

exhibition

# The Last Biennale before The 3rd Millennium

Curtain Falls on the 9th Asian Art Biennale on November 30

By Nafid, Nadine, Saima, Saboor and Ziaul Karim

**I**T began with the participation of 14 Asian countries back in 1981. 18 years have gone by and Asian Art Biennale 1999 which roped in 35 countries of Asia and the Pacific region emerge as a truly pan-Asian event. With the Biennale becoming a regular event in our cultural calendar, the show has literally opened a new horizon for artistic congregation for the new generation artists of the country and created a modicum of creative dialogue between the artists of the region.

The 1999 also coincides with the golden jubilee celebration of the founding of the Institute of Fine Arts in Dhaka which has over the years contributed immensely to the formation of fine arts movement in Bangladesh of which Biennale is a fruit to be reaped by the new generation of artists and art lovers. Dhaka now has become one of the capitals of world art.

This year, Osmani Memorial Hall, Shilpakala Academy, Shishu Academy and National Museum were the official venues of the biennale. We have covered all the venues for our special culture page edition.

#### Osmani Memorial Hall

It was deep dark inside, nothing could be seen. Turning to the right, a gleam and faint light was hinted. One more step and suddenly everything changed. One would be dazzled, at first, to find that everything from the outside have somehow come inside. There was the moving reflection of the outside world on the wall inside. The reflections though upside down, certainly made people perplexed with its beauty.

This is how the Osmani Memorial Hall welcomed the 9th Asian Art Biennale at its very entrance. The above-mentioned exhibit is an installation by Japanese artist Takihiro Sato. The installation 'Eye with Wings' received the Honourable Mention Award in the exhibition.

There were 34 countries that took part in the show. Of them 17 countries had their displays in The Osmani Memorial Hall. They are Australia, Laos, Philippines, Japan, Egypt, Malaysia, Lebanon, Kuwait, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Iraq, Qatar, India, Oman, Kenya, Bahrain, and Russian Federation.

