

RECOMMENDATIONS

Art Exhibition

A solo exhibition of artworks by artist Nazia Andaleeb Preema is being held at the DRIK gallery at Dhanmondi in the city. The exhibition continues till February 12, 2002. The exhibition is open for all everyday from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Thursday & Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Book Fair

Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela, a three-week long book fair at the premises of Bangla Academy is in progress. The fair is open everyday from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Etching Print Exhibition

A solo etching prints exhibition by Rashid Amin, a Charupith Fellow is continuing at Gallery 21. The exhibition will remain open till February 10 from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. everyday.

Drama Festival

Natyo Utsav 2002, the national festival of drama is going on at the Mahila Samity auditorium in the city. A drama of a particular group is staged everyday at 6:30 p.m. The festival will continue till February 20 organised by Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation. The drama festival is featuring 'Natyo Jalsa' after the staging of the theatrical productions, each evening. Each Jalsa includes cultural events performed by members of the theatre groups.

Today's drama: *Shongkranti* by Aranyak Natya Dal.

Coinciding with the drama festival began the 'Street Drama Festival 2002' that will end today. 'Fair & Lovely Drama Festival 2002' is ending today at the Showkat Osman auditorium of Central Public Library. The weeklong festival has been arranged with the theme 'Reach for the Skies'. DESH NATOK has composed five of the seven theatrical plays of the festival.

Rup Labonne Bangladesh

An art exhibition of 8 renowned artists of the country is being held at Gallery Chitrak at Dhanmondi in the city. Titled 'Rup Labonne Bangladesh', the exhibition is open for all from February 2 till February 16, from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. everyday.

Solo Art Exhibition

The second solo painting exhibition of artist Zahri is being held at Jainul art gallery at the Institute of Fine Arts in the city. The weeklong exhibition ends today. The exhibition is open for all from 10:00 a.m. till 8:00 p.m.

Festival

Dhaka celebrates two festivals of theater

National Street Theater Festival 2002 and National Drama Festival 2002 being held in the city

LUVA NAHEED CHOWDHURY

THE Liberation War of 1971 and establishment of the independent state of Bangladesh is a direct fall out of the Language Movement of 1952. The year 2002 commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Language Movement and cultural activists have taken the golden anniversary to heart. The length of the street from Shahbag to Bailey Road is ablaze with festoons, banners and placards proclaiming various events involving music, plays, films and exhibitions. It is a fiery hub of frenzied activism aimed at extolling and reviving the spirit of the Language Movement. *Ekush mane matha noto na kora* (*Ekush* means to not bow down) is etched in large banners in front of the Mohila Samity. On 1st February the National Drama Festival 2002 and the National Street Drama Festival were launched here with the kind of heady fanfare that is customary to the *theater-para*. The Festival takes on special meaning this year for two reasons- firstly, because it forms part of the celebrations of fifty years of the language movement and secondly because it manifests the beginning of a significant partnership between two cultural organizations Bangladesh Group Theater Federation and Bengal Foundation. Both shoulder the onus of extending the frontiers of the country's cultural heritage through dedicated work in diverse fields.

Justice Habibur Rahman, past Chief Justice and Chief Advisor of the Caretaker Government, declared the Festivals open on the morning of February 1, 2002 at Mohila Samity premises. Udichi led the chorus and all those who were present joined in a soulful rendition of Sonar Bangla as the national flag was hoisted. As soon as the declaration was made, ten Bangla Dhols burst on the scene and filled the air with its breathless, intoxicating rhythm. Younger members caught on to the beat and there was much dancing and clapping on way to the auditorium. The formal arrangement on the

dais finally lent a semblance of gravity to the infectious festivities. Justice Habibur Rahman, theater personalities Ataur Rahman, Ramendu Majumder, Nasiruddin

years. She added that the Drama Festival of 2002 marked the commencement of a project titled "Development of Theater in Bangladesh" which formed the basis

