

7th Asian Art Biennial Bangladesh '95

Continued from page 9
are being tested and manipulated.

Japan

SHO KAZAKURA, one of members of the legendary anti-art group known as Neo-Dada Organisers (Neo-Dada), which was established in 1960, may be one of the earliest performance-artists in Japan. Apart from other members of the group, his main concern was not the innovation of objects d'art but a philosophical redefinition of the human body as an object. Mamoru Abe, known for his installation works — mainly of steel began to reconstruct the notion of art-works in the early 1980's after the period of radical abolition of the notion of art which followed the rise of the Mono-ha (School of Things) movement and the conceptual art of the late 1960's. Installation and video artist Jun'ya Yamaide, the youngest of the three, is trying to express his situation in a local city without relying on existing art-disciplines, without paying much attention to Tokyo-centered information systems.

What is common to these three artists is their urge to reconfirm their own existence in relation to their surroundings, in spite of the difference of the generation they belong to and the media they use. In other words, they are dealing with issues of the body and its encounter with space, sound, media, and audiences. They want to create a direct and immediate confrontation between their existence and the details of the surrounding physical and social environment.

ABE is one of those artists who presented the notion of "installation" through his exhibitions, where he created a rhythmical construction by forged steel sticks or plates. His installations consist of two contrasting elements: the light, casual, and dispersed positioning of heavy material; and the exhausting physical labour of forging steel by his own hand. Neither of these two elements is superior to the other. In other words, his effort to document his physical existence by hammering and his concern with diverse aspects of space and time surrounding his existence are closely connected. Later, he began to practise earth-works considering the indigenous characteristics of the land. It gave his works ritual composition and a depiction of history inherent in each land/place/community.

Kuwait

THE origin of the visual arts scene in Kuwait is to be found in the manipulative activities with which Kuwait children used to occupy themselves spontaneously before modern schooling,

which became ubiquitous around the middle of the century, took up most of their time. As a result of the flexibility which was characteristic of the modern school during its early years, as well as its responsiveness to the developmental needs of the children themselves, those manipulative activities were soon infiltrated into the school where they became part of the curriculum. This is especially true of the more expressive or symbolic drawing and modelling.

Inside the school, however, these activities underwent a process of transmutation. Thus, their previous biological or developmental function was forgotten and their organic link to the social and physical environment obscured. Instead, they became formalised and were subjected to western influence, both in terms of artistic style and technique. This became even more obvious since the late sixties, when special institutions, both private and public, assuming responsibility for the visual arts, emerged.

Nowadays, the modern art scene in Kuwait is considered a notable aspect of the cultural transformation which the country has witnessed over the last few decades. The work of Kuwait artists now draws attention both inside Kuwait and abroad. This has earned them and their country considerable prestige.

Laos

The art of Laos has always reflected a strong awareness of tradition, genuine patriotism and a love of nature. Laotian artists have gone to the rich historic past of the country for inspiration and of themes, but their involvement with their own time and their immediate environment has encouraged them to search for newer themes and expressive modes. When Buddhism flourished in the country, many monasteries were established and they made lasting and creative contribution to the development of art in Laos. A knowledge of Laotian history and its interrelationship with culture is essential to appreciate the simplicity and intimacy of much of her art.

The life of Laotian people is unburdened and enjoys a rural tranquility. Urbanisation has not yet assumed a pernicious proportion. There is a strong attachment to traditional norms and social customs. The aesthetic and artistic preoccupations of the Laotian people find their manifestation in the folk rituals, festivals and even in religious ceremonies.

Lebanon

With the closing of the 19th century an important era for Lebanese culture started. Beirut had become the bridge between the East and West, witnessing the birth of the theatre, the public library, commercial printing, the newspaper and the university, which brought with them an increase of Western influence on the cultural and artistic life of the city. The true pioneers of modern art in Lebanon appeared at the end of the 19th century. The most important generation of artists appeared after World War I. They laid the foundation of modern art in Lebanon, and their impact is still felt up to the present day. While the early trend was towards religious subjects, the third generation of artists, after their return from Europe, depicted Lebanon in all its aspects: the coastline and the mountains; the people in their traditional costumes and local customs.