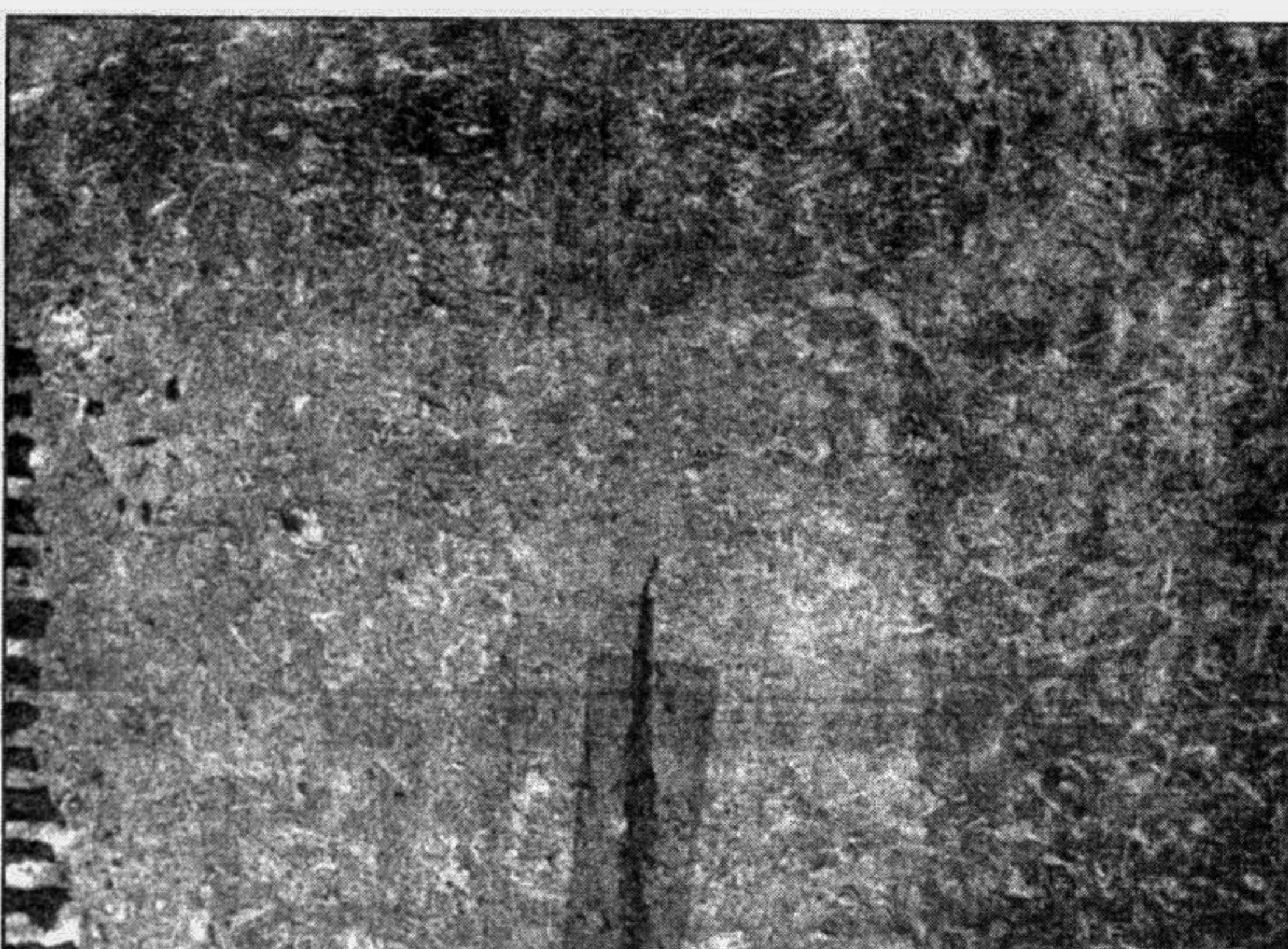
The main part of the exhibition took place in the 2nd and 3rd Floor. The Filipino artist Noel El Farol's work 'sentimental to you', is an installation in mixed media. The work reflects glowing passion from the eyes of a lady with a grove posture whereas Neil A Monals' KSP (acrylic) is message for peace through light and a cross.

Takihiro Sato, 'Running Eye' is a photographic scene created through this work gives a four-dimensional effect on the plane that resulted from an integral-like method to accumulate time and light on the exposed film.

'Hunger' by Khaza el Al-Qaffas, from Kuwait, is a work in bronze and aluminum that received Honourable Mention Award. The voracious and greedy instinct of our present



Dharshan(Rape) - grand prize winner, sculpture by Mahbubur Rahman (Bangladesh)

