

Anniversary

Institutionalising photography

BPI, a pioneering photography institute of the country, celebrates its twelfth anniversary

SAIFUL ISLAM

BA NGLADESH Photography Institute (BPI) has recently stepped into its 12th year since its establishment in 1990. The celebration of the photography institution establishes the validity of the potential of Bangladeshi photographers. When photography thrives high in the west, and photographers are well off, in Bangladesh we see an entirely opposite picture. Here the photographers are still reluctant to choose the profession of photography as their main source of livelihood. But BPI, like some other photographic institutes, is playing a pioneering role and the amount of success it achieved is noticeable.

During the initial stages, the institution was working as a learning centre of Bangladesh Photographic Society (BPS) for photographers. From then on the institute began to expand. A wide range of works on photography that it successfully covered were results of the ceaseless hard work of Mr. Beg, a pioneering figure of photography in Bangladesh besides the dedication of a large number of committed teachers, students, and well-wishers.

The vision and objective, which nourished the effort of the pioneers, was to teach the common about life by exploiting photography and to establish a modern and institutional learning centre in the country. The BPI came up with the basic courses



Photo by Golam Mostafa Akash

on videography and photography from the very beginning of its journey. In the last twelve years more than 2000 photographers completed different courses from the institute. The remarkable thing is that there were many professionals and experts from different fields who had been through the courses and these professionals included politi-

cians, doctors, artists, social workers, and NGO workers. Now a days BPI boasts on the number of their students who has taken photography as their profession here and abroad and claimed success.

The BPI is now working to start advanced courses and diplomas. They are working to set a curriculum of International standard. A four-



Photo by Nakib Ahmed

year long curriculum titled 'Diploma in Photography, Engineering and Technology' has already got formal affiliation from the Board of Vocational Training, Bangladesh. Last year the BPI has submitted an application to the Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University with a proposition of opening a department on photography in the campus.

Among the many achievement of the BPI, the holding of a competition of International standard on the auspicious moment of its twelfth-year is praiseworthy. Again the photographers of Bangladesh committed to their soil and heritage came up with a number of excellent photos. The participants were Abu Jobair Mohammad Salahuddin, Mahubur Rahman Dipu, Golam Mustafa, Farzana Mir, Mushfikul Alam, Abir Abdullah, Ahsanur Rashid, K. M. Jahangir Alam, Munirul Alam, Imtiazuddin Ahmed, Mahfuzur Rahman Akbar, Nakib Ahmed, Mohammad Muzibur, Golam Mustafa Vicky, asif Mahmud. While the first prize was grabbed by Golam Mustafa, Abir and Nakib were third respectively.

Abir's theme of catching the

fleeting mirth of the life of a destitute is remarkable. As the rain drops were coming down like sacred beads of pearls, two street children started playing in the rain, careless of their impoverished lives the children have seized the opportunity of the fleeting day. It seems that the photographer wants to claim that life does not depend on poverty, and the power of the human soul to search enjoyment cannot be hindered by misery.

Abir's photo seems to be the analysis of the philosophy of life. A lonely boy who is shabbily dressed walks towards a hut as the tree nearby remains vague amidst a misty setting.

Nakib's photograph is like a photo within a photo, a depiction of a Bangladeshi shepherd boy piping down the valleys like the shepherd of William Blake. All of the three photos are dipped in the watercolour of life.

The judges were Debobroto Chowdhury, Abdul Malek Babul, Nafis Ahmed Nadi and Enamul Karim Nirjhar.

Art

Modern idiom in contemporary Pakistani art

Nillofur Farrukh writes on the historical background of Pakistani art and artists starting from the period of Indo-Pak partition

IN the early post 1947 decades, the artists in Pakistan adopted Modernism not as perpetuation of the First World hegemony but as a metaphor for change and economic freedom. The society was no longer being viewed in stereotypes or idealised images, but as an evolving nation faced with the challenges of transition.

In 1947 Lahore boasted of two art institutions and an expanding artists' community. Karachi had very little post-Partition art activity, which expanded and became enriched by the arrival of pioneering talent in the exodus of displaced people from all over the sub-continent.

In the early 1950s The Lahore Group initiated experimentation in the Modern idiom and had a seminal influence on contemporary Pakistani art. Ahmed Parvez, Shemza, Ali Imam, Moyene Najmi, Sheikh Safer and Qutub Sheikh were members of this informal group and like the Progressive group of Artists, were also inspired by the Paris School. These painters looked upon the new aesthetics of Modern Art as a manifestation of a technological and industrial progress leading to economic freedom, as it had brought to the west. Modern Art also seemed to be the chosen visual language that was compatible with the national poet Iqbal's philosophy of 'khudi' or ego as a dynamo that would propel man towards personal success. In this milieu traditional art seemed inadequate to articulate the dreams and fears of a generation poised to enter a new era of freedom.

Those educated in the English medium schools with greater exposure to global changes, readily adopted the western idiom and recognised it as a vehicle of progress. The majority, who were unread or received their education in the traditional medium or 'madrassas' developed a suspicion of western

values and regarded them as vestiges of the colonial heritage and opposed to the spirit of Islam. Their path to progress lay through a revival of indigenous socio-political values.

