

# THE CROSS-SECTION OF HALF A CENTURY: LOKANAT GALLERIES

BY BORBÁLA KÁLMÁN

There is a gallery in Yangon that not only provides new exhibitions almost every week, bringing fresh talents to the surface as well as reviving the work of elder masters, but also allows a genuine trip to the past when one visits its space.

As most of the Yangon exhibition places, Lokanat Galleries is located on one of the upper floors of a Downtown building. The journey starts as soon as one enters Pansodan Street No 62; just take a look at the extravagant, imported original tiles! Formerly known as Sofaer's Buildings or Randeria House, today the edifice is mostly referred to as 'Lokanat Building'. The majestic late Neo-Renaissance structure, erected in the first decade of the 20th century is the result of the ambitious dream of Isaac A. Sofaer, a Baghdad-born Jewish trader who arrived to Yangon as a kid. Since its first days, the building has been housing numerous types of shops and businesses, among its residents were the Reuters Telegram Company and German photographer Philip Klier. After World War II, some government related offices sadly replaced these. In 1969, one of the locations used by an Indian-owned sugar mill company was about to be handed to the respective ministry when a small group of determined men had the pioneer thought to turn it into a gallery. After two years, during which the space was closed for reconstruction, Lokanat Galleries opened in 1971 thanks to the efforts, amongst others, of U Ba Than, U Ye Tun and KT U Tint Lwin who, till today,



teaches English and Law in a small office at the back of the gallery. Diplomats and ambassadors were invited to the opening where they strolled around together with the art scene's main representatives. A historical moment it was; today, it is the only gallery in town that has continuously been functioning since 44 years.

Lokanat Galleries, one of the 'ancestors' of all Yangon galleries is a busy space, booked ahead for a whole year if not for more. It is a community-run place of prestige; enabling artists with most various artistic approaches to showcase their works to the world. Thou-

sands of stories and secrets are held by the walls of the deteriorated building, which still guards the dignity of its luxurious past. The unavoidable, essential Lokanat Galleries is the art space from where most of the artist of the Myanmar art scene have made their first steps.

## *Lokanat Galleries*

*1st Fl., No 62, Pansodan Street (Lower Block),*

*Kyauktada Tsp., Yangon | +95 1 382 269*

*Open 9:00am – 5:00pm daily*

*[www.lokanatgalleries.com](http://www.lokanatgalleries.com)*



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### ABOUT MYANMORE

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