

RECOMMENDATIONS

Painting exhibition

Art works of Bangladeshi landscape done by an American artist, Sarah Sutro, is being exhibited at Divine Art Gallery at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel in the city. The exhibition is open for all from 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. everyday till March 18.

Festival

To commemorate the completion of fifty years of Language Movement, Dhaka Theatre organises a series of programmes including Theatre Festival, Seminar, Village Theater Convention and Reception from March 16 to 22 at Mahila Samiti Auditorium in the city. A two-day seminar on the key notes like Art, Theatre, Poetry and Music will be held on March 21 and 22.

German Theatrical Video Shows

Jointly organised by Zahir Raihan Film Society and Goethe Institute Dhaka, a four-day German contemporary theatrical video show takes place from March 11 to 14 everyday at 5:30 p.m. at the Goethe Institute Auditorium, Road # 9, Dhanmondi RA. Plays for screening includes 'Endgame' on 11th, 'The Kiss of Forgetting' on 12th, 'Year Zero Or The Art of Giving Service' on 13th and 'The Devil's General' on 14th March.

Film Festival

A Japanese film festival is in progress at the Institute of Modern Languages in the city that will continue till March 11. Four films are being screened with two shows, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., every day. The films are Tsuru, Faraway Sunset, Wild Daisy, Hearts and flowers for Tora.

Art Exhibition

Japan and Bangladesh are holding a joint art exhibition at the National Museum art gallery in the city. The exhibition will end on March 20 that is featuring works of renowned Bangladeshi artist Mohammad Kibria, those of Noriko Yanagisawa, a Japanese contemporary artist and works of Kazi Ghiyasuddin, a Bangladeshi artist who is presently based in Japan.

Solo exhibition

A solo art exhibition of Abdus Shakoor is being held at Bengal Art Gallery at Dhanmondi in the city. The exhibition features recent works of the artist who is inclined to pause and look back, to lift the fraying mantle and enquire a willing legacy. The exhibition will remain open for all from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. till March 29, 2002.

Exhibition

In praise of writers in French

Alliance Francaise hosts poetry reading session and exhibition of posters of French writers, from March 11

FAYZA HAQ

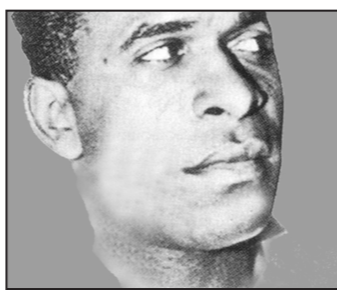
THERE will be a poetry reading session by local students commemorating Victor Hugo and Leopold Senghor as well as an exhibition of posters of writers in French at the Alliance Francaise, beginning from 11th March to 17th March and a part of this manifestation is called "Printemps des Poetes". Many of the writers write in French but are not French themselves. Every year the French speaking community also celebrates Francophonie at the same time. The exhibition also celebrates French writers from overseas. In 3rd May there will be a grander programme on Victor Hugo by someone coming from France to give theatrical performances. She will present passages from Victor Hugo dealing with pariahs.

Leopold Senghor was a minister in France before the liberation of



UNITED NATIONS PHOTOGRAPH Senghor, addressing the United Nations General Assembly, 1961

Senegal (former French West Africa) and became the president of Senegal until 1980. He is the father of the concept of Negritude when he wrote in his poems the need to take pride in being black in the 20th century. As chief executive of Senegal his concern with political and economic issues strengthened his espousal of negritude, which he



Frantz Fanon Les damnés de la terre

defined as "the sum total of cultural values of the Negro-African world". For both his literary and his political work, he was awarded honorary doctorates by universities in four continents. In 1984 he was inducted into the French Academy, becoming the first black member in that body's history. Senghor's career was replete with paradoxes. Although a Catholic and a Serer, he headed a predominantly Muslim Serer nation. An outstanding intellectual, he drew his main support from peasants. A distinguished poet, he was also a professional politician of great skill who guided his nation to independence and proved to be an able and effective leader for the following two decades.

