

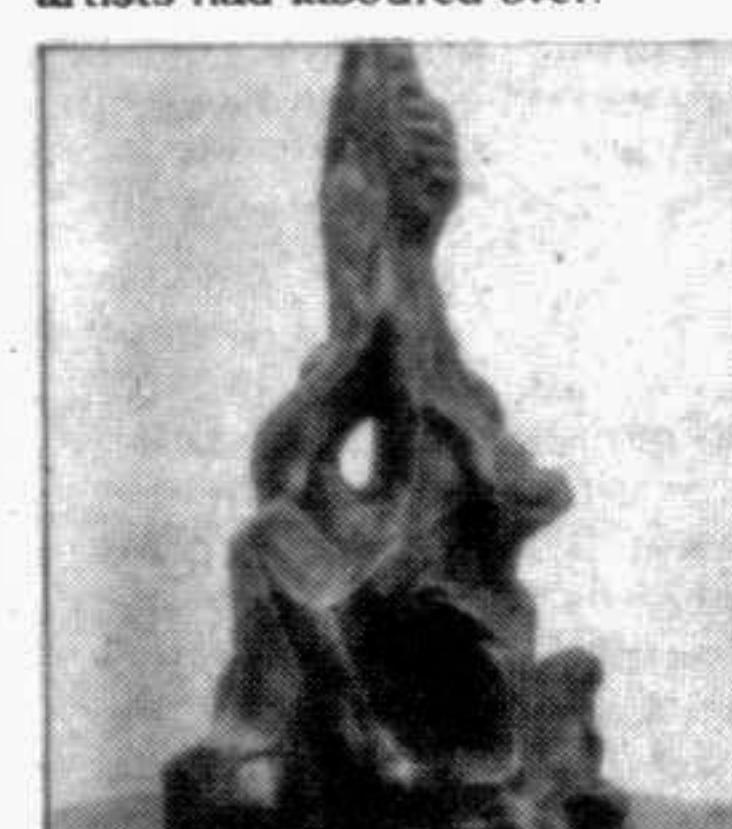
All That Guts and All That Go

Fayza Haq

The Exposition of Contemporary Young Artists '91 at the National Museum involved 42 painters. It was the first time that the painters and sculptors had not fallen back on local patrons or foreign backers. They had an interesting display of varied styles, themes and media just by contributing Tk. 300 each. The selection committee started off with nine enthusiastic young painters. "Out of 175 artists 56 were voted," said GS Kabir, a young painter himself, one of the brains behind the project.

"We wanted to be independent and do something of our very own," Kabir informed me. The brochures and posters alone, carrying most of photographs of many of the displays, cost Tk. 37,000 while the rent for the hall was Tk. 400 for 12 days.

When so many styles, artists and themes had been brought together, the head might have swum and one may have got a little bewildered to find that there was no unifying theme. Yet the fact that the artists wanted something beyond the annual Arts and Crafts College exhibit, and had restricted the age limit to 35 years brought some bond into the exposition. It is not enough in a gallery that one gets a chance to witness picturesque composition, or sees clever presentation of symbols and through provoking themes. The entrees in a binding factor.



Revolution. Shyamal

Through the works of the artists one could study the mind of the young generation and their preoccupations. The themes ranged from politics to social problems and sometimes even presented nothing more than a feminine angle of a tranquilising scene. The exposition encircled various medias ranging from cement and clay to collage and etching and the conventional canvas.

One had a good study of our Bangladeshi modern metropolitan society simply by gazing for a few moments at the pieces that the young artists had laboured over.

There was Shishir Bhattachjee with his brush and ink drawing of a caricature aimed against the last political regime. The main character was shown as a cruel despot clawing and mauling the common man. His identity was easily recognisable from the presentation of the face and the army medals. In another

"Accident" by Iftikharuddin Ahmed brought in a theme

drawing had Quide Azam, Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan shown with supreme contempt and tremendous hatred—once again in the form of caricatures.

Humayun Kabir Bahar's "Last distinction" encompassed battle fields with traditional elephants of India and soldiers carrying bows and arrows. A nasty looking guillotine was placed in the middle to add to the sinister effect of turmoil and conflict. The canvas was pulsating with colours ranging from pinks and blues to gaudy greens and mauves.

Meanwhile, the creation by Moshed Ara Arzu was a world away from havoc and pain with the steady swirls of pinks, blues and the lyrical white.

Rokeya Sultana's etching was likewise a soothing theme. It was print that had been created with a woman's gentle touch. The impact was calming after what one often witnessed about battlefields, slums and city ghettos.

The youngest artist of the group, Najib Tareq had an entree entitled "Master! who?" The ugly and uncouth greens and blues in the portrait were obvious symbols of perversion in men. Hiranyak Chandra's

mixed media delineated people of Bangladesh being all agog with world politics, specially the Gulf War. The collage was eye-catching for being a product of a fairly new painter.

