

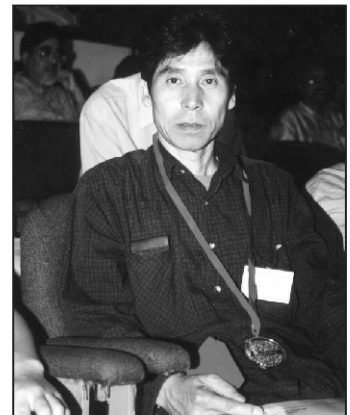
Exhibition

The first Asian Art Biennale of 21st Century

A record 66 countries are expected to attend 10th Asian Art Biennale beginning in the city in January 2002

FAYZA HAQ

TALKING about the forthcoming Asian Art Biennale, Dhaka, Subir Chowdhury of the Shilpakala Academy says about the coming art extravaganza, "We are no longer confined to Asia anymore. Africa has begun participating at the exhibition from last year and the Pacific countries even before that. Last year Egypt, Sudan and Uganda



Artist Akinori Matsumoto (b. 1951) of Japan recipient of Grand Prize for his installation work at the 9th Asian Biennale Bangladesh 1999

had joined the ever growing list of the participants. This year a dozen countries have been invited from Africa including Tunisia, Kenya, Egypt, Senegal, and Uganda. The Arab countries have been given considerable importance. People are under the impression that painting is forbidden in the Arab countries and sculpture is an impossibility, but the past couple of biennales in Dhaka proved this wrong. We have had personal contacts with these Muslim countries and they have responded well to our invitations. I had the good fortune to go to the Sarja biennale last April and I had contacts with my counterparts. Earlier the art scene of Saudi

Arabia was predominantly abstract but now they are doing figurative sculpture. As for Far Eastern countries like Malaysia, Singapore, China and Japan, they participate regularly and Japan Foundation does not even wait for our invitation to prepared themselves for the Dhaka Biennale."

Giving the list of the countries invited, Chowdhury says, "The longlist has 66 countries including Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, DPR Korea, Egypt, Fiji, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, south Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe."

Talking about how the Bangladesh biennale compares with similar ones organised in the Asia, Chowdhury says, "There are no comparable regional biennales of this dimension in the east. Of course, Japan, Sao Paulo and Venice hold larger biennales. We concentrate on the countries that are not so well developed and do not easily get international exposure. India has always participated in our biennales but this year due to its internal political problems there may not be any representation from Pakistan. Last year too, due to martial law, they could not participate. We do not invite



Recipient of Honourable Mention Awards, Artist Rokeya Sultana and Ifkher Uddin Ahmed with Artists Safuddin Ahmed, Hashem Khan and Kazi Abdul Baset at the 9th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh 1999

individual artists but countries and cannot at the moment speak of any particular artists whose works would feature in the exhibition. We try to focus on the works of the best of the younger generation of artists. We do this to encourage them so that they can learn more, whereas senior artists have the opportunity to display their works in various venues without much trouble."

Dwelling on the problems that he faces, Subir says, "The main problem is the finance. Our limited budget has to cater to as many as nearly 70 countries. We have to provide local hospitality including transport to the guest artists and critics. We are also thinking of a bigger brochure. This year the government has given us Tk 20 lakhs while UNESCO will give us US dollars 25,000. Altogether we will be having about Tk 33 lakhs. However, we need about Tk 45,000 for which we are hoping to get sponsors from local banks. Earlier our brochures were not fully coloured but this year they will be."

"Normally, in other countries the host countries bear the cost of bringing in and returning the

paintings. We don't bear this cost. Then there is problem with the airlines that are not willing to return the paintings and sculptures without payment. We need Tk 20 lakhs extra for this purpose.

Speaking about the nature and purpose of the biennale, Subir adds, "The 10th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh 2002 will be a grand platform for creative



Kathy Puzay, Observer from the USA at the formal reception party held on the occasion of the 9th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh 1999 with former cultural secretary Azizur Rahman and former director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Azad Rahman

interaction between artists and to see contemporary works of neighbouring countries in a



Artist Mahbur Rahman of Bangladesh receiving the Grand Prize at the inaugural ceremony of the 9th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh 1999

month long exhibition beginning on 9th January. The countries invited for participation to this biennale will be responsible for the selection of their exhibits.