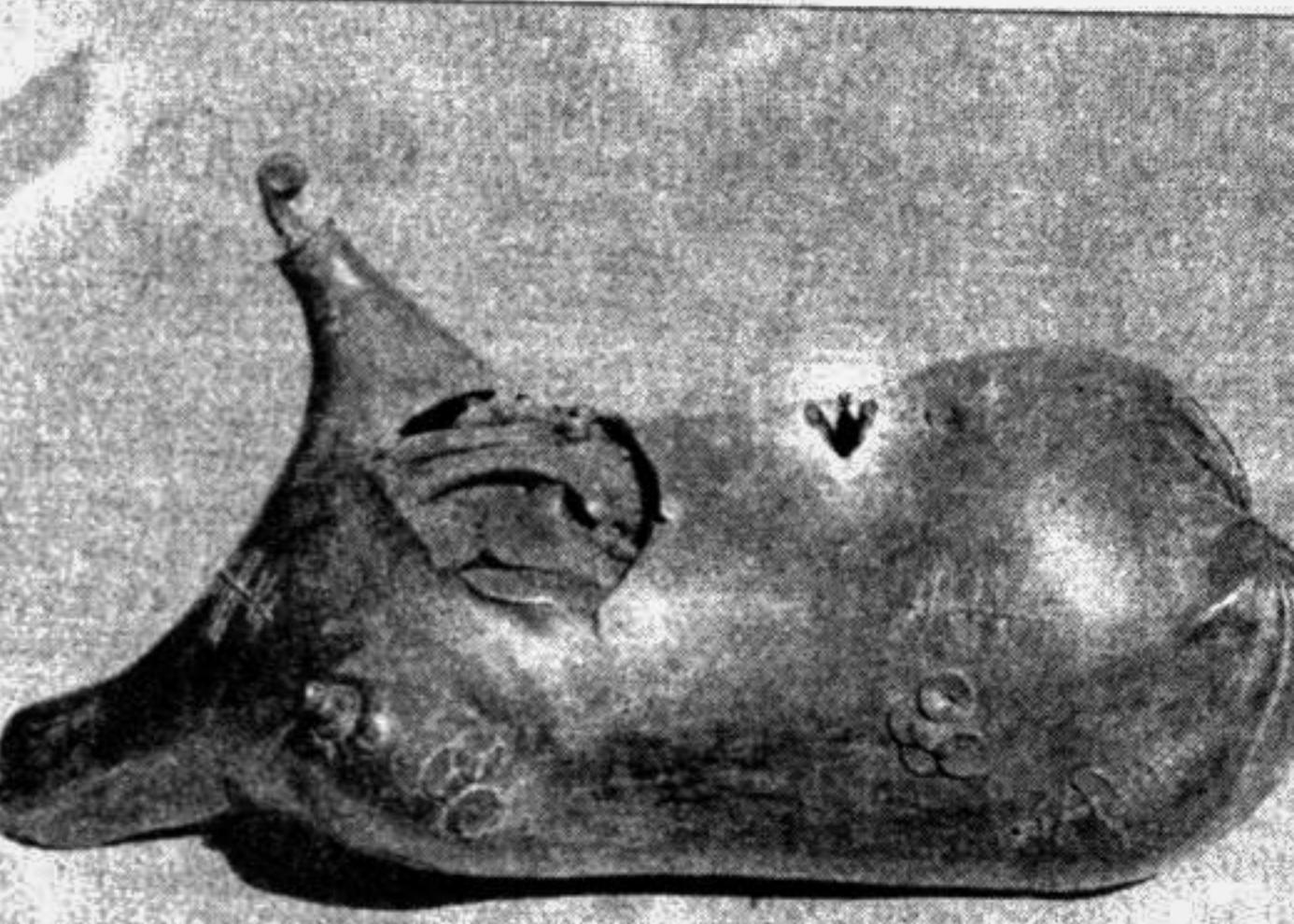


New Vision 3 - grand prize winner, mixed media by Yousef Ahmed (Qatar)

civilization is reflected through it.

'White Bird' is an oil painting by Rashid Al-Qaifi who came from Bahrain. The painting displays the desire of the painter that peace should prevail everywhere, which is symbolized by the bird.