theater in the perimeter of Bengal Foundations activities has added a newer dimension to its functioning. She reiterated the organizations' commitment to bring peace and social stability to the country through promotion, exchange and enrichment of the arts of the region. Justice Habibur Rahman, reminised in his speech that Munir Chowdhury's play "Kobor" was enacted in the confines of a prison, in the wake of the Language Movement. He spoke of the courage and conviction it had imparted to the revolutionary spirit of the times. Likewise, he hoped that plays would continue to be tools for creating social awareness and rooting out injustice. Sara Zaker, Chairperson of Bangladesh Group Theater Federation affirmed that an enslaved race could never hope to derive strength from its cultural legacy in times of national distress. Our struggle for freedom was initiated in 1952 and it finally brought us our sovereignty. And that is why our plays are so alive, so vibrant. She was happy to announce that the plays presented in the theater festival this year were all new plays. She appreciated Bengal Foundations' role in patronizing the arts and helping the theater movement in Bangladesh. In his speech, theater personality Ataur Rahman grieved the loss of lives in the Udichi and Pahela Boishakh incidents and lamented that unless the criminals were brought to task, subversive activities aimed at crippling our spirit would never cease. M. Hamid, convener of the Street Drama Festival spoke of the power of pothotonak and the how it could reach out effectively to the general public. He also said that more than ever before, many theater groups from outside Dhaka were participating in the festival this year.

After the speeches, activists of different theater groups and guests participated in a spontaneous rally which started from Mohila Samity, turned at Kakrail Church and headed back to Bailey Road. The rest of the day was spent in adda and general merry-making.



Organisers hoist national flag in the opening ceremony of the two drama festivals

Yusuf, Sara Zaker, M. Hamid, Liakat Ali Lucky and Director of Bengal Foundation Luva Nahid Choudhury. Secretary General of Bangladesh Group Theater Federation Liakat Ali Lucky delivered the welcome address. Speaking

of a 10-year agreement enacted between Bengal Foundation and Bangladesh Group Theater Federation. The project allows for holding of workshops, divisional conferences, supporting promising playwrights, providing direc-



Grand rally of the festival organisers

on behalf of Bengal Foundation, the Director highlighted the organization's activities of the past fifteen

torial support, supporting stage construction and compiling the history of theater. The inclusion of

The Street Drama festival commenced at the foot of the Central Shaheed Minar in late afternoon. The first play to be enacted was a portion of Munir

gunmen and the police marginalize them in society. It is written and directed by Abdullah Al Mamun.

After every play at the Mohila



Chief guest Justice Habibur Rahman is seen (4th from left) with the organisers at the festival's opening ceremony

Chowdhury's "Kobor", by Shomoy Natyagoshti. On the other hand the Mohila Samity stage came alive at six-thirty in the evening with "Golapbagan" by Bailey Road Theater. Maruf, a member of the group, stated that he was very happy to be doing the opening play

Samity, there is a short break and following that emerges Jalsa- an informal presentation by individual theater groups. On the second day at the Shaheed Minar premises, Dibalok from Shoilokupa earned much acclaim. Brojen, the Manager of the troupe, spoke at length



Ascene from a street drama at Shaheed Minar

of the Festival. "Golapbagan" involves the lives of sex-workers and how powerful local officials,

of the fact that their productions were centered on current social concerns. He lamented that even

Photography

Changing lifestyle of Dhaka

Ten students of Pathshala, a photography institution, held an exhibition of their workshop output, at Drik

FAYZA HAQ

AS a product of a workshop on "Modern Aspects of Photography" conducted by two German photographers, Christopher Mukherjee and David Streets, Drik held an exhibit of the works of ten Pathshala students. Drik's educational wing, Pathshala and the Goethe Institut organized the exhibition.

Speaking at the onset of the workshop Streets said, "This is basically about German contemporary photography, which uses a special language. This has been the most frequently used form of photography in Germany, UK and the rest of Europe for the past four years. We are trying to introduce that style to the people here so that they have an additional approach to certain topics concerning journalistic documentary photography."

Mukherjee, speaking about documentary photography, said, "There are two different areas, one being the classical form of doing a reportage and the other is the modern contemporary approach. This approach uses certain photographic techniques that try to show not only subjects but also their background at different levels which are not necessarily visible".

In his comments on the photographs on "Street People" Wilson Johwa says, "apart from being a time of great religious significance, the month of Ramadan brought with it a rush, a mad rush, as the people of Dhaka criss-crossed the city

shopping in preparation for Eid-ul-Fitr. Being an outsider, experiencing Ramadan for the first time, I also noticed that there was suddenly a large number of street people about, some, I was told, had come from outside Dhaka specially for this occasion. I noticed that the different methods that the street people used to attract the charity of shoppers were indeed reciprocated by an outpouring of generosity. From the busy Farmgate bus station to the quiet entrances of mosques, street people sought and received a helping hand."

