



THE YOUTH IN THE ERA OF DIGITALISATION

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Freedoms, restraints, inspirations: Life in digital art

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A glance at most of our newspaper and magazine pages, local art galleries, Facebook and Instagram communities, and even films and corporate campaigns reveals a thriving independent art scene. These platforms are all swept by illustrations, paintings, sketches, photo collages, and cartoons and comics that reflect how both the artists and the audience engage with the socio-political and cultural climate today. Much of all of this is made digitally.

To explore what goes into making art digitally, *The Daily Star* spoke to five artists of varying backgrounds who started out young and who create using the digital medium. **Reesham Shahab Tirtho** is a Dhaka-based illustrator, cartoonist, and graphic designer who is also an architect and academic. His multi-disciplinary studio, "Studio Terracotta", has been working to create sustainable and climate-responsive architecture since 2015. **Ata Mojlish**, whose recent exhibition *Truce - Juddhobiroti* at Dwip Gallery in Lalmatia kicked up quite a storm, has



Junaid Iqbal Ishmam illustrates the conversation between Sarah Anjum Bari of *The Daily Star* and artists Tirtho, Oishik, Monni, and Ata.

been working as a visual communicator around the world for 10 years. His work focuses on image manipulation, what he terms as "digital reconstruction of the image". **Nafia Jahan Monni**

completed an MFA degree in Fine Arts from the University of Dhaka in 2012. She selects subjects of art from the environment around her; while painting is her passion, Monni leans towards

creating illustrations, doodles, and character designs. Finally, **Oishik Jawad** is a freelance cartoonist and comic book artist currently studying BBA in Marketing at the Bangladesh University

of Professionals (BUP).

Sarah: *How and why did you start drawing/painting? And why digital art?*
Reesham Shahab Tirtho: There was no particular reason. I have always loved to paint since my childhood. Architecture—which is my background—also required me to draw a lot, conceptual drawing in particular. It is a powerful language. But more and more people are travelling into the digital paradigm. My own journey with it started around 2015 when I opened my own studio and started working with cartoons, illustrations, etc.
Ata Mojlish: When I first started dabbling in art, I feel that initially it was for the wrong reasons—for popularity and appreciation—but later it became about self-expression. I would take a photograph and it would have to be tweaked and improved upon, because I wasn't as skilled with it at the time. That was how I stumbled upon the digital medium.

Nafia Jahan Monni: Traditional painting requires a lot of space and equipment—paper, canvas, colours, pencils, other utensils. Painting digitally is easier in comparison. It requires no space and not much extra equipment, and so I veered towards this medium after finishing my academic training.

Oishik Jawad: I use the digital medium to make cartoons and comics, not to design per se. I've always wanted to be a professional cartoonist and comic book artist.

"Art is a powerful language. More and more people are travelling into the digital paradigm. My own journey with it started around 2015 when I opened my own studio and started working with cartoons, illustrations, etc."

— Reesham Shahab Tirtho

ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAM

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