In 1937, Alekis Boukos founded the Lebanon Academy of Fine Arts where foreign and local teachers gave lessons. The Fine Arts Institute opened at the Lebanese University in 1965 and Beirut College for Women had already established its Fine Arts department.

Malaysia

Malaysia being a multi-racial country, provides the most conducive place for the growth and development of creative activities. Although the basic characteristic of culture is universal, each society has its very own "world-view" and as a result, there exists different paradox within the culture of one society to another. Differences are found in the various aspects of life such as society, economy, customs and beliefs, religious backgrounds, education and political ideologies. Great and meaningful art in the past, has always been that which conveys the values of a particular society.

Malaysian culture still remains ethnically specific in form, content and intent, though the evolution of a national culture is slowly emerging. Government agencies like the National Art Gallery and the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism, together with other various institutions and private organizations are doing the very best to promote and elicit feelings of national identity and unity amongst the people.

Mongolia

A distinctive feature of the Mongolian masters rests in what one can describe as an aspiration for explicit decorativeness. Another feature of Mongolian art lies in the fact that nearly every such work of art is created from the materials which have been in man's use for centuries, such as ceramic, metal, wood, stone, skin and wool.

One of the main types of applied art is the artistically treated metal. Mongolian people have been developing this handicraft from time immemorial and it was facilitated by the many riches of the Mongolian land. Various methods of treatment of wood such as flat relief and round sculpture have been familiar to the Mongolian masters for a long time. A refined sense of materials, proportionality of ratio, and habits of rhythmical articulations of ornamented flatness have developed for many centuries.

A restrained use of colour, apart from ornamental motifs of age-old canons for conditional portrayal of curves of clouds, waves, flames, wind, mountains and rocks, characterise the style of Mongol zurgal. Painters usually work on the canvass with specially prepared paints which remind one of the distemper of gouache.

Mongolian art has a broad range, which includes realism in presentation, a striving to image completeness and form, perfection as well as mastery in performance characterised by dynamism. Much attention is paid to ornament. Ornament is based on the combination of nature motifs with geometric ones. With the colour combination, it expresses wishes for good luck, well-being, happiness and longevity.

Nepal

The history of contemporary Nepalese art is not very old. In the year 1965, the establishment of NAFA under the chairmanship of His Majesty the King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev has been of great significance in the development of modern art in Nepal at both national and international level. Since its inception the activities in the art world has gained momentum. This period may be regarded as the beginning of a transitory stage in the history of Nepalese modern art.

The eminent artists of Nepal Mr Chandraman Singh Maskey and Mr Tej Bahadur Chitrakar were the students of the well known Art School of Calcutta from where the renowned master of contemporary art of Bangladesh Mr

Zainul Abedin had also received his qualification. The history of Nepalese and Bangladesh art is therefore so relatively close and similar.

Pakistan

Like any other part of the world, Pakistan too had certain vital factors responsible to shape up its art affairs. Here, the political, social and economic upheavals, struggle for freedom and realization of self-determination, dictatorship and repression etc. have been of deep concern to our artist's mind and creative activities. It is interesting to note that how they have been reacting and questioning the adverse impact of so-called modernization vis-a-vis economic adversities. Their works raise social issues, protest against discrimination, question violation of human rights and the elements of suppression that exist either in political or social system. They treat the problem of feminism and gender while other's work focuses on common man's problem.

The most fascinating aspect of art activities in Pakistan is growing number of younger artists dominating art scene, displaying their creative genius in most intriguing imageries. Their contemporary idiom, quest for dynamic relationship between content and form offer a dialogue to develop a meaningful imagery. They are raising exciting voice filled with spontaneity, sensitivity, energy and skill. The political and social repression continued to deny the right of questioning or entering into a healthy debate till the current political stability in the country. The cultural policies issued by the people government has encouraged younger artists to take up challenges, to be creative and delve themselves into the issues relevant to the world of today.

Works included in 7th Biennial, 95, represent a group of younger artists who, as teachers and professional artists, are amongst the distinctive and outstanding artists of Pakistan. Through their dynamic expressions they express anguish and conflicts, social injustices seen in the society. Their works contain suitable and meaningful content with powerful and impressive imagery. Their technical competence is of the highest order. Most of these artists have gone through rigorous art training in Pakistan and art institutes in European countries and America.