Wilson Johwa in his photograph of an old vagrant in a crushed yellow sari standing in front a mosque wall waiting for handouts depicts both her hope and despair as seen in the lines on her face and her disheveled white hair. Behind are shadowy figures of priests and seated women waiting for handouts. This photo was taken at Sobhanbagh Masjid and Madrasah Complex at Mirpur Road in the city.

In Wilson Johwa's "Blind beggar at Farmgate" we see the footsteps and the sari border of a pedestrian seen against an old woman bending down in simple blue and white with her begging bowl in front, holding on to one of the rods of a fence like structure. The hapless bent blind woman is a contrast to the swiftly moving world around her. The focus is on the lonely and patient beggar but the callous world about her is also brought in effectively.

Monirul Alam comments on youth culture in Dhaka, which he records with his lens for posterity, "

Since I was born Dhaka 26 years ago, I have seen many changes among the youth. For instance, several years ago, folk songs like "Jari gaan", "Kobi gaan" and Baul gaan" were very popular but today Hindi movie songs have taken over. Most young people prefer Hindi and English songs to Bengali ones. At one time women even the young ones loved wearing saris but today they prefer the "shalwar-kameez". My aim in my work is to focus on the changing styles, aspirations and values of the young.

In Monir's photograph we see the colourful rickshaws of Dhaka against the dull gray multi-storied houses and on one side glossy fashion and movie magazines occupy the rest of the space. Here we see the contrast of the haves and have nots, the conventional and the imported. Monir comments, "We shall learn but we cannot do this by avoiding our own culture."

Zahedul Karim says about road-crossings, "Over the next few years Dhaka will join the league of the world's major cities where we find a high concentration of population. Farmgate is one of the most important points in the city and it is so busy that business transactions take place even on the pedestrian bridges. My colleague Mahbubul Karim and I tried to capture the activities and moods of this shopping area from morning to evening. As the sun rises, the first pedestrian walks across the bridge and a beggar appears after which the stream of people rushing to work grows. By mid-morning a crowd has formed as shopkeepers compete for the attention of passers-by. In the evening, the pace is busy and Farmgate epitomizes a conveyor belt transferring crowds from one part of the city to another. By now, however, the place has assumed a haggard tired complexion of the very pedestrians who rushing home at the end of the day."

In one of Zahed's photos we see the depiction of Farmgate as melting pot for transportation with gray and red double-decker buses pouring out their passengers. In the other he shows of anxiety of going home after a hard day's work and here we see a conglomeration of people between a building a rough



Waiting for worshippers outside Sobhanbagh Jame Masjid

pathway beside a busy road manned by police. The people appear to be milling and pushing in their desperate urge to reach their homes. On the building is a garish local cinema poster with heroes and villains along with political stickers.

Momena Jilil says about her work, "For better or for worse, Dhaka is changing rapidly with large 'up-market' shopping center. Apart from altering the cityscape, these shopping centres also have an impact on the lifestyles of shoppers who long to go about their buying of purchases with comfort and style. My work focussed on capturing this New World of glass and mirrors. Despite the glitz and air-conditioning the new shopping centers lack the empathy and personal warmth that is characteristic of Dhaka's traditional markets."

Khaza Rez-E-Ahmed says about his photos centering on "Food during Ramadan", Changes in restaurant menus and the colorful decorations of the premises during Ramadan ignited my interest to this particular project. I set out to capture images of the different types of restaurants that had assumed a new look, the different and special types of food that they served as well a how they garnished these food to attract the fasting people and later on the Eid shoppers. In addition, the project was about how food was served to customers and the kind of people who went to the



We shall not learn anything avoiding our own culture

restaurants for "iftar". Mohammad Mahmud Pishlu, commenting on his work "Light and Lines", says, "In the last decade, Dhaka shoppers have been introduced to the worldwide trend of big shopping centers. Attractive and modern, these centers offer a wide range of consumer products albeit at a price high that what could have been obtained elsewhere. The rise and spread of the shopping centers appear to have been a natural consequence of the increasing growth of the city's population. The Dhaka shoppers find it hard to resist the appealing neon lights as well as the air-conditioned, hassle-free environment."

Muhammad Aminuzzaman, explaining his "Video game centers", says, "In the last ten years, video game centers have sprung up in Old Dhaka to the extent that parents re worried since their school-going children re spending most of their free time and pocket money in them. Often children even skip school for the excitement of these video games. The video game centers in Old Dhaka are patronized entirely by boys."

The young photographers have captured Dhaka's life with keenness and sincerity and without bothering about a picturesque effect. Each photo told an explicit story and they did an excellent job of depicting Dhaka life in their works.

