in Kirkcudbright, on the west coast of the border country, to Japan, where a young painter, Edward Atkinson Hornel, travels with his friend and fellow artist, George Henry, to discover a country that is only just opening up to foreigners. Here Hornel becomes fascinated with photography and what it can offer to his work as a painter. He returns to Scotland and buys Broughton House (1901), and starts to gather a collection of glass plates and photographic prints – with a second trip to Japan in 1921, and travels to Sri Lanka in 1907 and Myanmar in 1920. This visual library provides Hornel with figures, poses and imagery that allow him to paint pictures he knew would feed a western enthusiasm for ‘orientalism’ and the female figure. After detailing this process, National Trust for Scotland Curator, Antonia Laurence Allen, who has led this research, will discuss the photographs Hornel took home from Sri Lanka. Thanks to a partnership with the National Trust Sri Lanka, an opportunity has arisen to contextualise and reappraise the significance of the photographs. By looking again at these photographs we can reverse the erasure of cultural specificity, which was both a consequence of 19th and early 20th century colonial attitudes, and the result of undocumented images turning into forgotten archives.



Antonia Laurence Allen is the Regional Curator for Edinburgh and East at the National Trust for Scotland. She has over 30 years of experience working in museums, galleries and heritage in North America, Canada and Scotland. With a PhD and MLitt in the History of Photography from the University of St Andrews, and an MA in Art History and Theory from the University of British Columbia, her research interests include the class, trade and consumer culture; the art and social history of the British Empire and Victorian Britain; photography and painting; women and Scottish interiors; and the history of museums, exhibitions and display. She has recently opened an exhibition of paintings, prints and silhouettes, *Raeburn’s Edinburgh*, to mark the bicentenary of Sir Henry Raeburn’s death (at the Georgian House until November 2023), and published a chapter in *Displaying Art in the Early Modern Period* (Routledge, 2023) that examines how visual culture in 17th century Edinburgh was guided by trade and consumption.

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. The HNB Sustainability Foundation is the principal sponsor of the events of the National Trust – Sri Lanka.

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