Victor Hugo is famous for his "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and "Les Misérables". Hugo's enormous output is unique in French literature. It is said that he used to write each morning 100 lines of verse of 20 pages of prose. "The most powerful mind of the Romantic movement" as he was described in 1830, laureate and peer of France in 1845, he went on to assume the role of an outlawed sage, who, with the easy consciousness of authority, put down his insights and prophetic visions in prose and verse, becoming at last the genial grandfather of popular literary portraiture and the national poet who gave his name to a street in every town in France.

Saint-John Perse, who born in Antilles, won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1960. He speaks about Antilles in his poems and is all known as he played well with the French language and created new words as he dealt with the conflict between the poor black and bourgeois white people. He went to USA in 1940 and returned in 1957. He was a philosopher, histo-

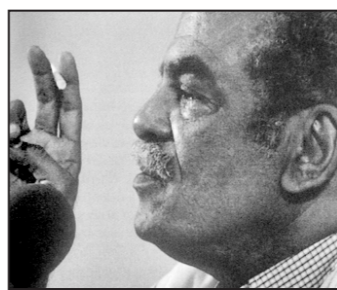


Hugo, photograph by Nadar (Gaspard-Felix Tourmarchon)

rian and a geologist. Another writer of Negritude, which dealt with literature, also in the exhibit, is Aime Caesar, who is born in Martinique in 1913. Aime Caesar was also political minded and was the mayor of the capital of Martinique, holding on to his Communist values. He wrote numerous political texts such as "Discourse on colonialism" which gave recognition to the black people. D'Andre Breton was inspired by a book that he read at Martinique that was written by Aime Caesar and realized that Jean Paul Sartre too had recognized negritude as an important political movement in the fight against oppression of the blacks. The thoughts of Franz Fanon also influenced a number of intellectuals in the third world. He wrote "Les Damnés de la Terre" dealing with all people who are suppressed by the rich. His Communist writings in defense of the downtrodden had a wide influence. Jacques Roumain from the island of Haiti (1907-1944) was a writer and diplomat with Communist leanings. His "Wood of Ebony" also dealt with colonial oppression of the slaves who once came from Africa.

The posters give a brief description of the writers from the south as the Indian Ocean and Africa like Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco in the section of "Literature du Sud".

The second exhibition is called "La saga du Francaise" and it traces the history of the French language from the beginning to the present time. It shows how the language developed borrowing words from other languages too as well as how it has given a lot of its words to English such as the slogan of the English monarchy is in French as it



Edouard Glissant

says "Dieu et mon Droit". The third part of the exhibit is dedicated to overseas writers such as the Caribbean. Among the overseas writers is also Jacques Roumain who is from Haiti and is famous for his book called "Gouverneur de ala Rose" where he describes the manner in which the peasant were living under very difficult circumstances on the island of Haiti. Their position was a desperate one having been imported from Africa to work in the colonies. The description is direct and depicts harsh realism. It drives home the fact that slaves are looked down upon with supreme contempt by their masters.

Another writer of repute is Clixthe Beyala who has won several French prizes for her writing. She has written "Asseze l'Africaine", "La petite fille Reverbere" and "Comment cuisiner son mari a Africaine". She shot to fame for her fight for equal rights for women and the fight against racism. Veronique Tadjou has written "L'Ombre d'Ima" and this deals about the tragic story of Rwanda with its revolts and massacres because of the conflicts between the Tootsi and Hutu. One writer representing Mauritius, Madagascar and Reunion region is Ananda Devi who has written a book called "Pagli" which shows the interaction of many languages and cultures and tells the story of a woman who is banned from the community because she has decided to marry outside her own ethnic group.

Let us hope that the exhibitions will enhance Francophonie in Dhaka.

