

the original ones from the fakes," says Kabir.

It is true that with work on paper, forgers and frauds are having a field day in Bangladesh, where the art market is thriving as the nouveaux riches are willing to invest in art. However, for all types of buyers, those with a long history of acquiring art works and those with the new-found enthusiasm for paintings, the market is like a maze. Not that there are fakes everywhere one looks, but experts feel that the number of works available in the market by the deceased masters like Zainul Abedin, Kamrul Hasan and SM Sultan seem formidably high. "I'm astonished that there are so many works available by Zainul Abedin and SM Sultan at present. I find it hard to believe that they painted so many pieces," says Hashem Khan, one of the second-generation artists of Bangladesh.

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attempts that tend to mimic the style of a particular artist rather than making a copy of an already existing original. With both cases it is the unfamiliarity with the oeuvre of a particular artist that gets in the way of a buyer. Perhaps the presence of a third party in the form of an expert or an agent might have helped the buyers to get their hands on the original art works. Of course, the presence of such a third party only exists in an ideal situation. Here in Bangladesh, there is no such luck for the buyers, and often they are being cheated.

RECOGNISING a fake needs an educated pair of eyes. However, one who has some authority over the history of Bangladesh's art, one who recognises the styles of the artists can also be hard put while vis-à-vis a fake painting if it is done with care. But in Dhaka even the shoddy imitations are finding eager buyers.

In the first week of July, Rafiqun Nabi found out that a certain forger



FAKES GALORE: Few examples from the 2002 Shilpangan exhibitions which many agree was an occasion to pass a formidable number of fakes as original. The paintings came from the collection of the artist's daughter.