Magdy Abd El Aziz of Egypt got the Honourable Mention

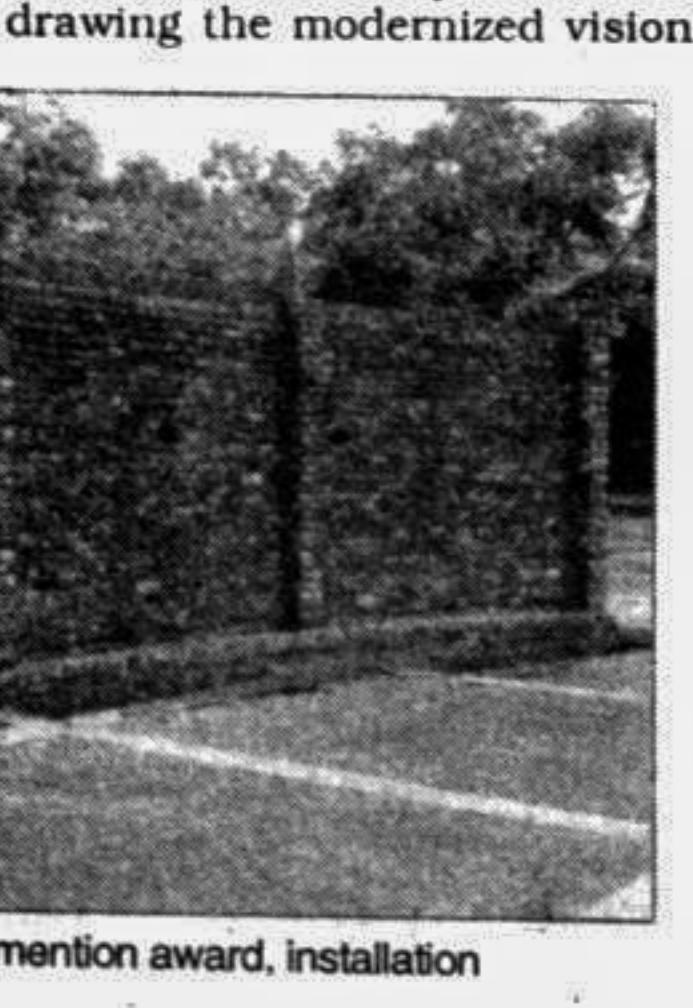


Jirba - honourable mention award, by Khaza Al Al-Qaffas (Kuwait)

Award for his mixed media (intaglio, engraving) 'Egypt 1999'. The sense of nationalism comes vivid through the work.

Kausik Mukhopadhyay from our neighbor country India has focused a very traditional theme through his mixed media 'Big Boy'. The eldest son is the one that usually runs the whole family in our culture and Kausik has been successful to express it with 'BB'.

One of the three grand prizes of the year went to Yousef Ahmed of Qatar for his mixed media 'New Vision-2'. Yousef has been absolutely terrific in drawing the modernized vision



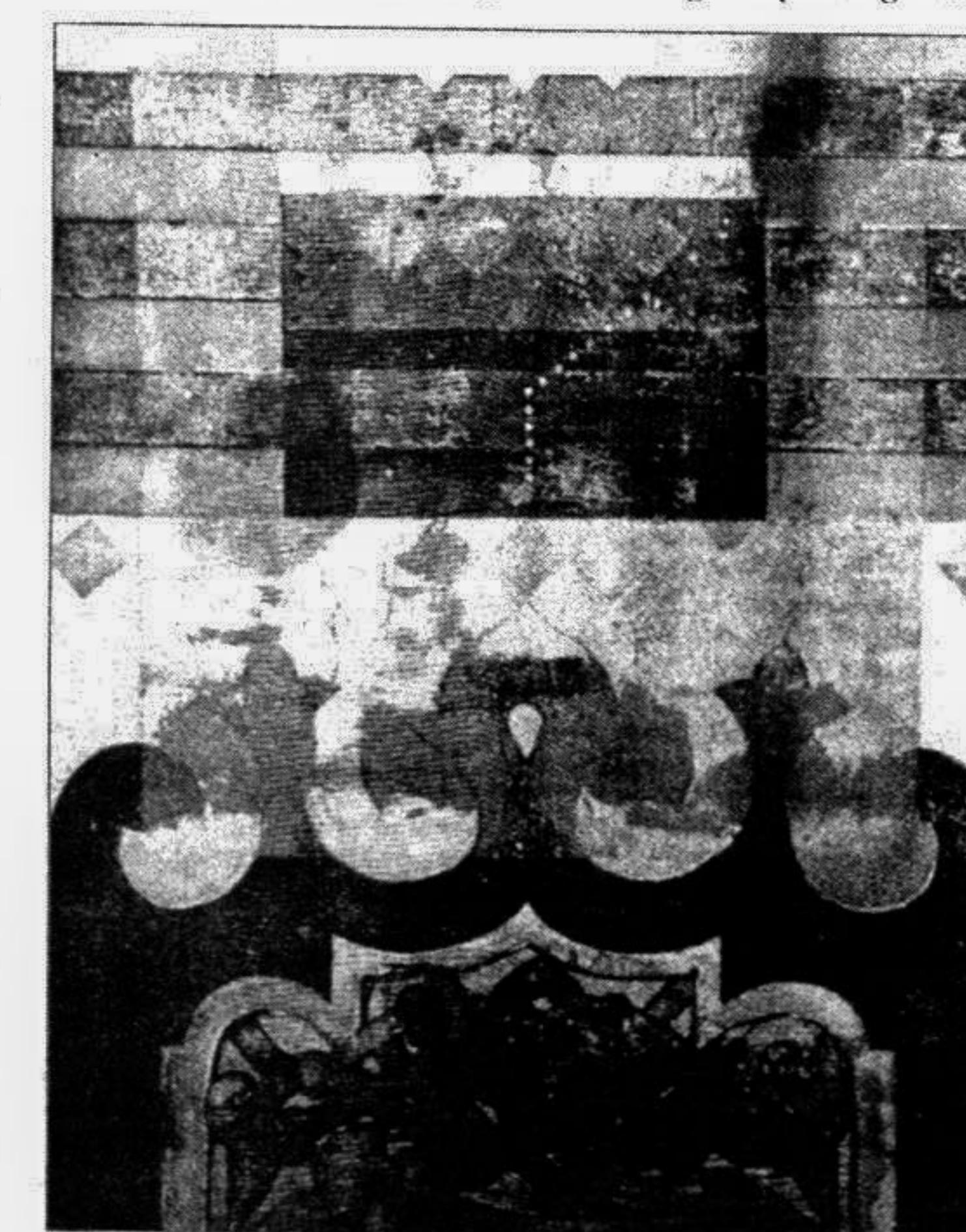
Compound Eye with Wings - honourable mention award, installation by Takihiro Sato (Japan)