Palestine

Very little has been documented about modern Pales-

tine art. It has been described as a spontaneous growing drive. As a result of the continuous devastation of the Palestinian people and the confiscation of their homeland, they have been scattered around the world, never really belonging to any land they have desired to reside in.

There appears to have been some sort of agreement between art historians that fine arts were not developed in Palestine until 1948: what was considered art then was the tradition of calligraphy, painted icons, engraving on wood, carvings in stone and olive wood, mosaics, mother of pearl work, pottery, weaving and straw work. One particular art form which expressed the sense of identity was colourful embroidery.

Although living under adverse conditions, artists in occupied Palestine have continued to produce works of art that reveal their determined struggle to survive as a people. The themes of most of their works reveal a strong and definite attachment to Palestine, and they are joined in this spirit by many other artists who are living outside their motherland, scattered to the four winds.

Philippines

In this decade of Nationalism and Filipinism, the visual arts, as in any other nation, plays crucial role in the development of the Philippine's cultural life and have a responsibility to fulfil towards the artistic community, as well as the world.

Contemporary painting, which may conveniently be dated from the years immediately following the Pacific War, was until recently dominated by artists, who, equally for convenience, were lumped under the name "Modernists". At one time, there was a sharp cleavage between them and the "Conservatives" which was more than professional in nature. Today, these labels have all but been erased. Balancing volume of production and prices for individual works, both schools enjoy approximately the same material success, which account in large part for the disappearance of their animosities. But a more lasting course of reconciliation is the rise of a new generation of painters and sculptors who reject academic realism equal as nonrepresentational art.

Qatar

Self Taught, or "Natural" Artists:
This group includes all those artists who have not had the opportunity to enter academic studies of art, especially classical studies. Their natural character gives

a true and real picture to their works, because their spontaneous expression in their works is the main factor in their creativity. They use original, earth-like colors, and present direct perceptions far from fabrication or formality. Sultan al-Ghanem is among the top artists of this group, other artists include Sultan al-Saliti, Majid al-Mushimani and Maya al-Kawari, the artists explore themes like traditional houses, the sea, clouds and landscape as the artists transfer their emotion directly to the object.

Impressionistic School:

Light may be the main characteristic that distinguishes the Arab Gulf region, especially the State of Qatar. Qatar is flat and has very few hills. Since the sky is clear year-round, the sun sheds its direct light to the earth, making it intense and clear. This light has provided the material for creating vivid plastic arts.

Muhammad Ali Kamlun is the top artist of this school. His themes include the sea, ships and so on. He also prints landscapes. Muhammad Ali Kawari distinguishes himself with the peace and tranquility which are distinctly seen in the colors and themes of his works. Light is also dominant in his works. Hissah al-Marikhi has also achieved a great deal in this school in her works of ships and so on. Maryam Humammad Abd Allah has created some paintings dealing with the natural environment.

Realistic School:

This school has played a distinct role in spreading and introducing painting among the common people and private organisations. This is because the themes are quite clear. The object is presented in every detail and as accurately as possible.

Republic of Korea

Since the turn of this century, Korea had to undergo lost of social upheaval caused by some foreign powers. But in spite of such changes Korean artists have always tried their best for their creative activities. Consequently, Korea, a small country in Far East, can now be proud of its artistic prodigiousness. Many artists are forming various groups being eager to express their creative ideas.

It is very difficult to construct new order on the old one, while finding and preserving the traditional values. Nevertheless, today's young artists continue their creative activities, acquiescent in that challenging tasks incumbent on them. During the past 20 years, Korea saw the most important era for the artists whose aspirations to adapt themselves to new possibilities reached the highest.

Russian Federation

The most important national craft of the republic is the sculpture of small size. Initially till 1950-1960 wood served as a basic material for small pieces of art in Tuva. As a rule wooden sculpture was painted. Paint was provisional and decorative. Glorious traditions of wooden sculpture were continued by skilful stonecutters. Modern stone sculpture is the most remarkable event in the national craft of Tuva. Rooting deep to the past this national craft has really blossomed for the last decade. Craftsmen cut small in size expressive figures out of agalmotolite (in the language of the republic of Tuva "chonar-dasha" means the stone for cutting). Deposits of "chonar-dasha" are at the top of difficult-to-access mountain Sarig-Rhaya in By-Trangynsk region. This stone is highly plastic with a rich colour palette. Blue-grey and pink, yellow-transparent

and deeply-red colours are met.

