



Artworks at the exhibition.

Arabinda Das Gupta's virtual art exhibition underway

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, from Sylhet

Plabone Shwapan Buni (Sowing dreams in cataclysm), the fourth solo exhibition of painter Arabinda Das Gupta, inaugurated virtually on Tuesday.

The ten-day exhibition is organised by Shah Alam Gallery of Fine Art. Anyone could visit and purchase paintings at bit.ly/arabinda. A total of 63 paintings, including drawing sketches, mixed media and watercolour works, represent the loss of social values, romanticism, landscape, science and many other things.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr A K Abdul Momen inaugurated the exhibition in the video conference while painter Jamal Ahmed, Professor of the Faculty of Fine Art in Dhaka University, was the keynote speaker.

Harold Rasheed, painter and chief patron of the gallery, presided the inaugural session where many other notable persons attended.

"In Europe, almost everyone knows about their legendary painters but here, the people in the grassroots are unaware of names like Zainul Abedin or Quamrul Hasan," said the minister. "These days, painters are in distress and everyone should come forward to revive their former glory. I'll do my best to support any initiative taken for the painters."

"There is no art institute or college in Sylhet, no art gallery with modern facilities. I always wished for a proper art college in Sylhet, and hope an initiative will be taken soon," asserted Arabinda, a reticent painter and art teacher.

Arabinda prefers to stay away from the limelight. His previous exhibitions were arranged in 1980, 2002 and 2016. He was born in Habiganj in 1953 and brought up in Sylhet. He completed his graduation from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Dhaka University (then called Bangladesh Institute of Arts and Crafts) in 1976.

"Dancers have quickly turned to technology for survival"

- Lubna Marium

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

Eminent dancer, art director, researcher and cultural activist Lubna Marium has transformed the face of classical dance through her initiatives. Her organisation Shadhona and her dance school Kolpotoru, have become household names in the industry. The dance connoisseur, who is the current General Secretary of Nrityajog - the Bangladesh Chapter of World Dance Alliance - Asia Pacific and Vice-President (South Asia) of the World Dance Alliance - Asia Pacific, is the founding initiator of the Ocean Dance Festival. In a candid chat with The Daily Star, she sheds light on the challenges faced by dancers during the coronavirus pandemic, and the ways that they are trying to overcome them.

How has the coronavirus pandemic affected dancers?

We have hundreds of dancers in Bangladesh, who need to be supported. Stage shows are the primary source of income for any professional dancer. Some of them earn through teaching as well. However, after consulting with certain event management groups that we work with, we have been unofficially informed that we probably won't have any concerts or corporate events this year. Many artistes have taken up dance as a career after careful consideration, efforts and experiments. However, it saddens me to say that I am not seeing many possibilities in this industry at present.

Now that all stage performances are cancelled and dance schools are closed, how are most dancers coping up?

I have observed that performers all around the globe are doing concerts for safeguarding the arts. A while ago, we had a meeting with Nrityajog, where we discussed the possibilities of arranging online fund-raising concerts for dancers. I also like Bangladesh Shilpakala



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

Academy's initiatives. They have started an online platform, where the dancers can make videos with their choreographies and also continue their online classes, for which the academy is remunerating them. Dance teachers are also earning, since the online classes are active. Shadhona, located in Banani, has also started online classes for the time being. Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre, despite being a foreign organisation, has been supporting us, and we are grateful to them.

How are dancers adapting to these changes?

Dancers have quickly turned to technology for survival. I noticed that Samina Husain Prema and Warda Rihab created marvelous video content. Plus, we have designed an Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) medium, an inventory of all the cultural practices in Bangladesh through Shadhona. We have formed a consortium of 12 organisations. We are also trying to train 1000 young students, academics and scholars to interact with various communities and upload information. Fortunately, the Cultural Ministry is standing

by us, especially in our two-stage workshops—general knowledge about what ICH is and how information can be uploaded into our website as well as our critical research on cultural heritage. 10 officials from the ministry are participating in our current workshop. The seven ethnic minority culture centres will be joining us soon. Besides, E-pledge has accepted a manuscript from Bangladesh for a book on dance and the Routledge wants the manuscript soon. We are working on that in full swing.

How are you spending time these days at home?

We are in one building with around four families. My daughter is guiding me on yoga basics, meditation and breathing exercises. She daughter has come up with organic remedies and healthy diet plans for all of us.

Do you have any message for your fans, colleagues, and well-wishers?