materials in Bangladesh, such as bamboo, hemp cloth and fragments of a red brick. He designed various sound objects and set them up in the space so the audience may enjoy the sounds of his creations.

As viewers strolled through the installation space going their own ways enveloped in the enchanting, nostalgic atmosphere, they were lured toward the sounds heard from all directions, and found themselves discovering animistic expression in the objects where sounds were created.

#### Shilpakala Academy

The Shilpakala Academy Gallery was adorned with paintings and sculptures, which foreign artists had created. The Singaporeans, the Arabians, the Uzbekistanis, the Iranian, the Thai, the Korean, and the Yemenis proved their artistic talents and allowed the Bangladeshis to decipher life in their respective countries - as expected most of the paintings depicted their homeland, and the ones which didn't represent the country directly, portrayed a part of their society, economy and culture. One such example was that of 'Remains' by the Saudi Arabian artist Abdul Aziz Ashour, who was the recipient of one of the Honourable



Egypt 1999 - honourable mention award, mixed media by Magdy Abd El Aziz (EGYPT)

intricate designs on them. He used yellow, green, blue, white and red in great abundance. Vouya Aryanpaur had a completely different style from his counterpart - his paintings were semi abstract, delineating nature and mankind. Thai artist Chatvat Koamredeckool had a series of paintings to his name in Seigraph. They had stripes of different colours with three golden pin stripes in the middle. Yong Soo Park of Korea had an interesting sculpture named 'Meditation -Self Portrait', which earned him the 'Honourable Mention Award'. Kyrgyzstan's artists too were participants of the Biennale, and their artist Yuri Stanbek too was one of the recipients of the Honourable Mention Awards. Amin Naser of Yemen had a few paintings like 'Blind Folded' and 'Waiting' in white with soft colours of light pink, blue and purple. Mazher Nuzar's 'Dialogue' depicted two women in deep conversation, while a few other heads popped up here and there, as if listening to them, or eavesdropping on the conversation.