The majority of the stone cutters of the republic of Tuva are hereditary cattle breeders and hunters. That is why fur-bearing and domestic animals met in Taiga and meadows, mythic creatures from Tuvian tales are at the centre of attention of the painters. For example, arzlan is half-lion and half-dog.

Sri Lanka

In the years before Sri Lanka gained her independence (1947), the art of painting was limited largely to the naturalistic outlook introduced into the island by its colonial occupiers. This naturalistic tradition was not intrinsically unimaginative, but had the unfortunate effect, on the one hand of destroying the island's Sinhala style; and on the other of obscuring the international movements in art that were revolutionising painting in Europe and America. However shortly before Sri Lanka won her independence, an event of the highest importance for the future of the island's art occurred in 1943: the establishment of a society of art named the "43 Group".

This Group had among its members painters of the calibre of Deraniyagala and George Key who are today internationally recognised artists. Speaking of the works of the artists of this group John Berger could say in 1952 that "in terms of their art, they are trying nothing less than solve the problems of world revolution", and another critic commented in the art journal "Studio" that "the most significant movement in Eastern Art is found in Ceylon". The "43 Group" introduced the artists of Sri Lanka to the modern exciting new styles of attitudes of 20th century European art.

Thailand

Contemporary Thai Art grew up in the local environments along with some influences from the outside world. The government has created many art schools such as the School of Arts and Crafts and Silpakorn University and the School of Fine Arts to develop and advance the cause of fine arts. Along with the government schools grew up private schools and institutions. These schools give out art education in the western influence. Thai students who have studied and made names for themselves abroad have brought back foreign influence giving Thai Art a more international outlook and appearance. However Buddhism, a national religion still, has a strong influence in art by way of the traditional art forms which very often crop up in the Contemporary Thai Art. The understanding and encouragement art has received have enabled it to become well-known at home and abroad.

Yemen

Art in the most contemporary sense of the word can be seen manifest in all aspects of life in Yemen, naturally expressed; here in a twist of cloth, there a whole mountain sculpted. A window, a door, the clothes enshrining a woman in colour or a pattern animated in black. Patterns, the gesture in a splash or rhythms composed in stone. Recently homemade TV antennas rigged from scrap adorn many rooftops, they would not look out of place in the most modern of art museums.

There is a cultural mechanism in Yemen called a "HALAQA" it means a ring of people who come together and share knowledge, belief, values, meaning and beauty transmitted by word, poetry, stories and also dance and music.

Local Artists on the 7th Biennial

Leading artists of the country speak about their complaints, hopes and suggestions about the 7th Asian Art Biennial, Bangladesh. **Fayza Haq reports.**

Rafiqun Nabi, Director, Institute of Fine Arts, DU, says, "The participating countries are not sending representative or selected works, specially India, Thailand and Nepal. Asian art has become a big event in Asia and it deserves more importance. This exhibition is now a countable one — this has, by now, attained an international standard. There were recommendations in the seminar to expand it more than the Asian arena and make it international. This is difficult to organise but can be done with the help of UNESCO. It can be a four-yearly or even a five-yearly event."

"As we don't have much space for the exhibits, the Shilpakala Academy should be more selective and careful with its choice of display. In Bangladesh the number of artists are increasing so the final selection is not an easy one. For that, ways must be sought to improve the quality of the displays. Although more countries have participated this year — 34 in all — the quality of the works have suffered. The countries should concentrate in improving the quality of the entries."

Mahmudul Haque, Professor Print Making, Institute of Fine Arts, DU, says, "For a comparatively poor country this exhibition is something to be proud of. Gradually more countries are participating. However, the organising committee should take their initiatives earlier: It

takes a year to organise. Sometimes, the works, such as that of India, come just the day before. This makes it difficult for the committee that does the final judging. Moreover, some of the delegates arrived late so that they could not attend the opening ceremony."

"On the whole, the Bangladesh part is good. In comparison to previous years the foreign portion of the exhibition is not as good as other times except for the works of Japan and Syria. We should try to have a liaison and choose the artists and paintings to be exhibited instead of simply relying on the foreign governments. At present, we invite the governments and they send the works of their choice."

