

Balmond Studios & AOD support the Colombo Municipal Council in scoping the best young design talent to tell the city's story

AOD and Balmond strengths in mobilising young creativity and making art for public spaces came together with the Colombo Municipal Council Project's 'Envision the Future' competition; The winning young talent discovered at the competition will now go on to design a monument that will be incorporated into one of Sri Lanka's largest landmark developments.

Good design gives solutions, and in the process, opens up new paradigms of thinking through its ingenuity; It's a great representation of a country's creative and intellectual wealth. As the Colombo Municipal Council (Colombo International Financial City) unfolds, representing Sri Lanka's young creative talent has been a carefully chosen aspect of its agenda; the project hosted a competition searching for outstanding work in sculptural design that would be both inspiring and interactive. Recognising a fantastic opportunity for young creators in the island to engage in a public initiative attached to the country's most futuristic development project, and create work that will potentially become globally identified local monuments, The Colombo Municipal Council, AOD and the Balmond Studio combined their strengths to organise and handpick the best young talent from Sri Lanka, as well as the judges who select the winner.

AOD's founder Linda Speldewinde mentioned that AOD saw the competition as a great opportunity for creators, particularly young ones, to become active voices in their country's development, and contribute their best to bring about better futures. *"Our view of design was always as a force to engage and impact—never as one to stand aside as the world changes. So, with the Colombo Municipal Council—one of Sri Lanka's most influential developmental projects to date—we really wanted to make it possible for young designers and creators to have an opportunity to make their mark. To bring out their best, knowing that it will influence millions of people, and represent that country's creative intelligence in a sense, you know? It's quite a monumental task."* Speldewinde added that AOD is looking forward to guiding the winner; She added that AOD invited Cecil Balmond—the internationally recognised architect who is one of the island's brightest creative sparks out there—to join the judging panel as its honorary chair. *"AOD's long-standing relationship with Balmond Studio, and more importantly, Cecil's award-winning work in sculpture, made this a perfect fit,"* said Speldewinde.

The Sri Lankan-British designer Cecil Balmond said that it is so important for a creator to be present and part of the most defining moments of their lifetime—and for many young Sri Lankans today, being part of such a massive undertaking that will influence their country's fate for the next decade, is simply incredible. "I was really interested to see how young creative minds in Sri Lanka interpret these enormous changes happening to their country right now. It's a fantastic way to engage young people and I'm excited that the Colombo Municipal Council, Balmond Studios and AOD are coming together to give such a significant platform to this young talent." Balmond Studios stated that it has always been interested in nurturing young talent.

Being part of the competition with AOD became a way to continue this involvement and plant a wider narrative seed. Balmond Studio extended detailed feedback on the designers' work and paid a key role in the final selection of the winner.

The design competition was titled 'Envision the Future', and became a reflection of how the Colombo Municipal Council is leading the city's futuristic vision that is coming to life today. It reflects the city's aspirations as Sri Lanka's commercial hub, and also in a sense, the entire country's aspirations as they tend to concentrate on Colombo where many converge for trade and business. The competition focused on how well these aspirations were captured in the interactive sculpture design, and how deeply it engages and inspires Colombo's visitors. AOD congratulated the winner, as well as all young creators around the island who took part in the competition, as the sheer journey of designing a monument to represent your country and the aspirations of its people is a remarkable journey in itself, and a learning process that would have undoubtedly shaped them as creatives with the opportunity to get direct feedback from international icons like Cecil Balmond. Speaking about the importance of mega projects like the Colombo Municipal Council giving a platform to young voices, Cecil Balmond said that he truly believes in listening to the future generation because they come with fresh perspectives and new ideas, unlike seasoned designers.

"Our role in this competition by the Colombo Municipal Council really connected to a core belief that is common to both AOD and Balmond Studio; this is to support and guide the creative talent that will take on tomorrow's world. It is essentially what we do, in using design to create impact for better futures," said AOD founder Linda Speldwinde.