#### The National Museum

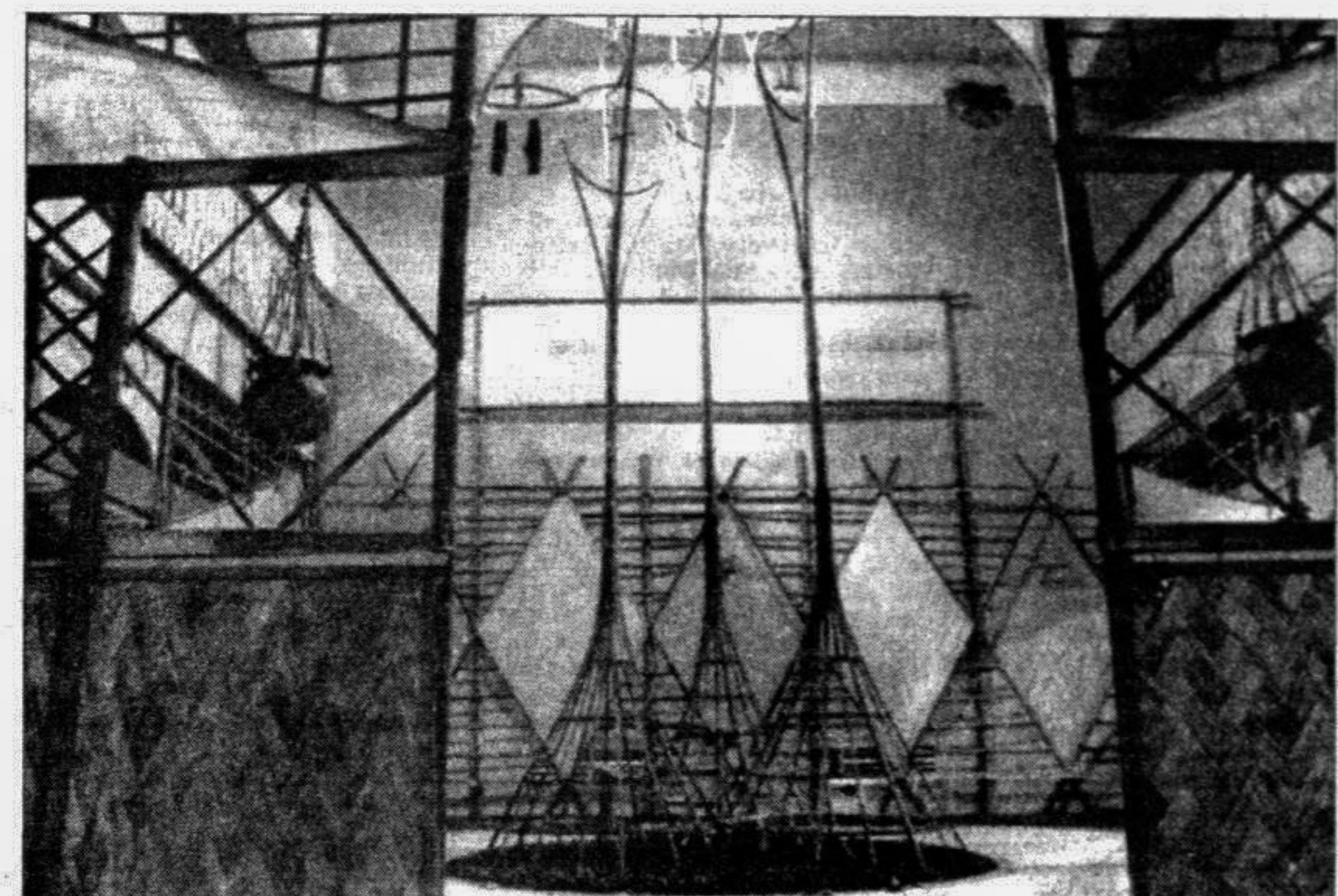
The Asian Art Biennale is only a reminder of the talents that we have among us. From good, to the very best - the recipient of the Grand Prize of the Asian Art Biennale, Mabubur Rahman, has made it to the top. The 'Honourable Mention Award' recipient of the last Biennale is now the best we have. His sculpture, which won him the award, is 'Rape', a depiction of a crude scene with five men standing around a bleeding woman with utensils such as a pair of scissors. One might find it repulsive - conventional art is supposed to be pleasing to the eye - but as far as skill goes, Mahbub has it all.

