

# NEW WINE IN OLD BOTTLES

by Malinda Jayasinghe



Harold Peiris Gallery | 24th - 27th Aug, 2023

# New Wine in Old Bottles

Malinda Jayasinghe's *New Wine in Old Bottles* explores social stratification in Sri Lanka, where the evolving aspirations of a diverse people (new wine) threaten to burst the fragile and erosive articulations of Sinhala Buddhist majoritarianism (old bottles). The series revolves around the legend of Sinhabahu, the origin myth of Sinhalese civilization, written by Buddhist chroniclers during the 5th century CE – one of the many narrative 'vessels' used to establish Sinhala Buddhist identity. The artist observes how the nationalist drive to foster a single ethno-religious identity has forged inequality and a militant Buddhism instead.

To explore masculine and majoritarian privilege, Jayasinghe dives into the roots of Sinhabahu, the Sri Lankan Oedipus. Despite killing his lion father, Sinhabahu himself is lionized. This trope, the elevation of the infallible hero-king, manifests historically and in contemporary Sri Lankan politics, where voters seek salvation through an all-powerful executive president. The artwork consists of a series of paintings and sculptures, primarily using phallic, yet brittle wine bottles. The artist employs glass for its transparency, noting it is made in extreme conditions and has the potential to cut, hurt or even kill when shattered. In material and concept, the work questions a society that embraces a violent origin-story of patricide, bestiality and incest as the foundation of its cultural purity.

The title for the series is derived from the proverb 'Old Wine in New Bottles' to confront those disguising decline as progress by presenting old as new. The inverted 'New Wine in Old Bottles' speaks also to the fragility of worn-out vessels repurposed to house what they cannot. Sculptures fuse the natural and man-made – wood with steel, concrete and glass shards – to represent the boundaries created by discriminatory social constructs. In depicting the absurdity of supremacism in race, religion and gender, Jayasinghe invites the viewer to re-examine popular historical perspectives and aspire to a more pluralistic future.



**Sinhabahu I**

2023

31 x 15 x 15 cm

Acrylic and ink on glass shards  
and concrete



**Sinhabahu II**

2023

32 x 15 x 15 cm

Acrylic and ink on glass shards  
and concrete



**Sinhabahu III**

2022

31 x 45 x 15 cm

Acrylic and ink on wine bottle



**Sunday Sil, Monday Kill**  
2023  
32 x 30 x 15 cm  
Acrylic on wine bottle



**Saffron Borders**

2022

23 x 15 x 15 cm

Acrylic on wine bottle



**Attempt I**  
2022  
25 x 15 x 15 cm  
Acrylic on shattered wine  
bottle



**Attempt II**

2023

32 x 15 x 15 cm

Acrylic on shattered wine  
bottle



**Attempt III**

2023

23 x 15 x 15 cm

Acrylic on shattered wine  
bottle



**Attempt IV**

2023

33 x 15 x 15 cm

Acrylic on wine/ arrack bottle



**Molotov I**

2022

33 x 15 x 15 cm

Acrylic, ink and cloth on wine  
bottle



**Molotov II**

2023

33 x 15 x 15 cm

Acrylic, ink and cloth on wine  
bottle



**Yaluwo**

2023

33 x 15 x 15 cm

Acrylic and ink on wine bottle



**Dhammo Havē Rakkhathi  
Dhammadchāri**

2022

31 x 15 x 15 cm

Acrylic and ink on wine bottle



## For the Fatherland

2022

31 x 15 x 15 cm

Acrylic and ink on wine bottle



**Another Tower**

2022

36 x 15 x 15 cm

Acrylic and concrete on wine  
bottle



**Work in Progress**

2022

32 x 15 x 15 cm

Concrete and barbwire on  
wine bottle



**2500+**

2022

32 x 15 x 15 cm

Toffee wrappers and glass  
shards in wine bottle



**2500++**

2023

33 x 15 x 15 cm

Acrylic and oil on wine bottle  
with glass shards



**Hard On/Off (I,II,III,IV,V)**

2023

25 x 25 cm (each)

