

DHAKA ART SUMMIT 2020

Rajeeb and Nadia Samdani transform their dream into reality

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Celebrated art connoisseurs, collectors and entrepreneurs Rajeeb and Nadia Samdani, also the cofounders of the Samdani Art Foundation, have been organising Dhaka Art Summit biennially since 2012. The extravaganza of art returns this year with a full-fledged exposition and projection of arts, opening at the National Art Gallery Auditorium of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA), at 10 am, today. The duo, in an exclusive interview with *The Daily Star*, shared various aspects of the *Dhaka Art Summit (DAS) 2020: Seismic Movements*. Bringing together international curators, artists, critics, thinkers and art professionals from around the globe, DAS 2020 is set to feature an array of dynamic programmes, encompassing arts, histories, various movements, borders and fault lines. “We are grateful to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladeshi missions abroad, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and other government bodies for their support and collaboration. We look forward to work together in the upcoming summits,” says Rajeeb Samdani.

Every edition of DAS honours a young artist for their promising contribution in Fine Art through the Samdani Art Award and aims at promoting their work internationally. Samdani Art awardee (2014) Ayesha Sultana’s work is now in the collection of Tate Modern, London Reetu Sattar’s performance art *Lost Time*, which was shortlisted for the awards in 2018, has been commissioned by Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Starting its journey with DAS’18, the exclusive exhibition, *A beast, a god, and a line*, curated by Cosmin Costinas, is



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currently underway. It has travelled to Norway, Myanmar, Hong Kong, Poland, and Dubai. The exhibition is set to make way to Thailand soon. “The prime purpose of DAS was to engage the emerging artists of South Asia, and we successfully did so. If you look back a decade, you will find the least global exposure of Bangladeshi emerging artists,” Rajeeb adds. “Now they are strong and actively participating in Gwangju Biennale, Bangkok Art Biennale, Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, documenta, La Biennale di Venezia, Sharjah Biennial, Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Lahore Biennale and other events. Apart from that, the artworks of our

modern masters and their historical legacies are being researched in DAS.”

“This year, the Dhaka Art Summit is being held under one theme-- Seismic Movement, which actually covers all other movements of this delta. 32 independent international and local curators from MOMA, Center Pompidou and Parasite curators, under the expert supervision of DAS’s chief curator Diana Campbell Betancourt, is presenting a lot of thematic shows, alongside the unique exhibition, *Lighting The Fire of Freedom: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*, organised as a tribute to the Father of the Nation marking his birth centenary,” shares

Nadia. “We will also showcase the educative art exhibition *Roots*, curated by Bishwajit Goswami.”

Over 500 artists from 44 countries and 40 artist-led organisations from across the world, including 12 artist-led local organisations under the auspices of Samdani Artists Led Initiative, are participating in the summit.

“This year, art lovers will get to see the 400 million year old fossils, an installation by Adrián Villar Rojas, an Argentinian sculptor known for his elaborate fantastical works which explore notions of the Anthropocene and the end of the world. 80 tons fossils were imported from Germany, which was a challenge,” mentions Nadia, while speaking of their challenges this time. “Murtaja Baseer’s early paintings on dinosaur, in harmony with this exposition, will also be on display,” adds Rajeeb.

Samdani Foundation has been working since 2012 with an aim to establish Bangladesh as the pioneer in bringing together the richness of art froms all around the world. “We dreamt that someday DAS will be the iconic art event of Bangladesh, with our artists owning the summit. I believe our dream has transformed into reality with 700 foreign delegates from around the world are joining us today,” says an emotional Rajeeb Samdani.

Around 30 scholars, professors and South Asian Art experts from different institutions, including University of California and Harvard University, USA, under the leadership of eminent US-based South Asian Contemporary artist Iftekhar Dadi, will also be in attendance at the event, facilitating open classes. The open for all art fiesta concludes on February 15.

WHAT'S ON



Group Art Exhibition
Title: Three Worlds
Venue: Shilpangan Gallery, Lalmatia, Dhaka
Date: January 31 – February 11
Time: 3 pm – 8 pm



Art Event
Title: Dhaka Art Summit 2020
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Date: February 7 – 15
Time: 10 am – 8 pm



Book Fair
Title: Amar Ekushey Boi Mela
Organiser: Bangla Academy
Venue: Bangla Academy Premises
Date: Feb 2 - 29
Time: 3 pm - 8 pm; 11 am - 9 pm on weekends



Group Art Exhibition
Title: Breaking Ground: Modern Art in Transition
Venue: Subho Choudhury Exhibition Hall, Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi
Date: Dec 17 – Feb 15
Time: 1 pm – 8 pm (Except Sundays)



Group Art Exhibition
Title: 7
Venue: Galleri Kaya, Uttara
Date: January 24 – February 7
Time: 11:30 am – 7:30 pm



Solo Exhibition
Title: Parables of the Womb
Artist: Dilara Begum Jolly
Venue: Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi
Date: February 4 – March 28
Time: 2 pm – 8 pm (Except Sundays)



A moment from behind the scenes of ‘Tripoli Cancelled’.