"As regards the Bangladeshi side, there should have been less selected artists but more works by the same artist. We can judge from our national shows and we can invite them to participate. The selection from the Bangladeshi side was made through slides and photographs. Sometimes the photographs are good but the actual work is not that good. At other times the photographs were not as good as the original work. The committee for the final selection should see the original works."

Bulbon Osman, Professor of the History of Arts comments, "The foreign artists' works were not as good as before. Since there were so many items to be displayed there was not the normal distance between one painting and another. The seminar included too many papers. This could have been stretched out to two days so that there could have been some questions and answers. This time the print-making

was a poor turn-out. I do not think that the jury was very fair. They tended to vote for their own country."

Naima Haque gives her opinion. "Those in the committee of the biennial should think twice before giving out the prizes. The division of the media was not clear, it should have been wider and included more countries. More money should be spent on art and culture. The arts of a country are its roots. They deserve more preservation. We have reason to be proud, however, to be able to have cultural exchange, sitting at home."

"It is better than before," observes Kalidas Karmakar. "It is important that Pacific countries are included. The Bangladesh standard could have been more selective. The Shilpakala Academy should have invited some local artists, given space, and then asked the artists to fill the space with their creative work as is done overseas. The standard of the biennial can be improved if the system of invitation could be changed to include better artists from the neighbouring countries."

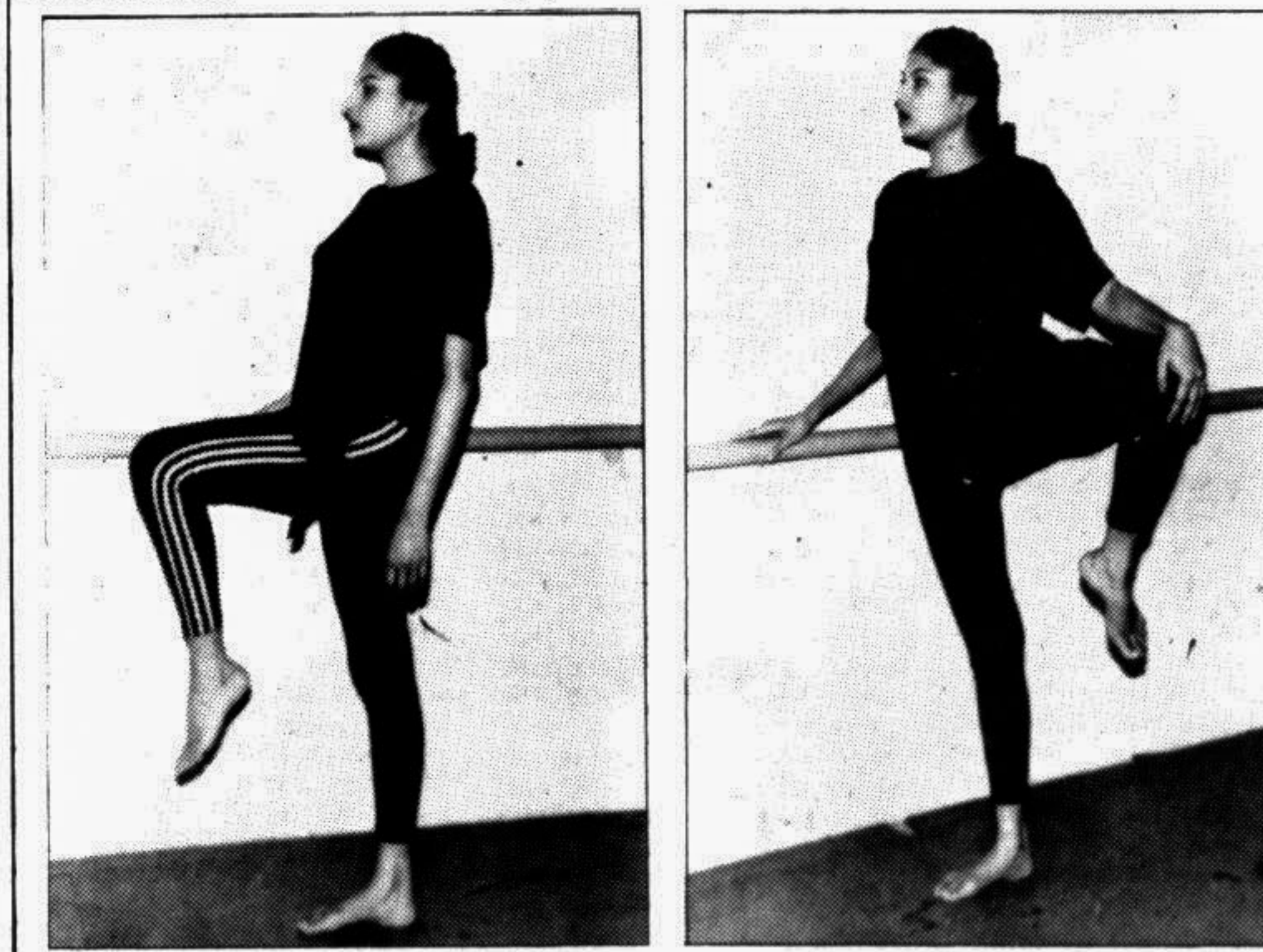
"The management could have been improved," says Ranjit Das. "I believe the manpower of the Shilpakala Academy is limited. Shubir Chowdhury is loaded with too much of responsibilities. Again, there was limitation of space for display. The paintings were crowded in a relatively small place. I also feel that more time should have been spent in completing the works and displaying them," he adds.