Acrylic & ink on glass and  
concrete



**Divide and Rule I**

2022

95 x 55 cm

Barbwire on wood

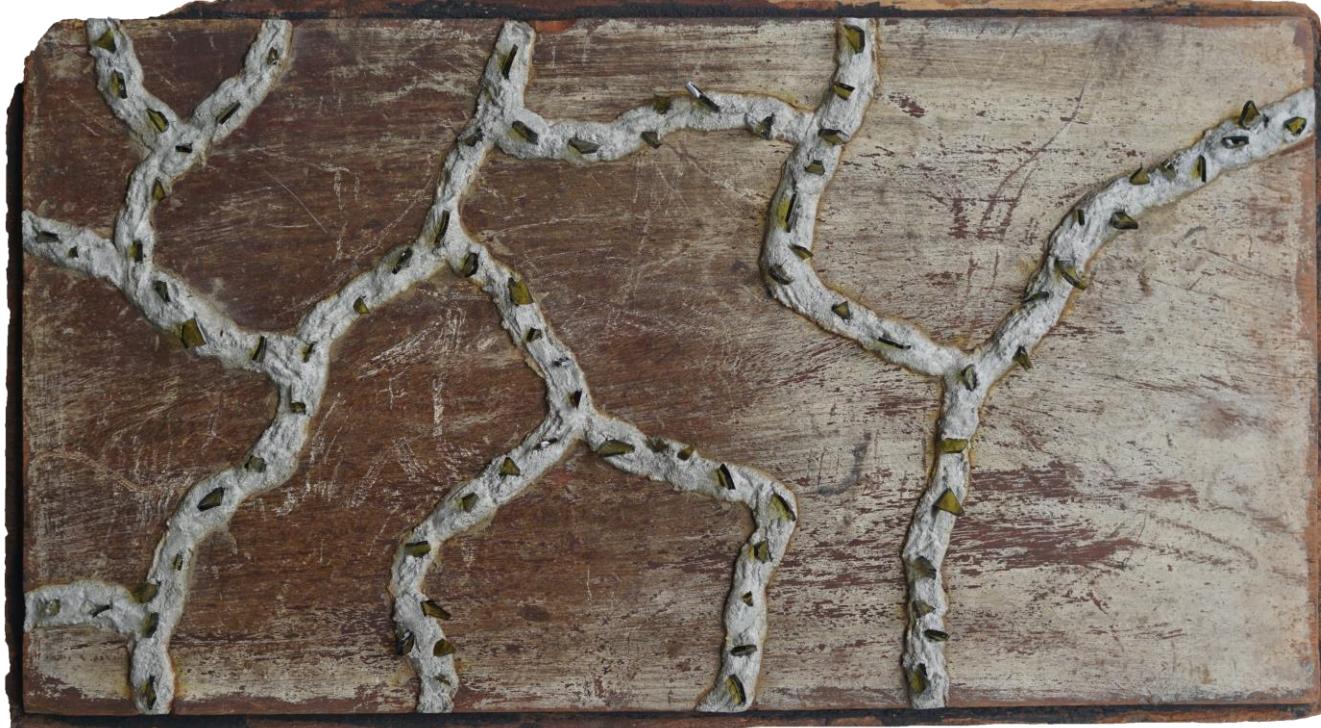


**Divide and Rule II**

2023

64 x 30 cm

Concrete and glass shards on  
wood



**Divide and Rule III**

2023

52 x 29 cm

Concrete and glass shards on  
wood



**Divide and Rule IV, V, VI**

2023

30 x 30 cm (each)

