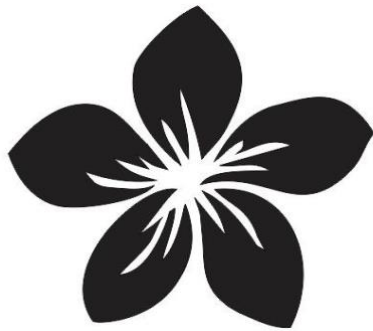


abandon-me-not



An invitation to travel in time, find
traces and help argue against the
demolition of Minnette de Silva's First
built project

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1. Introduction of the Game

the Game

Abandon-me-not is a game that invites architecture and design students to discuss broader themes related to value in the context of heritage, preservation and transformation debates.

The game looks at alternative ways of dealing with the complex pasts of the building and histories of architects such as Minnette De Silva whose works lack a proper archive. With a mix of short Narratives and a visual component in the form of a game board with illustrations, students, teachers and enthusiasts get to travel back in time and reconstruct narratives. In so doing, they find out about how design decisions and questions of value come together.

De Silva's first house, the Karunaratne House, is abandoned, like most of her other houses. As of now, there is no place for a discussion about its complex past and why it matters, so, you and your play mates are tasked with travelling in time and find ways to bring this house and events surrounding it back in to presence. Discuss, argue, collaborate and find

ways to make some of this building's elements matter in/for current discussions.

story set-up

Back to 1947 – a turning point.

Not only for Sri Lanka, as it got its independence after about 300 years of colonisation, but also for Minnette de Silva, who had just moved from the West (England, where she studied) to the East (Sri Lanka, her country of origin): it is the moment in which Minnette tries to bind her past with her western education and the feeling of coming back to her place of origin. 1947 is also the year in which the construction of this house started, her first ever project.

So, in 1947, ...

What did it mean to be a female architect in a South Asian country that had just become independent? How did DesSilva's western education, gained at AA London, inspire or discourage the ways she thought about regional practice? Was she able to connect with the local community in the town of Kandy?

Back to today, at present, the K house is abandoned. Why was this house abandoned? What is the role of Heritage Authorities?

2. Brief overview on Minnette de Silva

Minnette de Silva, who lived between 1918 and 1998, once called herself the *first South Asian woman architect*. Coming from an upper middle-class family, de Silva trained as an architect at the Architectural Association in London and remained in touch with modernist icons such as Le Corbusier, and important figures of the cultural scene, such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, throughout her life. Especially her first built works in Sri Lanka are testimonies of her unique path, created right after the country gained independence: The Karunaratne House, in which de Silva aimed at bringing together modernist ideas with local crafts and traditions, is a strong example.

3. How to play

game components

- game board, with 6 marked building elements [described below in game elements]
- 18 cards
- play book

game elements

[a list of the 6 marked elements on the board and themes you can relate to them]

- #1 kitchen: gender
- #2 split level: building costs
- #3 panelled wall: tradition
- #4 mural painting by George Keyt: supporting local artists and crafts
- #5 glass bricks: modernism
- #6 rubble walls: society and community

how to play

1. The game is ideally played by 2 to 6 players, if more of you would like to play, we suggest teaming up. It is also

possible to play alone and discover Minnette's life and work on your own!

2. The game board contains a drawing of the Karunartne House. Notice the marked elements on the board. Each of them is associated with 3 missing cards. These cards make up a sub-story. Work together and assemble the sub-stories while associating them with the marked building elements!
3. Start by shuffling the cards. The first player/team should take one card from the deck and place it next to the marked element they think it corresponds to.
4. Notice that next to each marked element, there is space for 3 cards. The 3 cards belong to 3 different card types. Place them in the correct order to find out the sub-story.

card types

abc ...

[start card]

... def ...

[middle card]

... ghi

[end card]

example:

In 1947, Minnette de Silva ...

[start card]

... designed ...

[middle card]

... her first house.

[end card]

4. By placing one card you get +1 point. By choosing not to play the card you got from the deck, you get +0 points; however, you can save the card and use it later. If you place it correctly, you still get +1 point.

5. If you think one card is not placed correctly, you should discuss it with your play mates. If they agree and the card is placed correctly, you get +2 points.
6. You will find the answer sheet at the end of the play book.

4. Sources

Minnette De Silva. (1998). *The life & work of an asian woman architect* (1st ed.). Smart Media Productions.

Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi (2017) Crafting the archive: Minnette De Silva, Architecture, and History, *The Journal of Architecture*, 22:8, 1299-1336,
DOI:10.1080/13602365.2017.1376341

American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies.
<https://www.aisls.org/teaching-about-sri-lankan-architecture/minnette-de-silva/>

Karunaratne House
<https://architectuul.com/architecture/karunaratne-house>

5. Answers

... how would have such pioneering ideas been received by the local communities?

#1 glass bricks

... this implied additional costs to the clients, so they were a reluctant to making this

<p>The building site was located on one of the southern hills around the Karunaratne House, Minnette was able to use this material. It is a typical element used in modernist buildings, however ...</p>	<p>... had it been a few years later, this wouldn't have been possible, because Sri Lanka adopted a closed economy policy. This wasn't a traditional nor local material, so it could hardly be found in the country. Then, ...</p>	<p>... diminish the building costs, since excavation is an expensive part of building and has negative effects on the environment.</p>
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#2 mural painting
#3 split level

<p>As a dedicated supporter of local craftwork and the local artistic community ...</p>	<p>... Minnette asked her artist friend George Keyt to make a mural painting for the living room/stairs of this house. **</p>	<p>... her clients believed that this approach didn't match their expectations of a house for an upper-middle class family.</p>
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<p>The local craftsmen had been isolated from ...</p>	<p>... trends of contemporary life. In this wall, Minnette uses decorative cast tiles made by local craftsmen – a tradition that was dying out – as an effort to preserve local traditions. Nowadays, ...</p>	<p>... how could such techniques be preserved? Or how could one prevent their extinction?</p>
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<p>As an attempt to incorporate traditional elements in her contemporary buildings ...</p>	<p>... Minnette proposed a rustic approach to a structural element, which is very common and essential in architecture. However, ...</p>	
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#4 rubble wall
#5 panelled wall

This space of the house
was mentioned in one
article, there, its author
starts by saying ...

... "That this architect is a
woman becomes apparent
in the design in the
kitchen [...]"
so ...

...what could it have
meant to rethink the
kitchen form as a
practicing architect in Sri
Lanka during this time
period?

#6 kitchen