Event

Recognition of academic feat

A three-day prize distribution ceremony of book reading campaign, organized by Bishwa Shahittya Kendra, concludes today at the Showkat Osman auditorium of Central Public Library in the city

CULTURE DESK

LAST year a special workshop of reading was held in schools across the city of Dhaka, organized by Bishwa Shahittya Kendra, where 24,000 students from 100 schools took part. A large number of successful students were placed in a final pool and the members of the group have been honored with special awards at a three-day ceremony that concludes at the venue of Central Public Library in the city this evening.

Bishwa Shahittya Kendra, a unique library-based organization of

campaign. Lutfar Rahman Sarkar, the former governor of Bangladesh Bank, formally inaugurated the three-day event, which started last Friday. Mahubul Jamil, an eminent business and cultural personality, Mamhubul Rab Sadi of Delta Life Insurance Company Ltd., Najmul Hakim, Brand Manager of Nestle Bangladesh and Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed, President of Bishwa Shahittya Kendra were present at the colourful inaugural ceremony.

With the presence of around 1200 students, guardians, teachers and fans of Bishwa Shahittya Kendra, the event venue got trans-



A young reader receives prize from Lutfar Rahman Sarkar, former Governor of Bangladesh Bank

books, has carried out campaigns of book reading for the last eighteen years in order to develop the habit among youths and students of the country.

At present, there are some 500 branches of the organization where over one hundred thousand young members are participating in the

formed into a festive ground of a cross-section of citizens.

The proceedings of the final day will start at 3 p.m. and will continue till 7 p.m. On the concluding day, a total of 1200 students will receive prizes from special guests, all of who belong to reputed professional sectors of the society.

Exhibition

An artist of the world

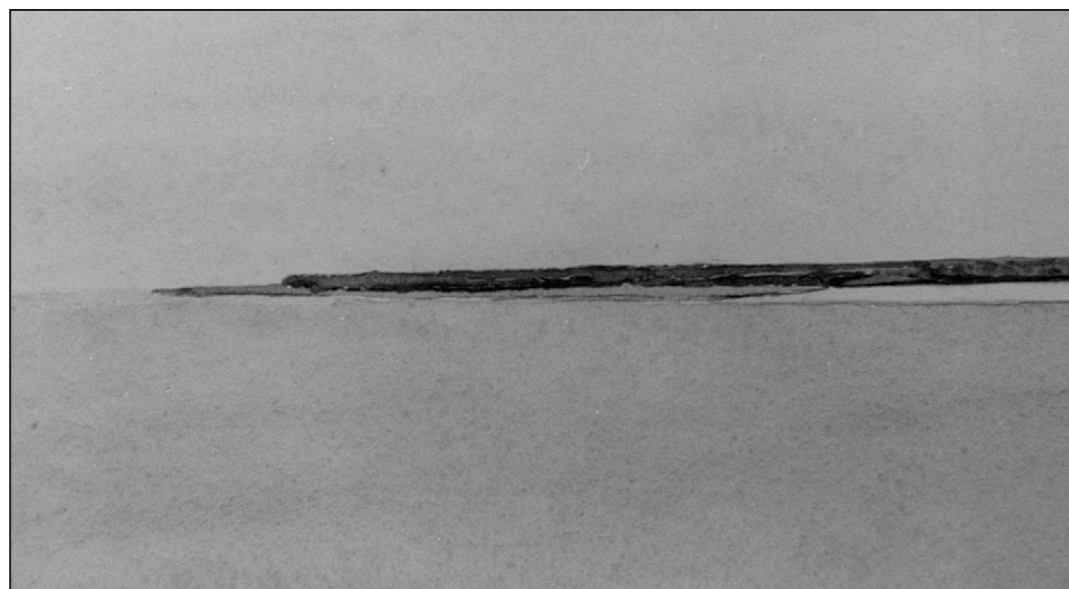
Sarah Sutro, an artist of the US, runs her solo exhibition at Divine Gallery in the city on subject of Bangladeshi landscape, to show her love and attraction for the simple countryside of Bengal

AZIZ AMIRUL

SARAH has displayed in the exhibition a total of 40 works out of which 36 are in watercolor while the remaining four have been painted in oil on canvas.