The last Biennale Grand Prizewinner, Tarun Ghosh, handed in a wonderful piece of work, titled 'Behula Shomoy' in oil. With a whitish background, a red human head protruding from it and two swords making a cross below the head, the painting is a sight to behold. Shameen Subrana's 'Untitled', another work in white and has a thick stripe of red and blue, but completely different from Tarun's. Subrana's painting is soothing and calm, but as intense as Tarun's violence. G.S. Kabir's 'Voice of Future' I and III were oil paintings, one in green and the other in brown. Interesting symbols and shapes give it an 'alien' and 'futuristic' look. Abdul Muktadir created a painting with the 'Adam, Eve and the forbidden apple' concept and had done it very well. The circular designs on the painting only enhanced the painting's charm.

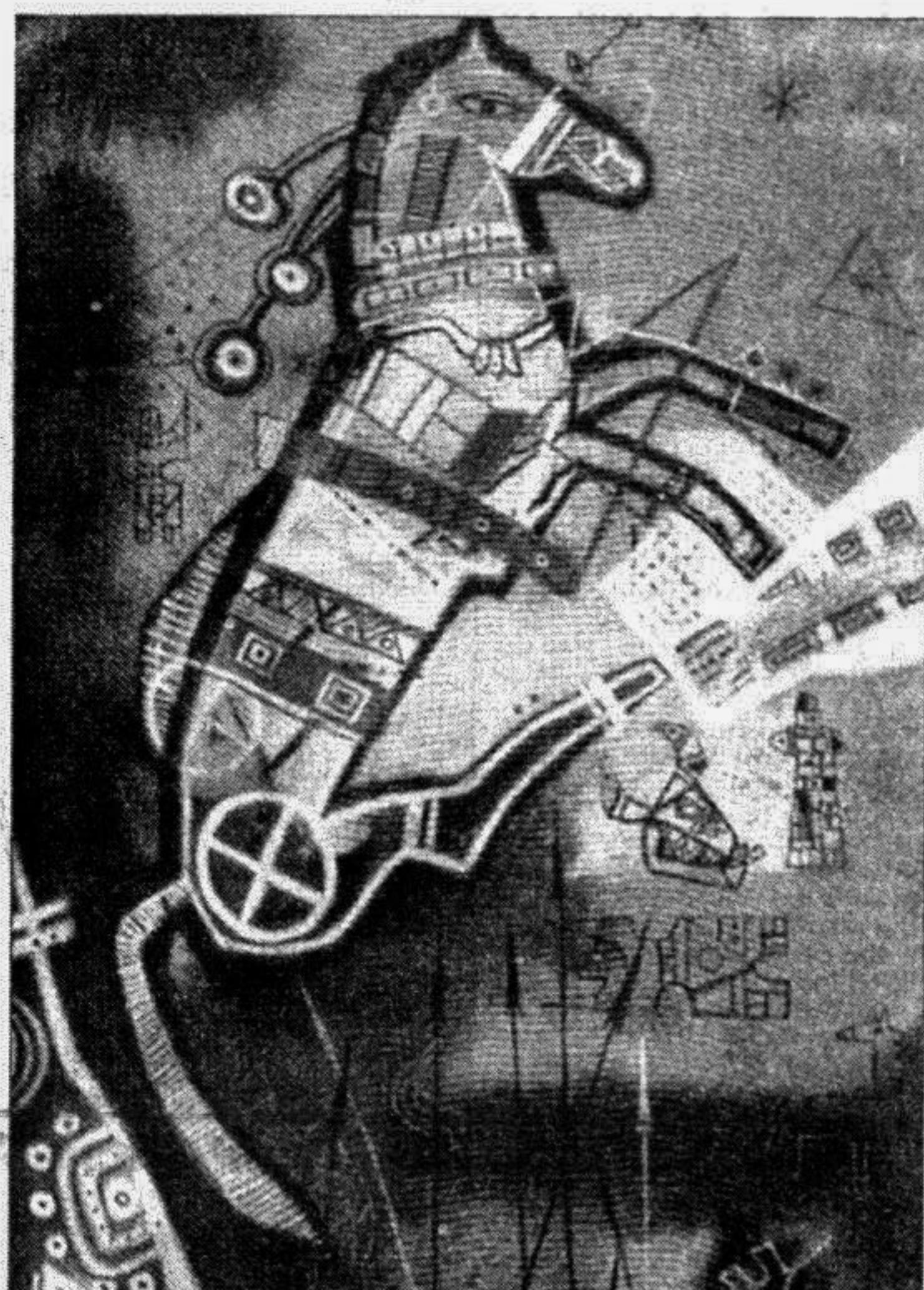
Sajal Basar's 'Folk Festival' was a sculpture made in wood. The geometrical spiral that he created had attracted a lot of attention. Hashi Chakrabarti, the artist residing in Chittagong, had two paintings in the exhibition: Rightist and Leftist I and II. Lovely Chakma's 'Animal New-I' was a representation of a cow's head, done in wood. At first sight, it was not easy to decipher it, but a second look said it all: it is a cow's head. The realistic look that she had given the sculpture shows her talent as a sculptor. Farzana Islam was another sculptor who had an interesting piece in the exhibition: Autumn Moon. Some of the other artists who had produced noteworthy pieces of art are Sayed Talukdar, Sayed Ahmed, Sarkar Nizari Nipu and Ultam Karmakar.