Habibur Rehman Habib's water colour brought in the downtrodden leading a simple life bordering on starvation. The scrawny and emaciated people with dried breasts spoke of the intense poverty

and hunger of the masses. The agony and suffering were captured in a few strokes. Symbols were once again painted into the semi-abstract.

"Dance of the Carnivores" by Nasir Hossain had the lascivious scenes from the back of rickshaws. The artists had not just the local film actors and actresses in mind but the so-called polished members of the bourgeoisie.

Enthusiastic visitors admiring the exposition of contemporary young artists at the National Museum gallery.

— Photo: Mohsin.



Untitled. Nazir Ahmed



Untitled. Iftikharuddin

Ataur Rahman – a Tribute

Arshad-uz Zaman

In the early hours of last Friday, Ambassador Ataur Rahman passed away in a hospital of his native Rajshahi. I have lost a most warm-hearted childhood friend.

Ataur Rahman and myself went to our first school in the early thirties in Malda (a town in West Bengal) Zilla School. He was a few years my senior but had already achieved fame by his academic distinction. We lost track of each other and my next encounter with him was in Paris where I was studying at the Political Science Institute of the University of Paris and he had come as a language trainee after joining the Pakistan Foreign Service.

Almost 20 years passed and we found ourselves in the Pakistan Embassy in Bonn, after crisscrossing the world in various Pakistan missions. Pakistan maintained a large mission in Bonn and it reflected the varied elements of Pakistan pretty well. Our Ambassador was Mr. Abdur Rahman Khan, who had very strong family ties with field Marshal Ayub Khan. His sister was married to Ayub Khan; his two daughters were married to two sons of Ayub. In a manner it was an extension of the Presidential Palace in Pindi and I had served for four months as Public Relations Officer to the President, I could clearly see the similarities. Our Military Attaché was Col. Mustafa Khan, who was a most colourful personality from Hyderabad (India) and his wife Mumtaz was the elder sister of Mr. Bhutto, who was making long sojourn at his sister's place after his dismissal by Ayub. In this highly political atmosphere Ataur Rahman and I worked hand in hand to defend the Bengali rights for in that Embassy there were diplomats and staff from virtually every province of Pakistan.

Towards the end of 1968 I came on home leave to Dhaka in order to complete my house. In stretched my fifteen day holiday to more than three months, for I wanted to remain on the scene to witness the mass upsurge. This was an exhilarating experience as the people brought down Ayub's protégé in Dhaka, Governor Monem Khan. On my way back I stopped briefly in Rawalpindi and saw my friend Lt. Gen. S.G.M.M. Peerzada. Our friendship stemmed from the fact that he and I had identical fate in the Ayub House, as we both lasted four months. After my stay in Dhaka I was sure that the Ayub regime had entered the twilight zone and when I asked Peerzada about his thoughts, he said 'You are too impatient. It will fall, in our lap like a ripe fruit.' On reaching Bonn I told Ataur Rahman and Anwar Hashim, the young Third Secretary (now our Ambassador in Bucharest) that Pakistan was going to split up soon and if they had assets in



Late Ambassador Md. Ataur Rahman

started instructing them by letter how to campaign for Bangladesh in various US circles and institutions. One such letter found its way into the hands of Pakistani authorities, who found a way to bring him to Islamabad, took his passport away, I visited Islamabad on official business sometime in August, if my memory serves me right and found my friend home, shunned by almost everybody. We took long walks in Islamabad and told him about the Liberation War and tried to cheer him as best as I could. After liberation, Ataur Rahman was among the early arrivals via the Kabul route. He was given very important assignments specially in the Arab countries as the Special Envoy of the Government. True to his form, he put his heart and soul in the mission. During this period I was Chief of Protocol in the Foreign Office and this was really the fulfillment of our dream of our days in Bonn. Ataur Rahman and I went out as Heads of Mission about the same time in 1973, he to Cairo and I to Algiers. We maintained contact and I recall that he achieved quite a coup by offering

hated debts, so one fine morning without even telling his wife he sold their beautiful Gulshan house. She was heartbroken for she loved collecting good things from around the world and she loved her rose garden, which she tended with loving care. He shifted from one rented flat to another. We met often and talked about the state of affairs.

In the beginning of this month the tragic news came from the USA, from his son that his wife Surayya had died in a hospital. I rushed to his Uttara house, found him broken-hearted, tried in vain to cheer him by talking politics. He asked to place an advertisement in two newspapers regarding 'Kul'. I saw him at the Kul. He would not leave my side. We held our hands in unspoken sorrow. Two days later I rang his house. He had gone to their ancestral home in Chapai Nawabganj. On March 22 I received a telephone call from my friend Abul Ahsan, the Foreign Secretary. Ataur Rahman is dead. (Inna Lillah....)

The writer was a former Bangladesh Ambassador.

ONE of the earliest known cities in the world, which was apparently suddenly abandoned, may never give up its secrets. The enemies are salinity and waterlogging, combined with lack of money and archaeologists.

Mohenjodaro—it means the mound of the dead—is 600 kilometres north of Karachi, Pakistan. Archaeologist John Marshall stumbled on its ruins 69 years ago.

