

# ISLANDDSOUTH

## A TWO THOUSAND ISLES EXHIBITION

*by* AISHATH NAJ

### Exhibition

Addu is the southernmost collection of islands in the Maldivian archipelago, and is home to a remarkable culture, environment, and history that combines the best of the country in a relatively small and accessible location.

Such a unique place requires a unique name, and so we've coined the word 'Islanddsouth' for this exhibition, which shows off the people, the places and the past that can be found here in the Maldives' final (or perhaps its first) atoll.

All of the canvas prints featured in this exhibition are available for purchase, as are many other images from across the atolls. Please see contact details below.

### Two Thousand Isles

Two Thousand Isles is a joint project between well-established Maldivian photographer Aishath Naj, and her British writer/husband, Daniel Bosley.

Named after some of the more notable early attempts to quantify the Maldives mysterious isles, the aim of the project is to re-discover and re-interpret the less well-known, and often forgotten, elements of local history and culture through the eyes of a Maldivian and the words of an Englishman.

Underneath the sun, sea and sand that have caught the attention of the world lie the stories of 350,000 Maldivians, from an estimated 1,192 islands, collected over 2,000 years of history. As more and more people now seek to visit Maldivian communities, more will want to hear about the culture upon the coral.

Two Thousand Isles is also unique in being a completely Addu-based project, with Dan and Naj splitting their time between collecting stories in the atolls and Naj's home island of Hithadhoo. We are proud to launch Naj's first exhibition here in Equator Village, Gan, the traditional home of Anglo-Maldivian partnership.

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# Exhibition Guide

## 01 ADDU FAIRY

The White Tern, Angel Tern or White Noddy is known in Addu simply as *dhondheeni* (white bird). In the Maldives, these beautiful but territorial birds can be found in only one island outside of Addu, and have therefore become symbolic of the southern atoll. Photograph taken in Meedhoo.

## 02 KOATTEY SLICE

The Koatthey and Eidhigalhi Kilhi area on the far north-west of the atoll are designated the Hithadhoo Protected Area. It is one of the most ecologically diverse spots in the country and its 570 hectares include open waters, coral reefs, sea-grass beds, mudflats, mangroves and forest.

## 03 CATCH & RELEASE

Fishing plays a less crucial economic role than it once did, but still provides vital jobs and income for island communities. Fish, mostly tuna, continue to make up 99% of Maldivian exports, and 1 in 3 fish are caught in the southern atolls. In this photo, Hithadhoo fishermen bring home their early-morning catch to sell by the roadside.

## 04 ATOLL HIGHWAY

The Addu Link Road was the longest in the country when first built in 2003, over a series of bridges and causeways left behind by the British military. Despite being outdone last year by a slightly longer road in Laamu atoll, Addu's highway still connects more Maldivians than any other.

## 05 STARS OVER SEENU

The wonder of the atolls at night is usually forgotten after the beauty of a Maldivian day. However, the lack of light pollution in the islands makes them an ideal place for star-gazers, even if they are no longer relied upon to guide local sailors. Photograph taken on Hankedede bridge.

## 06 REEF HUNTER

Maldivian fishing is best known for tuna caught with pole & line in the deep channels, but the abundance of marine life on the reef means that a hook & line - particularly as the sun begins to set - can be just as rewarding. Photograph taken on the western side of Hithadhoo.

## 07 HANKEDE HINGUN

The once-populated island of Hankedede now lies halfway along the link road, and is still a favourite spot for picnics. The figure pictured here is wearing a dress - or *libaas* - in the traditional Maldivian style, though not in the traditional colours (which are normally red with a black skirt).

## 08 KILHI LOOKOUT

In addition to its diverse natural habitats, the Hithadhoo Protected Area is home to a large number of bird species, most notably the *maakana* (Grey Heron). Viewing platforms have recently been constructed over Eidhigalhi Kilhi, whose fresh water attracts migratory birds from great distances.

## 09 SUNSET SWIM

One famous visitor to the Maldives long ago described islanders who were 'halfe fishes', but changing lifestyles mean many people today are less at home in the water. Adduans have greater opportunities to learn to swim, however, with tracks floating in the waters off Hithadhoo, Huludhu and Maradhoo (pictured here).

## 10 TIME FOR TIME

Koagannu cemetery, on Meedhoo, is the country's oldest, housing the remains of some of its first Muslims, whose 12th century arrival began the island's proud tradition of Islamic scholarship. This photograph shows the hand of Ibrahim Didi, who for many years has proudly maintained the graveyard and its memories.

## 11 SUN SPLASH

Addu lies almost equidistant between East Africa and Western Sumatra, with just over 3000km of open ocean lying to the west of the atoll, and the same to the east. This photograph was taken on the ocean-side of Hithadhoo, looking west towards Somalia and the sunset.

## 12 OLD HOUSE, NEW TRICKS

Coral stone houses began to replace thatch huts throughout the atolls during the last century, before greater environmental awareness brought an end to mining of the reef. Maldivian homes are all given names, usually ending with the suffix 'ge', meaning 'house'. This Hithadhoo home, named 'Asareege', was built in 1961.