

## Eternal Internet Brotherhood/Sisterhood 2016

### A reflection by the artist as a racialized poet



Having only begun to become comfortable with the designation of 'artist' in the past 3 years of my life, it was with much excitement and a healthy dose of apprehension that I approached #etinterbro.

I read the brief and wondered if this was something like Burning Man, as I had no real reference point, given the lack of such residencies in Sri Lanka. The prospect of being able to interact with so many artists in a setting such as Dambulla was one I could not refuse, so I took all the annual leave I had left for the year, in order to make it.




I meet Andreas Angeladakis through his introduction of himself on the first night of the residency. He says he is an architect interested in treating buildings as characters in a story, and I am immediately drawn to the idea of working with him on my contribution, though I have yet to figure out what that might be.


While informing the group that we are lucky that this is a peaceful time in this country, and that the area we inhabit is particularly peaceful, a fellow Sri Lankan artist, Isuru Kumarasinghe, reminds us that it is not necessarily so. In 2012, Dambulla was the focus of anti-Muslim tensions that would soon unfurl across the island.


**DAMBULLA MOSQUE ATTACK**

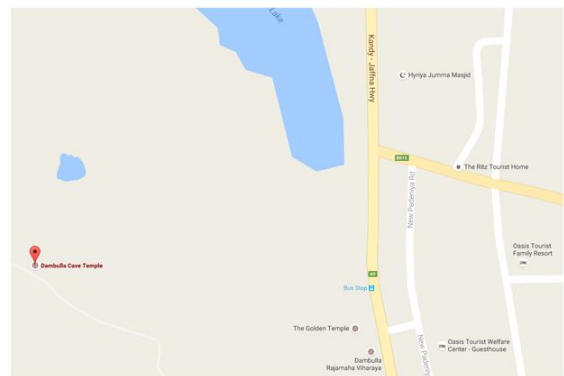
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 Dambulla Masjid Attack (Part 2)



Monks of the Golden Temple of Dambulla had rallied to the Hyriya Jumma Masjid just down the road, claiming that it had no place in a sacred space that sanctified Buddhism. Following the attack, where monks threw stones at the mosque, the government decided that it would be demolished and relocated.



While in a trishaw (a tiny motor vehicle with three wheels), I asked Andreas what makes a space 'sacred'. We decided we would visit the mosque and see if it had been demolished yet, and talk to people there. After visiting the Golden Temple, we asked another trishaw to take us to the mosque. Once we reached, the driver said "If you call this a mosque, I don't know what a mosque is". We could see his point. It was just a shack, really, a make-shift structure that had been improvised upon, we learnt, over 60 years. I took ablution, as Andreas followed my lead, and we observed the evening prayer. We learnt from the imam the argument held against them: this mosque did not represent any community actually residing in the immediate area and had no justification for being there. This was somewhat true, as it was mostly Muslim merchants travelling through the area that used this mosque. The imam told us that though the decision was made, there is no word of where they will be relocated, and, so, they await their fate, patiently.



Another contribution that I assisted was that of Candice Jacobs. All I had to do was stand at the edge of a golden triangle, but the moment I got into it, I felt my body transform into a part of piece, as though I were a pillar (my namesake), though really I functioned as a paperweight. I felt drawn to this contribution as Candice was sampling readings of Jiddu Krishnamurti, one of the first philosophers I had ever read, and one that I truly admire.



Of all the artists of the residency though, if there was one who really impressed me with their commitment and passion, it would be Luca Pozzi. I noticed this particularly while we were being toured around Sigiriya by the archaeologist Jagath Weerasinghe. Luca had carried with him two bluetooth speakers that he used to create an immersive sound installation, as the rest of us sat in a circle of stumps in the shrub just by the walkway through the old kingdom and towards the Sigiriya Museum.

I was struck by how he immediately took the opportunity that presented itself, and how it just fit into that moment, it was not forced, by any means. I would later find him hoisting some fabric in our compound, wondering what he was getting up to, to learn that he was preparing a light sensitive material. His interest in science and his approach to understanding art through it was really inspiring. Often, I find that people separate the two, but here was someone who understood one through the other.



The most intimate connections I made though, were with Vincent Charlebois and fellow Sri Lankan artist Dinelka Liyanage. We were the musicians among the artists, and we were fortunate enough to get a trishaw that blared reggae music, as we followed the rest of the troupe across Dambulla into Sigiriya.

Dinelka and I would make music in our little treehouse that had access to electricity, and were always happy to have the other artists over as we jammed. Vincent would bring his own instrument and join us. The particular moment that we will remember was when I introduced Vincent to a collaboration between a poet and an experimental musician from back in the 70s. The lyrics were in colloquial Quebec, Vincent's mother tongue, and so he began to translate it, then and there. He had never done such a thing before, but, now, he was appreciating poetry that spoke of the indigenous struggle in his land, of settler-colonialism, and the politics of space.