I would like to appeal to the corporate houses who we have collaborated with for years, especially if they are considering online events. I hope that my well-wishers are keeping fit and staying safe.



Bojack Horseman

Shows to catch up on while staying indoors

SHABABA IQBAL

As we stay at home to curb the spread of the coronavirus, we finally have some time to catch up on all the popular shows that everyone is always talking about. From the classics you really should have seen by now to your friends' current favourites, treat yourself to the binge you always claimed you wanted, with these great shows on Netflix.



Peaky Blinders

BREAKING BAD

The award-winning show, *BreakingBad*, is filled with shocking moments of violence and wry humour, portraying the rise and fall of Walter White and his conspirators. It is best experienced in intense, indulgent binges. With the acclaimed spin-off



You

BetterCallSaul and the movie *ElCamino*, which serves as an epilogue to the original show, there has never been a better time to take the dive into the fictional world of blue meth.

YOU

This show was a big hit when it arrived on Netflix, but you may have resisted it after you found that everyone on your social media feeds was hooked to it. While the subject matter is disturbing, the show is presented in such an over-the-top manner, that you wouldn't have any real-life concerns. It's compulsively watchable, without making you think too hard about anything.

BOJACK HORSEMAN

It's a goofy animated series unlike those that came before it - a middle-aged



Breaking Bad

man (read: horse) consistently struggles to stay out of trouble while dealing with the downside of fame. Although you would be hard pressed to find a moment in *BojackHorseman* that isn't a hilarious one, the series has some dark and emotionally ambitious moments that will hook you from beginning to end.

PEAKY BLINDERS

This early 20th century period drama revolves around Thomas Shelby, a World War I veteran turned patriarchal crime boss who wants to up his family's social and financial status in England. The story is loosely inspired by the exploits of real-life gangs in Birmingham during the late 1800s to early 1900s. This one is a great pick for the history buffs.

"Performance art involves looking at life through a micro lens"

- Yasmin Jahan Nupur

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

In 'Let Me Get You a Nice Cup of Tea', artist Yasmin Jahan Nupur sits across from spectators at an English-styled tea table, in her white jamdani shari. She serves a cup of home-harvested tea, and enchants people with her storytelling, sharing details about the history of tea and its impact on different cultures.

Her performances encompass a great deal of pre-production. Nupur conducts extensive research into individual, social, cultural, and scientific objects of inquiry. Her practice includes installations and performances that are rooted in history, and find their relevance in her surroundings and community. Nupur has won several accolades for her work, both at home and abroad. She collaborates closely with people from different communities, who are deprived of social benefits.

"I try to read extensively during my research. At the same time, I prepare myself from a month prior to a performance, with a proper diet and exercise regime," says Nupur.

Drawing is a meditative practice for the artist, who credits her teachers Dhali Al Mamooun, Abul Mansur and Mansur Karim for inspiring her during her student years at University of Chittagong.

From 2003 to 2004, French artist Awena Cozannet conducted a workshop in Chittagong, organised by Britto Art Trust, which Nupur took part in. "I was inspired to try out performance art because of Awena. Her talks were insightful and thought-provoking," recalls the artist.

Her performances often last for long hours. At the 2016 Serendipity Art Festival, Nupur performed for nine hours every day, for four days. She never leaves her performance space during an event.



Yasmin Jahan Nupur

Her 2014 performance, 'SatontheChair' at Dhaka Art Summit, also showed her diligence. Referring to noted artist Marina Abramovic, Nupur mentioned that in performance art, the emotions are real, whereas in theatre, one imagines and performs role play. "Performance art involves looking at life through a micro lens," she adds. In her project, *A Tailor is Sewing the Dress of Tipu Sultan*, she uses handwoven muslin-jamdani as a signifier of power and consumption embedded in the contested and violent history of the subcontinent. She began threadwork in 2008, inspired from her mother. Nupur is interested in the socio-political connections of fabrics.

Reflecting on the pandemic, she said that most artists prefer a secluded place to work on their craft. However, the abrupt halt to social activities these days has been difficult to deal with. Along with drawing, she has been writing and working on sound and art projects about 'breathing'. While doing so, she likes listening to Mozart and Beethoven.

"Finding a minute to breathe, especially to combat the panic surrounding the pandemic has been crucial for me, both physically and mentally. I am trying to find an image of our breath," concludes Nupur.



Nupur in performance at 'Let me get you a nice cup of tea'.