‘Tripoli Cancelled’ starts screening at Bengal Shilpalay

Visual artist and writer Naeem Mohaiemen’s fiction film *Tripoli Cancelled* started screening at Bengal Shilpalay, recently. Trailing successfully along Documenta 14 and Museum of Modern Art New York, the film was nominated for Turner Prize in 2018.

PRIVANKA CHOWDHURY

A panel discussion, featuring Mohaiemen with Sociologist Seuty Sabur, Anthropologist Manosh Chowdhury and Chief Curator of Bengal Foundation Tanzim Wahab will also be held during the inaugural ceremony of the exhibition.

After a decade of making documentaries about Bangladeshi communists from the 1970s, Mohaiemen takes a turn to a different

form, which may be referred to as ‘cinema of slow time’. The fiction portrays a lonely man, played by Greek-Iranian actor Vassilis Koukalani, following a daily routine -- smoking, writing letters, and reading from a children’s book. His home for the last decade has been an abandoned airport. The script of the film was inspired from his father’s experience, who was trapped in this same airport for nine days in 1977, after losing his passport during a transit.

Shot in Ellinikon Airport in Greece (built 1969, closed 2001), the place was designed by Finnish architect Eero Saarinen. The film is set amidst a vanished modernist architecture, with a script written in dialogues, inspired from works by Afsan Chowdhury, Hannah Arendt, and Giorgio Agamben. *Tripoli Cancelled* will be screened on Monday to Saturday, at 4 pm and 6:30 pm, on the second floor of Bengal Shilpalay until March 28.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

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Popular actor Ashna Habib Bhabna started her journey as a writer with the novel *Gulnehar*, three years ago. Bhabna’s second book, *Tara*, came out during the Ekushey Boi Mela next year. Both *Tara* and *Gulnehar* were widely appreciated by readers.

This year, her third book, *Golapi Jomin*, published by Tamralipi and illustrated by Sabyasachi Hazra, is set to come out at the Ekushey Boi Mela.

On the other hand, Bhabna is busy with the television show, *Boka Bhoot*, directed by Animesh Aich.



BANGLADESH BANDS GEN NEXT

Band Natai

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Bangladesh Band Gen Next is a project aimed to promote young and upcoming bands by providing them with a unique platform to express their talents. The programme has selected 26 young bands from Chattogram for its first run.

Formed by five youngsters -- Al Tushi, Nahid, Parvez, Raju and Rana, Band Natai is a promising folk fusion band. Their single, *Tui Ki Bujhish?*, has been released through the platform. “It is an amazing opportunity for us, to be able to share this platform with so many amazing bands,” said Parvez, the lead guitarist of the band. The melodious song is based on the bittersweet relationship between two lovers. “We tried to bring in the feeling of love and attraction in *Tui Ki Bujhish?*, and I am sure that people will be able to relate to it,” commented Al Tushi, the vocalist of Band Natai.

Bangladesh Bands Gen Next is helmed by advertising agency Creato, and produced by 49 Blue. The programme is sponsored by Marks Full Cream Milk Powder. *Tui Ki Bujhish?* is available on the band’s YouTube channel.



PHOTO: COURTESY

British Council celebrates National Library Day 2020

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

In collaboration with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and Department of Public Libraries, the British Council’s Libraries Unlimited Programme celebrated the third National Library Day, recently. The event, ‘Porbo Boi Gorbo Desh, Bangabandhur Bangladesh’, consisted of a rally, discussion session and cultural programme.

K M Khalid, MP, State Minister for Cultural Affairs, inaugurated the rally and discussion session, while Dr Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, MP, Agriculture Minister was present as the chief guest for the discussion. The event was presided over by Md Abdul Mannan Ilias, Director General (Additional Secretary) Department of Public Libraries, whereas Dr Md Zafar Iqbal, eminent writer and former professor at Shahjajal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, presented the keynote paper. A meeting on ‘Toy Brick play

activities in government public libraries of 64 districts’ was also organised in the children reading room of the Sufia Kamal National Public Library. Thirty children participated in this activity. The children built the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban (National Parliament House) with building blocks, under the leadership of Juditha Ohlmacher, who has already developed a model of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban with 8000 toy bricks.

Md Abdul Mannan Ilias,



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Third season of ‘Magic Bauliana’ kicks off

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Folk music reality show, *Magic Bauliana*, has returned with a third season. The first episode of the show was aired yesterday. It will be telecasted every Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 7:30 pm on Maasranga Television.

The reality show is initiated by Sun Foundation and supported by Square Toiletries Limited. The show intends to engage youngsters in folk music. The three best artists will be selected as the Bauliana winners, after different rounds of the programme. The winners will be performing with popular local and international artists at the upcoming Dhaka International Folk Fest.