Concrete and glass shards on  
wood

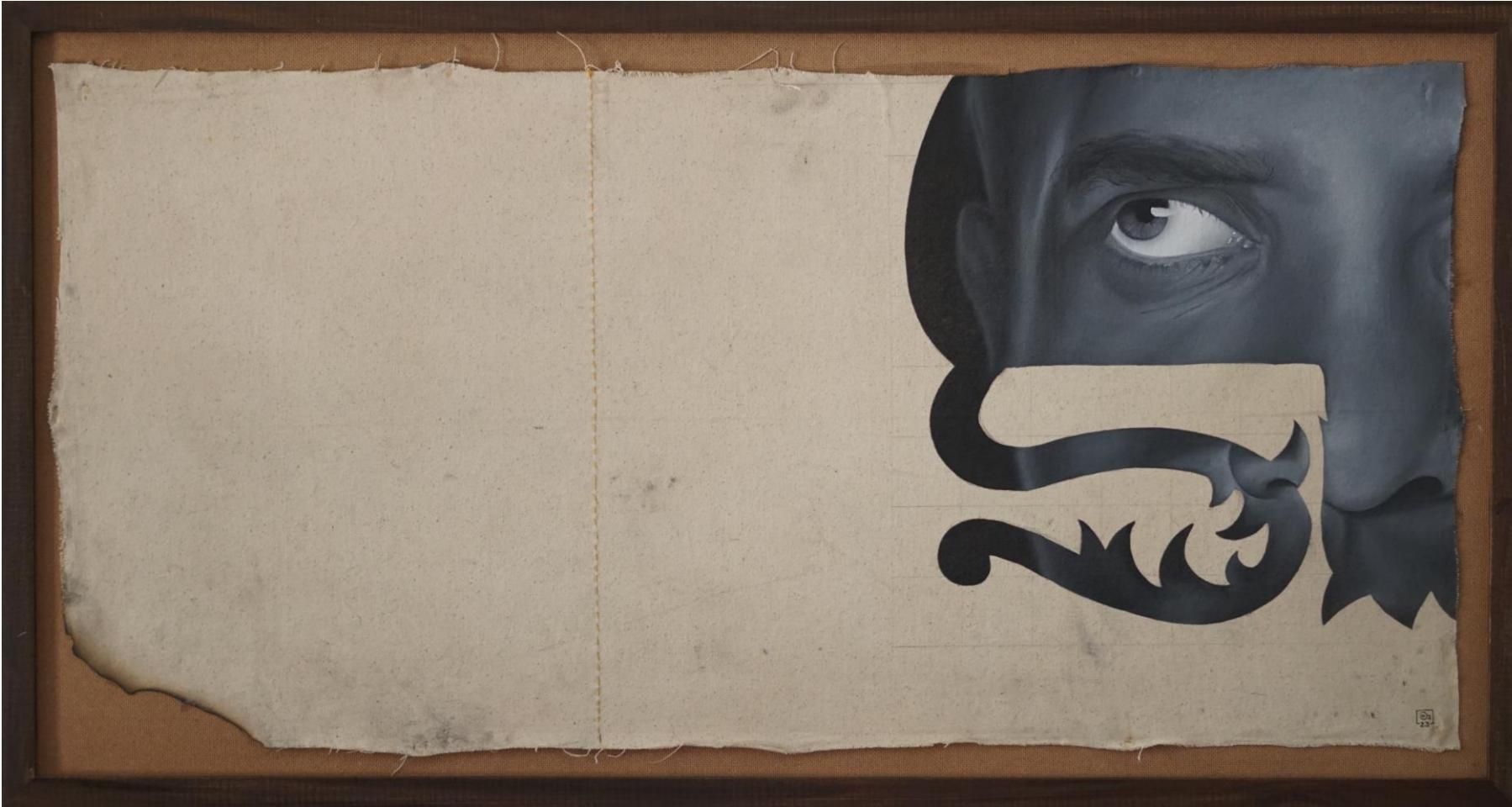


**The Gaze I**

2023

50 x 100 cm

Oil on canvas



**The Gaze II**

2023

50 x 100 cm

Oil on canvas



**The Gaze III, IV, V**

2023

25 x 50 cm (each)

Oil on canvas



## **Circle of Lion**

2022

46 x 46 cm

Acrylic and ink on wood

## Artist Bio

b. 1992, in Colombo Sri Lanka, Malinda Jayasinghe pursued a career in the corporate world after completing his Bachelor's degree in Economics and Finance. He worked in Investment Banking and the FMCG sector to gain experience in fields such as Finance, Marketing and Supply Chain Management before pursuing a career in the visual arts in 2019. Self-taught in classical drawing and painting techniques, Jayasinghe's initial focus was on learning photorealism through pencil portraiture. Upon completing the course, 'History of Art' at Theertha International Artists Collective, his practice further developed towards a concept driven approach to explore Identity and socio-political currents.

His current practice embraces a fusion of photorealism and surrealist approaches to explore themes of identity and the freedom available for the construction of such identities. The paintings use a combination of the conscious, yet mechanical approach of classical painting, while a mark making oriented approach is used to depict the unconscious decision-making process. His sculptural installations explore natural and man-made materials to depict imaginary boundaries created through discriminatory social constructs. Jayasinghe uses visual arts as platform to explore and uncover religious biases, racial and gender privileges and the unwitting complicity in institutional oppression.

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