



Elephant in the Room.

The performance titled *Geet*.

PHOTO: COURTESY

## KAMRUZZAMAN SHADHIN

### The tale of a socio-politically conscious artist



The Ascend.

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Celebrated visual artist Kamruzzaman Shadhin works on diverse media, including installation, video, sculpture and performance art. Born in Thakurgaon, his artistic research is predominantly based on socio-political, environmental issues and their overlapping affiliations. His art projects are often created through public participation and are exhibited in public spaces. He is the founder of Gidree Bawlee, a non-profit art organisation working for creating scopes for cultural and artistic exchange between artists and the rural and indigenous communities through collaborative approaches. He is also a part of Chhobir Haat, an alternative open space for art and artists, which played an important role in the public art movement in Dhaka.

Shadhin's widely acclaimed work titled *Haven is elsewhere* (2017-2018, commissioned by Samdani Art Foundation) was showcased at the 4th Dhaka Art Summit, and in Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow. The work embodies the common quest of the most migrants and refugees; the search for a 'Safe Haven.' In his work, internally migrated people in Thakurgaon, created a quilt from the used clothes of displaced people from Southern Bangladesh.



"I am interested in the various layers and dimensions of migration and how it is related to history and current ways of the world," said Kamruzzaman Shadhin. "Currently, I am developing a piece that explores the relationship of jute cultivation and migration in the colonial times of Bengal. Through my organisation Gidree Bawlee, I am working in my village to trigger an artistic movement through collaborative community art projects."

Many of these clothes and narratives of displaced people were collected over a period of time by the artist from people, who were illegally trafficked as forced

labourers into Thailand and Malaysia, while some of these were abandoned by the Rohingya refugees. These were then sewn together by the internal migrant community in Thakurgaon and embellished with the traditional Bengali Kantha embroidery techniques through a therapeutic ritual.

During the 2018 Dhaka Art Summit, these monumental quilts formed a projection surface for video documentation that attempted to capture the stories of displacement through these once-used clothes. These quests for freedom often continue as the new migrants and refugees become targets for illegal trade and trafficking, continuing a cycle where the safe haven shifts its axis further and further out of their reach.

Shadhin completed his BFA and MFA from the Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka. His work maintains a satirical edge, dealing directly with the politics of environmental degradation and destruction, and its effects on communities across Bangladesh. Migration, social injustice and local history are recurring themes in his works. The traditional crafts of the region and their underlying relationship with the history of this land has become a major part of his artistic research and journey for several years.

His first solo exhibition 'Rooted in

Soil', was held at the Alliance Française de Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2016. He also participated in the prestigious exhibition 'Fabricated Fractures', organised by Samdani Art Foundation at Concrete, Alserker Avenue, Dubai in 2019.

Shadhin also participated in the first edition of Majhi International Art Residency Programme, presented by Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation in Venice, Italy. The residency took place at Combo, the former Convento dei Crociferi, where he worked and exhibited in 2019.

"I believe all artists - wherever they come from - belong to a single community. Together we think and create works," said the artist. "I don't know whether the output is good or not, but, for sure, we make a deep connection among us. This experience could lead us to developing new projects and ideas together."

Shadhin won the Grand Prize at the 17th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh for an innovative installation titled *Greed*, showcasing the adverse impact of nature on the life of the Santal community. Previously, he won an Honourable Mention Award at the 16th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh, for a video installation featuring the miserable life of the Palestinian people. He also bagged another Honourable Mention Award at the 18th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh.

## Looking back at Aranyak Natyadal's glorious journey



Bhongobongo

SHAH ALAM SHAZLI

Theatre was one of the most powerful forms of expression in post-liberation Bangladesh. Popular theatre group Aranyak Natyadal has been actively staging plays for 48 years. Right after Bangladesh's liberation, Ekushey Padak-winning thespian Mamunur Rashid, along with noted theatre artists Aly Zaker, Shubhash Dutta, Dr Enamul Haque and Nazmul Hossain, started the group on February 1, 1972. Mamunur Rashid spearheads the troupe.

Besides staging shows in the country, Aranyak Natyadal has staged many plays overseas as well. Their first show, *Kobor*, written by martyr Munir Chowdhury, was featured on February 20 in the year



Mayur Singhasan

of their establishment. It was directed by Manunur Rashid. Aly Zaker, Dr Enamul Haque, Nazmul Hossain, Babul Chowdhury, Mujib Haque and others acted in this play. Later, they brought *Poshchimer Shiriti* to the stage, under the direction of Mamunur Rashid, who wrote the play during the Liberation War. It was supposed to be staged in Kolkata, under Mustafa Monwar's direction. However, that did not happen.

Aranyak Natyadal presented some of their finest plays on the stage of Mahila Samity. During the late 1970s, the group staged *Gondhorbonogori*. In the 1980s, their play, *Kodom Ali*, based on May Day, received a splendid response. It was first staged in the premises of Bangla Academy on May 1, 1981. Later,



Rarang

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

the play was translated into German. Another play, *Iblish*, also garnered immense popularity. Aranyak Natyadal carries the mission that plays are not only meant for entertainment; they are a tool for people to raise their voices. Some other remarkable plays produced by the group include *Rarang*, *Khudiram Deshe*, *Shinghashon Dukkho*, *Shekol*, *Joyjyonti*, *Mayur Singhasan*, *Shongkranti*, *Kodom Ali*, *Bhongobongo* and *Kohe Facebook*, among others. They have done both stage and street plays.

Azizul Hakim, Salahuddin Lavlu, Brindaban Das, Azad Abul Kalam, Tamalika Karmakar, alongside many other noted actors, have performed with the troupe for a long time. Aranyak Natyadal will celebrate their 50th anniversary in 2022.

## The 'Rise' of Nishat Anjum

ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Even though a lot of talented female artistes have graced our music industry, Nishat Anjum distinguishes herself as one of the few to be able to play the insane riffs by Lamb of God or System of a Down. The talented artiste is on a journey that fulfills her dream of being a full-time musician, and her debut album, *Rise*, is a step towards the dream. "Rise is basically an experimental album, comprised of punk rock, pop and metal songs," says the artiste, who has written, composed songs and played in all the tracks. The album is available in physical form as well as online platforms such as Spotify, Google Play Music, GP Music, Gaan app, amongst others.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

It is a performance that begins from the Swaparjita Swadhinata Chatter and ends at the Smriti Chirantan in Fuller Road. Owing to concerns over the coronavirus pandemic, *Lal Jatra* has been postponed until further notice.

The annual performance, a brainchild of Rahul Ananda,

took a different shape this year. Ananda and other members of the group showed solidarity with everyone on social media, on staying at home. Ananda with his family performed a symbolic walk of the original *Lal Jatra* and others uploaded a candle-lit rendition of Dhono Dhanyo Pushpo Bhora, along with photographs and videos of

previous performances.

For a decade, the theatre group has been remembering martyrs through *Lal Jatra*, where artistes of Prachyanat presented songs and street plays, among other things. Through their performance, they condemn the atrocities committed by the Pakistani occupation forces in the first hours of March 26, 1971.

## Prachyanat postpones 'Lal Jatra'

The city dwellers are well versed with the scene of holding the fringe of a long red saree, bestowing rose petals and singing in the tune of DL Roy's iconic patriotic song, *Dhono Dhanyo Pushpo Bhora* as a part of *Lal Jatra*, by Prachyanat School of Acting and Design.