#### Shishu Academy

Art students, deeply involved in drawing and painting - was a



Join Us and Enjoy the Bamboo Symphony 1 - grand prize winner, installation by Akinori Matsumoto (Japan)



Sunny Horse honourable mention award, by Yuristanbek Shigaev (Kyrgyzstan)

usual scene of the Shishu Academy's gallery, where a portion of the 9th Biennale was exhibited. The exhibition with its colourful accumulation of creative works had made Shishu Academy a visiting ground for all kinds of art lovers during the past month.

Shishu Academy like the National Museum, hosted only the art works of Bangladesh. About 36 art works of our talented artists were displayed in the gallery among them were 16 sculptures and the rest were paintings.

The magnificent creations of our artists surely captured the essence of Bangladesh and one could trace the faces and nature of Bangladesh in the exhibition. The themes, the mood, the colour, the feelings the paint-



Air, Water, Land 13 - honourable mention award, oil on paper by Rokeya Sultana (Bangladesh)

scene around us many a times. The women must have gathered after finishing their lunch to have a little chat and the children were playing around them. Perhaps they were waiting in the train station, their usual dwelling place.

Jamal Ahmed's, A Face (acrylic) is a portrait of a beautiful dark lady. The detailed work of the artist is really noticeable. One will definitely notice the nose ring, the patterns on her earrings, the thin borders of her orange sari along with the distinguished mark of experience on her face.

Swapan Chaudhury's Worship for beauty-1 (mixed media) is a work done with beautiful shades of blue. The use of this colour is breath taking. The artist has gone from darker to the lighter shades, which created an excellent sense of symmetry.

Ahmed Nazir's Dream- lit moon (mixed media) used very little colour. In fact, the colour which dominates his canvas is white. White, different shades of pale blue and the artist's imagination made the feeling of moon lit night almost real.

Iftikhar Uddin Ahmed got Honourable Mention Award for his painting, Composition (mixed media). His painting evokes the feeling of delight in disorder. All sorts of items scattered all over his canvas but the artist's systematic endeavor to fulfill his creative urge through his painting does not go unnoticed.

#### CONCLUSION

For the critics and the artists as well, this year's Biennale had special meaning as this event marks the end of a millennium and heralds the commencement of a new one, for the month-long artistic extravaganza gave a foretaste of what the artistic landscape of the new millennium would be. Without going into the deep it can safely be said that the artistic expressions of the new century would be more individualistic and more global and at the same time holding the spirit of the local to create a rich tapestry of internationalism.