The female artist, who is at the moment, based in Dhaka due to her husband's professional engagements, is staying in this country for the last three years. It has been quite sometime since she has developed a seemingly enduring passion for the greenery of the rural pasture of our countryside. In her words, 'The straight lines of minimal volume and vast spaces adjoining the natural subjects of this part of the world has created amazing sensations in my mind and I simply, cannot resist painting the scenes again and again, in a variety of style and formation'.

In painting the landscape of Bangladesh, Sarah Sutro has been drawn to the intense light, colour and texture of the rivers, land and sky. She has so far, traveled a lot of regions in Bangladesh and in her works, tried to inject some ingredi-



Landscape, Bangladesh

Watercolor 2001

ents of those elements in the form of colour, light and tone.

Four of her works include subjects those have been captured in frames at her native home at

Boston. A work titled 'From the studio' is a depiction of a scene of the outside world seen through a window, that of the studio of the artist. A bit of abstraction have been added to make the setting more interesting.

'Alongside the paintings of Bangladeshi landscape, I also include some watercolors from New England, where I live. The tidal rivers, light and growth of the natural vegetation of American landscape engage me in a similar fashion as it is done here in Bangladesh and hence beg in earnest to be painted', added the realistic artist.

Three or so abstract works those have been composed in oil, have subjects that share the ingredients of Mother Nature. 'South Asia', a work of an equally divided vertical block of mustard and deep red shades exemplify or in fact, symbolize the extremely colourful and diversified lifestyle of the South Asian countries, which, as Sarah feels, is very much absent in simple lifestyles of the citizens of this country.

In their simplicity, bands and blocks of color harmonizing or forming subtle tension, too, have

mirrored the light and sky, land and water, which are some of the basic components of the geographical entity of Bangladesh. They are the smell, sights and sounds of the



Landscape, Bangladesh

nature those have been paired down to simple elements that represent the landscapes themselves.

The plain paddy fields in knee-deep muddy water has brought a sense of humane feeling in Sarah's mind and in the process, made the artist feel close to the earth. Probably, this has resulted in the creation of a work by the artist that she has included in the current exhibition.

'The truly unique landscape and geographical location of Bangladesh has brought a sort of elation and joy in my soul and mind, a caring notion in me towards the real world of nature and greenery that is quite rare in most parts of the world. Through my works of the landscape of Bangladesh, I intend to glorify the natural richness of a country of the third world region that is often kept hidden by various factors of social diversity', rounded off the eloquent maestro of pragmatic artworks.

The exhibition is open for all from 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. everyday till March 18.

Japan Week

A delicate fairy tale

The Japanese Film Festival opens with screening of a film, Tsuru which is a mix of fairy-tale and social realism

EMILE CHABAL

AS part of Japan Week, the Japanese Embassy has organised a four-day film festival, showcasing the best in Japanese film. The first of the four films to be shown during the festival was Tsuru Directed by Kon Ichikawa and filmed in 1988, it deftly combines a traditional fable and biting social commentary. It was also the hundredth film of the famous actress Sayuri Yoshinaga and she has a starring role.

Set in the bleak, snow-covered Japanese countryside it tells the story of a poor, nameless peasant and his encounter with Tsuru, a beautiful and delicate girl. She arrives from nowhere out of a blizzard and offers to be the peasant's wife. Confronted with such beauty and encouraged by his bedridden mother (with whom he lives), he has no choice but to accept. As their relationship develops, they both fall deeply in love with each other.

One of the things she does as his wife is to weave him a piece of breathtakingly delicate cloth. Armed with this cloth he is able to sell it for a fortune to his landlord who soon requests that he bring some more for him. However, Tsuru wove the cloth on two conditions: one that he shouldn't look at her while she is weaving and, two, that she can weave the cloth only once.