Music

Mars rocks

Blur tune heading for Red Planet

AFP, Paris

THE British pop group Blur has recorded a piece of music that will be sent to Mars next year aboard a European lander, the mission reports on its website.

"The haunting refrain will be the first music beamed back to Earth from another planet," the Beagle 2 website says.

The music comprises nine notes that last week were incorporated into software enabling the Beagle 2 to use them as a call sign to preface its communications home.

Beagle 2 -- named in honour of the ship that took the father of evolutionary theory, British scientist Charles Darwin, on his voyage of discovery -- is scheduled to be launched in June 2003 aboard European Space Agency's Mars Express satellite.

The little probe's main task is to analyse samples of soil, to test the potential for life on Mars.

It is being built by a British-led consortium headed by Colin Pillinger, a professor at the Open University. If all goes well, Mars Express should be in orbit around the Red Planet at Christmas 2003 and then send down Beagle 2 to the surface.



British band: Blur

Blur bassist Alex James describes the brief tune as being loosely based on on a mathematical curiosity called the Fibonacci sequence.

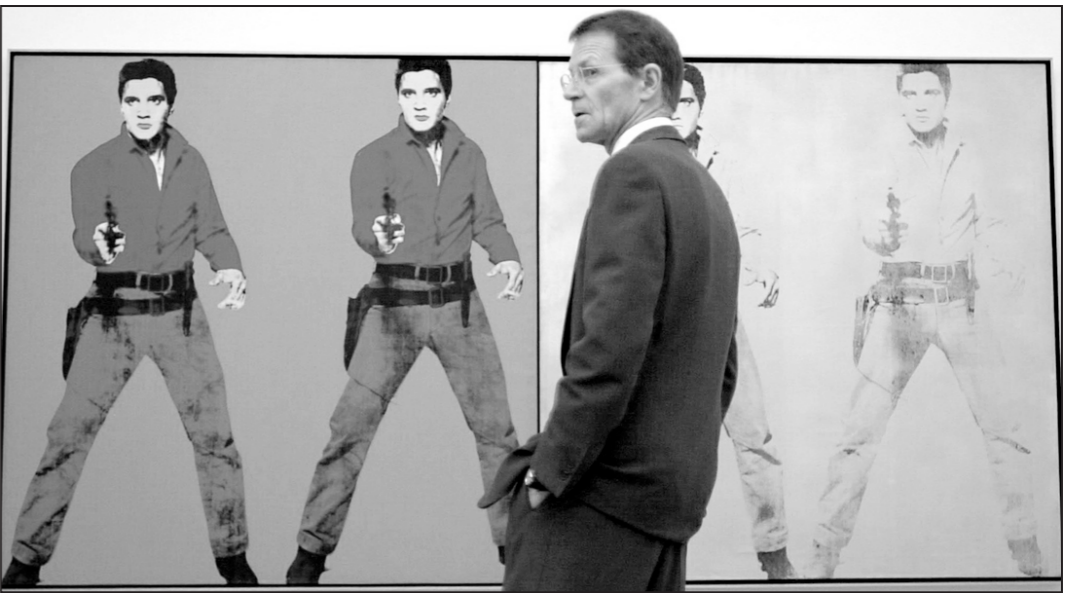
The sequence starts off with 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13 and so on, meaning that each term is the sum of the two previous terms (for instance, 2+3=5,

3+5=8 and 5+8=13).

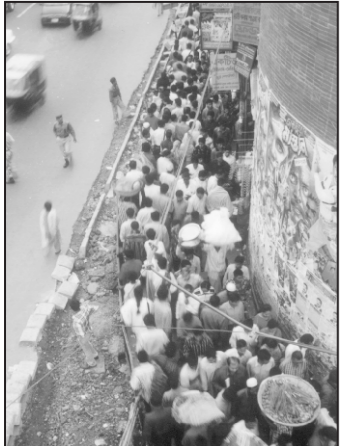
The tune is said to have a feel of the theme music from the old BBC sci-fi series Dr. Who and from a Blur track, No Distance Left to Run.

"It is kind of like a musical cave painting, a ponderous clear tune," says James.

International



Tate Modern director Nicholas Serota stands in front of a work featuring Elvis Presley by the enigmatic American artist Andy Warhol at the Tate Modern in London February 5, 2002. A major retrospective of the controversial Warhol's work is expected to be a highlight of the English capital's cultural year



Farmgate center



Blind beggars at Farmgate