While he was excavating a Buddhist stupa there came to light a complete metropolis—one of the earliest examples of human civilisation.

The ruins visible today are of a highly developed Bronze Age civilisation that existed between 2500 and 1500 BC in this valley of the Indus river.

The city is laid out in a chessboard pattern. Streets as wide as nine metres cross each other at right angles to divide it into rectangular blocks—rather like present-day New York.

Along the streets runs a remarkable system of covered drains, into which pipes for waste water and sewage open out from neatly built brick houses. There are even manholes to allow for cleaning the drains—suggesting a standard of sanitation that would be the envy of many modern Asian cities.

Mohenjodaro consists of two distinct sections—the actual hill, or mound, where the rulers were, and the larger lower city to the east, where lived the ruled.

Although no excavation has been done under the relatively modern Buddhist stupa, major buildings have been discovered around it—a large granary, an assembly hall and the Great Bath.

This is a magnificent rectangular structure, 12 metres by 7 metres, and 2.5 meters deep. Its bottom and sides are built of fire-dried bricks bound by gypsum mortar and reinforced by bitumen sealing.

Surrounding the Bath are several rooms, the whole being similar to the Roman baths which it preceded by over 2000 years.

Excavations have revealed an amazing picture of an urban society of nearly 5,000 years ago—at the time man was just beginning to settle into urban centres in river valleys such as here, on the banks of the Nile, and by the twin rivers of Mesopotamia.

The inhabitants of Mohenjodaro possessed a distinctive script—referred to as the Indus script, but as yet undeciphered—and a high degree of artistic craftsmanship.

Terracotta models of animals, painted wheel-made pottery, jewellery made of gold, ivory and shell, domestic utensils of copper and bronze—all testify to an advanced society.

Scales with standard cubic stone weights indicate an orderly and regulated system of commerce. The children even had toy bullock carts, marbles and dolls to play with.

Contact with the outside world existed probably along the Indus river five kilometres to the East and thence via the Arabian Sea to Mesopotamia. Excavations in the Mesopotamian cities of Ur and Kish have unearthed material related to that found in Mohenjodaro.

Today this same Indus river poses the greatest threat to Mohenjodaro. In 1922, when Marshall started excavating, the water table was 7.5 metres below ground level. Today, in summer, it can come to within 1.5 metres of the surface.

As a result the water dissolves natural minerals in the

often witnessed on Dhaka roads. This was depicted with symbols and lines that were semi-abstract. The horror of the occasion was delineated by the gloomy greys and subtle pinks. His other composition called "Distinction of peace" had utilised symbols once again.

"Still Life" by Iftikharuddin Alam was merely on the experimental stage as the artist played around with the traditional still-life subject of bottles, books and flowers. It would be interesting to note his progress ten years from now.

Meanwhile, the creation by Moshed Ara Arzu was a world away from havoc and pain with the steady swirls of pinks, blues and the lyrical white.

Rokeya Sultana's etching was likewise a soothing theme. It was print that had been created with a woman's gentle touch. The impact was calming after what one often witnessed about battlefields, slums and city ghettos.

The youngest artist of the group, Najib Tareq had an entree entitled "Master! who?"

The ugly and uncouth greens and blues in the portrait were obvious symbols of perversion in men. Hiranyak Chandra's

mixed media delineated people of Bangladesh being all agog with world politics, specially the Gulf War. The collage was eye-catching for being a product of a fairly new painter.

Habibur Rehman Habib's water colour brought in the downtrodden leading a simple life bordering on starvation. The scrawny and emaciated people with dried breasts spoke of the intense poverty

and upper class.

There are academic exercises. The painters and sculptors were hell bent on doing some

experimenting of their own

and trying to present to the

viewers something new to see

and meditate over. There was

room for improvement. Yet

considering their age, the ini-

tiative and effort were remark-

able.

and upper class.

There are academic exercises. The

painters and sculptors were

hell bent on doing some

experimenting of their own

and trying to present to the

viewers something new to see

and meditate over. There was

room for improvement. Yet

considering their age, the ini-

tiative and effort were remark-

able.

and upper class.

There are academic exercises. The

painters and sculptors were

hell bent on doing some

experimenting of their own

and trying to present to the

viewers something new to see

and meditate over. There was

room for improvement. Yet

considering their age, the ini-

tiative and effort were remark-

able.

and upper class.

There are academic exercises. The

painters and sculptors were

hell bent on doing some

experimenting of their own

and trying to present to the

viewers something new to see

and meditate over. There was

room for improvement. Yet

considering their age, the ini-

tiative and effort were remark-

able.

and upper class.

There are academic exercises. The

painters and sculptors were

hell bent on doing some

experimenting of their own

and trying to present to the

viewers something new to see

and meditate over. There was

room for improvement. Yet

considering their age, the ini-

tiative and effort were remark-

able.

and upper class.

There are academic exercises. The

painters and sculptors were

hell bent on doing some

experimenting of their own

and trying to present to the

viewers something new to see