Despite this, the cruel landlord drives the peasant into a corner. The peasant returns home and begs Tsuru to make one more piece of cloth. She eventually assents, albeit reluctantly. The bittersweet climax of the film is when the peasant finally succumbs to his curiosity and peeks while she is weaving.

In breaking his promise to her, he discovers who she really is and why she originally wove the cloth. This central story is complemented by the wise comments of the bedridden mother and several scenes showing how poor labourers are tied to their land by the landlord.

The film has been sensitively produced throughout. The piercing white of the snow and the dingy light inside the peasant's hut provide sharp contrasts. At no point is the screen cluttered, Ichigawa actually presenting what could be interpreted as a minimalist film. Acting all round is very good,



Yoshinaga putting in a perfect performance as the submissive and mysterious Japanese girl.

There is perhaps a lingering feeling that the female has been portrayed as excessively submissive. She always wants to please the peasant. Though we later find out why, this does make the obvious heroine of the film appear rather humble. Also, the deliberate and slow dialogue passages do not always sustain the interest, particularly when the set is dark and empty.

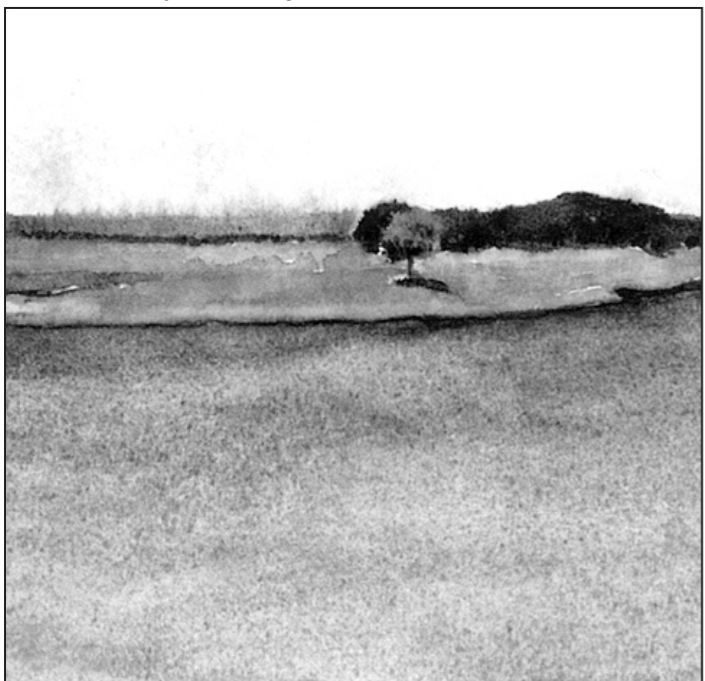
Nevertheless, this film succeeds

on three important counts. It carries a poignantly expressed, universal moral message about exploitation. It is set in extremely beautiful surroundings; and, though it is a fable, it appeals to both the young and the mature mind. As such, it makes a very watchable and delicate film. The Japanese film festival is taking place at the Institute of Modern Languages until the March 11. Admission cards and schedules are available at the Embassy of Japan in the city.

Video

Films on contemporary theatre

4 Stage Productions on Video (In collaboration with the Goethe-Institut Dhaka)
March 11 at 5:30 p.m. Samuel Beckett's "Endspiel"
March 12 at 5:30 p.m. Botho Strauss' "Der Kuss Des Vergessens"
March 13 at 5:30 p.m. Christoph Marthaler and Stephanie Carp's "Die Stunde Null Oder Die Kunst Des Servierens" March 14 at 5:30 p.m. Carl Zuckmayer's "Des Teufels General"
Venue: Goethe-Institut Dhaka, Road No. 9, Dhanmondi.



Landscape, Bangladesh

Watercolor 2001