

Slow-Cooked Thoughts: Articles, Talks, Essays, One Old Poem, and Two Tales

Rohan de Soysa

PatridgeSingapore (Feb 27, 2019)

Softcover \$42.99 (140pp)

978-1-5437-4793-5

The eclectic entries of Slow-Cooked Thoughts prompt inquiry related to the value of art and the importance of maintaining respect for the natural world.

Slow-Cooked Thoughts compiles Rohan de Soysa's articles, lectures, photographs, and other writings on art and the environment.

Rohan de Soysa, who supports the arts and environmental causes in Sri Lanka as a trustee and chairman of the Sapumal Foundation, also purchased land at risk of deforestation to allow it to remain wild. In his collected writings, he reflects on those endeavors and his overall life philosophy, conveying deep respect for art and the natural world.

The book is segmented by medium and topic; articles on the environment, talks and presentations on art, and other writings appear, along with related photographs. Complex topics are addressed in an accessible way, introducing ideas as springboards for further examination.

The articles in the first section demonstrate passion for the environment. Buddhist teachings are incorporated, calling attention to what is lost beneath rapid development and deforestation and how those losses contribute to a growing divide between the rich and poor. "What is Our Real Wealth?" focuses on the importance of keeping the environment pure, calling for a return to a more compassionate worldview and for living in harmony with the earth, rather than monopolizing and overusing the earth's resources.

"Becoming: Colombo Art Biennale 2012" leads the transition into the next section of the book, which is focused on Sri Lankan art and culture; the entries in this section are mostly speeches used to kick off the Colombo Art Biennales in Sri Lanka. Their focus is particular to the Sri Lankan art scene, through which they argue that art prompts respect for the natural world.

A history of the '43 Group, an association of like-minded artists founded in 1943 that broke away from traditional forms of Sri Lankan painting to engage in more experimental work, and which led to the formation of the Sapumal Foundation, is gathered through the book's transcribed presentations; they read like lists and are repetitive. The same information is presented with more clarity in the talks that come before. Photographs of the foundation's house and grounds are glimpses at its beauty, including the artwork it contains.

The book ends with two fiction stories that are magical and rooted in ecological notions. The first is inspired by a Mahayana Buddhist legend on the origin of life; the other describes how other life on the planet might view human beings and functions as a plea for people to amend their ways. Thematically, both tie back to the book's earlier environmental concerns.

A poem not written by de Soysa, an essay on health care, and a longer essay, "An Overland Trip," concerning an excursion to pick up a car in London and drive back to Sri Lanka, move the material away from its central foci. Still, "An Overland Trip" includes tantalizing cultural details and includes eccentric personalities, if all are underexplored.

The eclectic entries of *Slow-Cooked Thoughts* prompt inquiry related to the value of art and the importance of maintaining respect for the natural world.

EMILY WEBBER (February 3, 2020)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.