

David Cotterrell: Was Many Pictures

Collaborators: Ruwanthie de Chickera

Date: 10th December 2018

Materials:

C-Type Photographic Print, Lecturns, Speakers and Barix Media Players with custom firmware.

An artwork produced contemporaneously with a series of cascading events. The process began with the release of a remarkable picture to the Sri Lankan public, one entirely unremarkable Friday evening.

Was Many Pictures reveals the way in which common evidence can be used to justify contradictory arguments. During a fifty-day constitutional crisis in Sri Lanka, permission was gained from Reuters to reprint a single iconic photograph that had become centrally identified with the political uncertainty. The image was of Mahinda Rajapaksa signing the official documents that had controversially promoted him to the office of Prime-Minister. It was shown by news outlets within Sri Lanka and around the world.

The image was rarely shown alone. It was normally accompanied by commentary, quotes, facts and opinions, which served to frame the way that the image would be understood. Within the installation, Was Many Pictures, six museum lecterns have been constructed. Within each is a catalogue of audio clips gleaned from contradictory statements and stories reprinted within the Daily Mirror. At each lectern, audience members could trigger a random audio clip is selected from a biased catalogue to recontextualise and reframe the meaning of the photograph. Each lectern housed ten to sixteen short audio clips read by actors but derived from actual reported statements. It was possible to play the political commentary from one vantage point, but also possible to trigger all six and introduce a cacophony of contradictory views into the ambient space of the gallery.



Was Many Pictures Credit: © David Cotterrell & Ruwanthie de Chickera (2019)



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