



SM Sultan's forgeries have flooded the market; this is one example of how shoddy an imitation can get.

that of works produced in imitation of the style of a particular artist. As most fake arts are works done in the vein of an artist, they can be called fakes but not forgeries.

In the absence of any formal procedure of authentication, what are the steps that may finally put the buyers on alert? What are the options that might be explored to separate the authentic from the fake? Nisar Hossain had a proposal way back in the late 1998. "What I proposed is a formation of a committee which will be accountable for the works of the dead as well as the living artists. There should be a survey of all the pictures, who owns what and where did they obtain it from, all the information must be compiled by an institution. I thought the National Museum would have been the likely organisation that had the logistics to do this.

At present, the Bengal Gallery has the capability to take on this task," says Hossain, who adds that the committee could issue certificate for each of the art works.

"There can be three categories of art works. The first being the genuine one, about which no one belonging to the committee would raise any objection; the second being the one about which committee members are not unanimous; and the third category art work would be the one that had been unanimously rejected by the committee," Hossain clarifies. According to what Hossain proposed, each artwork would carry a certificate with it, and if a work changed hands it must accompany a certificate of that resale. "All these must be overseen and regulated by the National Museum," Hossain points out.

Hashem Khan, Rafiqun Nabi and many other artists, who believe that there are artists involved in this ring of forgers and producers of fake art works, feel that to check the flooding of the market with spurious art there is no alternative to introducing certificates.

"We are thinking seriously of sitting with the senior artists whose works are being copied to work out a way to combat such deplorable acts," declares Nabi.

The concept of fake art works is relatively new in Bangladesh. Collectors in Europe and America, where there are regulatory bodies and experts to authenticate a piece of art and to denounce a fake, have been dealing with forgeries for centuries. Since it is impossible to put a stop to the act of producing fakes what is needed is an organised effort to sort out the authentic pieces from the fakes. Many blame the galleries for being involved in underhanded dealings. Many feel that it is the brokers who are dealing in paintings skirting round the usual practice of selling art through the galleries. However, the blame game is not helping anyone, as it is a fact that there are fakes that are changing hands in the market. Experts in the art world must come forward and put a stop to this.



Four of Zainul Abedin's works from the bulk that Dipaly Bhattacharya brought from Kolkata in 1996. Dipaly's potential buyer -- the Shilpangan Gallery dismissed them as fakes.