"The government of the representative art body of the participating country will appoint a commissioner who will liaison with Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and who will sent us the following materials for docu-

b) Brief CVs of the artists.

c) Preferably colour photographs (16 by 12 cm to 30 by 25 cm maximum) or colour transparencies of all the art works selected for exhibition. The name of the country, artist, title, medium and technique, dimensions and date of execution of the work will have to be written down on the back of the photographs (art works must have been executed during the last two years). Also photographs of the artist with his name must be on the back in English.

d) Value of the exhibits either in Bangladeshi taka or US dollar

e) A suitable introduction (preferably within 250 words) on the exhibits for publication in the catalogue of the 10th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh

"The commissioner or his representative will reach Dhaka at least two days before the inauguration of the exhibition. Travel expenses of the commissioner will be borne by the participating country while Shilpakala Academy will provide local hospitality for seven days.

"Exhibits must be presented ready for display. Each participating country will be allotted 20 meters (running) wall space and 30 meters (square) floor area.

Because of space restrictions, participating countries will be requested to limit each of their sculpture to 120 cm in height, 90cm in length and breadth and 60kg in weight.

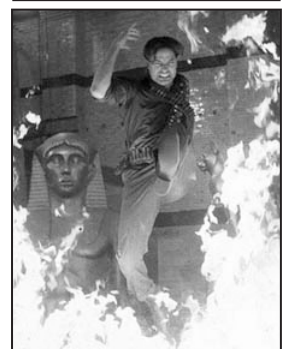
"Three Grand Prizes will be awarded to the best works by the jury, irrespective of media. Each of these awards will be accompanied by a medal and cash prize of Tk 100,000 (US\$1,750).

"The jury will comprise of two representatives from Bangladesh and three foreign invitees. Besides, announcing three grand prizes, the member of the jury will also announce honourable mention awards.

"A two-day seminar will be organized on 10th and 11th January 2002. The theme of the seminar is *Indigenous Art: Traditions, Identity, and Challenges*. There is already fear that many indigenous art forms are facing extinction. The seminar will take broad look at the traditions of indigenous in Asia, Africa, and Australia. Each participating country will nominate one representative for the seminar who will read a paper on the given subject."

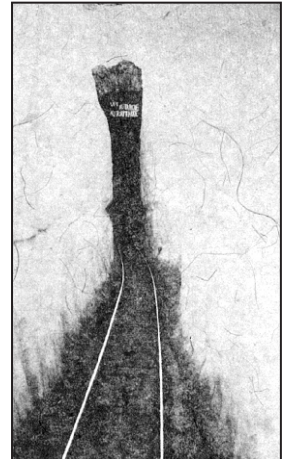
Subir says in conclusion "The Asian Art Biennale which aims at an understanding and cultural dialogues, which involves neighbours, links Asian and Pacific countries for the last 18 years. The biennale has become a festival that has brought countries together in an attempt to assess the achievements in their art. In place of isolation, the biennale has fostered togetherness, and in place of individual aims, it has included the possibility of a shared understanding of cultures. The biennale's message has crossed the boundary of continents and has become a truly transcontinental affair."

RECOMMENDATIONS



The Mummy Returns

This Hollywood blockbuster runs at the country's premier cinema hall Modhumita from today. The Mummy Returns is the sequel of The Mummy and have all the ingredients of its earlier one. With its spine-tingling adventures against breath-taking landscapes, The Mummy Returns is sure to thrill cine buffs. Hordes of canine bodied Anubis warriors-literally hounds from hell-bound across the Sahara in attack formation while carnivorous pygmy mummies ambush their pray in the jungles of the Nile.



Graphic prints show

Noted French artist Jean-Michel Alberola's solo exhibition of graphic prints is now being held at the French cultural centre, Alliance Francaise, at Dhanmandi.

Six Seasons

Shilparag Gallery at Dhanmandi (House#15, Road# 27 old) presents an exhibition on the theme six seasons. Leading artists of the country have captured in their canvases the rich variety of our seasons and their ambience. The month-long show has been extended till October 31 everyday from 11 am to 8pm.

TV GUIDE

Table with TV channels (BT, CHAN, HBO, STAR GOLD, STAR PLUS, BBC WORLD) and their respective programs.

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