These are but a few samples of opinions of the success of the biennial which included 200 artists, 154 of them being from the host country, and 700 works of art.

fitness royale
with rani padamsee

There are many Bangladeshi of all ages and with all physical backgrounds who now exercise on a daily basis. They have discovered that not only does exercise provide the most practical approach to attaining high level of physical fitness, but it stabilizes the emotions and elevates one's mental attitude.

Its very IMPORTANT to keep your attention fixed on



You will feel energetic, lively and alert. Your eating & sleeping habits will improve. Complexion improves. People who have high blood pressure are recommended by the doctor to exercise. Arthritis, Asthma, back problem and other ailments can be controlled with proper exercises. All exercises require proper breathing pattern and in the process you will build up your lungs. Swimming is excellent, provided what you are doing. If you find your mind wandering, bring it back, gently but firmly, to that point of the body from where it was distracted. In the beginning frequent distractions may occur, but patient practice will result in unswerving concentration. You all know how good that will be for you because then you can use it in your daily life in work and other things. If you have any special inquiries kindly

ing your hand on the knee. Second (10) use hand to pull your leg to the side. Third (10 times) from the 2nd position use your inner thigh muscles to pull your knee towards position 1. Keep repeating for count of ten & then do the other leg. This is excellent for your thighs. Once your body gets accustomed to this exercise add ankle weights to increase the pressure. Breathe normal.

fitness royale
with rani padamsee

write and I will try to help. In the mean time I will continue to guide you and hope you all make time for yourself. Best of luck!

Stand straight, stomach pulled in & bottom tucked in. Rest your hand on the wall, window sill, chair or a table. Lift leg up front position 1 & rotate the knee to the side. Do the first (10) without us-

umbrella shielding his balding head from the sun padded his way to another village. He met the father of a girl who was eighteen years old but was still unmarried because she had a limp in her right leg. The matchmaker said "I have a wonderful boy who is just waiting to go overseas for work. Unfortunately he was cheated out of the money he had paid to go abroad. We all know that your daughter is defective. If you can raise the money for the boy's passage I can persuade his family to agree to the marriage in spite of your daughter's limp. There will of course be a small fee for services rendered."

The grateful father warmly shook the matchmaker's hand and ushered him into his house.

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The Matchmaker

Continued from page 10 and cawing in the darkness. A jackal howled far away and an owl hooted in reply. Frogs drowned in the little ditch by the wayside lulling those who could hear them into a state of somnambulism. But for Rokeya there was no sleep. She got up from the floor where she was lying next to her baby brother and stepped through the doorway into the little courtyard which she had freshly swept that evening. She looked at the orange-gold moon through the leaves of the mango tree and sighed.

They found her dead body swinging from the mango tree in the early morning breeze at the first call for morning prayers. A cuckoo was calling frantically in the bamboo grove.

That afternoon, just after the asar prayers, the matchmaker with his faded black