The art that emerged from the studios of the Modernists, because of its economically advantaged status, came to dominate the national art scene by the 1960s. The art of the East Pakistani [now Bangladesh] painters had a tremendous impact on their counterparts in Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi and Peshawar, who had yet to reach that mature understanding of the discipline. Artists such as Zainul Abedin had already bridged the gulf between folk art and contemporary art.

Mansur Rahi, a student of Zainul Abedin, became one of the pioneer teachers at Karachi School of Art where his pedagogic influence on the young watercolorists heralded an aquarelle revival in the 1980s. Rahi became a faithful exponent of analytical cubism and developed his oeuvre under the influence of this style.

The Lahore Art Group was committed to modern art but before it could become a cohesive movement its activities were disrupted by political interference. After a gap, when they returned to mainstream art activity, their will had been blunted and the spirit lost.

The 60s also saw the American cultural impact on Pakistani urban centres. Films and publications were freely shown and distributed, and media were used to promote United States' first art movement - Abstract Expressionism. Through visiting exhibitions and art historians, Pakistani artists received considerable exposure to abstract styles from America.

Source: Internet

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 started from March 11 to 14. Shows start everyday at 5:30 p.m. at the Goethe Institute Auditorium, Road # 9, Dhanmondi R/A. Plays for screening includes 'The Kiss of Forgetting' on 12th, 'Year Zero Or The Art of Giving Service' on 13th and 'The Devil's Genera' on 14th March.

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 Abdu Shukur 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.

Discussion

Bangla Academy will hold a discussion program and recitation on March 14 at 11:00 a.m. at the seminar hall of the academy to mark the death anniversary of Poet Jashimuddin. Professor Abul Kalam Monzur will deliver speech at the event. The session will be presided over by Professor Waki Ahmed.

Movies

Oscar favourite Ron Howard gets Oscar fillip with directors guild win

AFP, Los Angeles

VETERAN director and Academy Awards favorite Ron Howard has won a timely Oscars boost by winning the Directors' Guild of America (DGA) best director award for his film "A Beautiful Mind."

Howard, 48, who has been repeatedly ignored by Oscar voters despite a string of hit movies over the past 25 years, saw his chances of taking cinema's most prized award rise dramatically with the DGA win late Saturday.

Howard beat out fellow Oscar contenders Peter Jackson for "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring," Baz Luhrmann for "Moulin Rouge," Ridley Scott for combat drama "Black Hawk Down" and Christopher Nolan for "Memento."

Since its launch in 1949, DGA winners have failed to go on to take the best director Oscar only five times, making the awards one of Hollywood's more accurate Academy Award bellwethers.



Russell Crowe and director Ron Howard on the set of Universal's A Beautiful Mind - 2001

However, the odds are complicated this year as Oscars voters in the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences overlooked DGA nominees Luhrmann and Nolan in favour of Golden Globe Award winner Robert Altman for "Gosford Park" and David Lynch for "Mulholland Drive."

Psychological drama "Mind" is the life story of schizophrenic maths genius John Nash, played in the film by Russell Crowe, and has won eight Oscar nominations including

best picture, best actor, best director and best supporting actress.

But the competition is still seen as intense between "Mind", "Lord of the Rings" -- which is nominated 13 times -- and "Moulin Rouge," despite the extraordinary oversight of Luhrmann for best director.

Last year proved to be a surprise year for those who had put their Oscars money on the DGA winner when Ang Lee was chosen by the DGA for his direction of "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," but Steven Soderbergh scored Oscar gold for "Traffic."

And in 1995 Howard won the DGA award for best director for his smash hit space drama "Apollo 13," but lost out at the Oscars.

DGA Award presenters included Oscar acting nominees Halle Berry, Jennifer Connelly, Russell Crowe, Nicole Kidman, Will Smith and Denzel Washington. A special award went to veteran US actor Edward Asner.

"Time Machine" at the top of North American box office

AFP, Los Angeles

'TIME Machine' traveled to the top of the North American box office, knocking "We Were Soldiers" out of its way over the weekend, preliminary figures showed Sunday.

The DreamWorks remake of the 1960 sci-fi H.G. Wells movie scooped up about 22.5 million dollars in its debut showing.

Vietnam War drama "We Were Soldiers" slid into second place with an expected 14.4 million dollar take, according to the Los Angeles-based Exhibitor Relations Co.

Crime comedy "All About the Benjamins" came in third, with an expected take of 10.1 million dollars, followed by "40 Days and 40 Nights" with 7.1 million, "John Q." with six million, and the Peter Pan tale of "Return to Never Land" with 4.7 million.

"Dragonfly", a thriller romance starring Kevin Costner, "A Beautiful Mind", "Big Fat Liar" and "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring" rounded out the next five big hitters.



Guy Pearce as scientist and inventor Alexander Hartdegen in Dreamworks' and Warner Brothers' The Time Machine - 2002

South Korean film scoops top prizes at France's Asian film fest

AFP, Deauville

FRANCE "Failan", a film by South Korean director Song Hae-Sung, has scooped the top awards at a festival dedicated to Asian cinema in the French resort of Deauville.

The jury awarded Lotus best movie, film, best actor (for Choi Min-shik) and best director prizes to the film which was also voted best film by the general public at the festival.

It beat six other offerings, including "Whispering Sands" by Indonesia's Nan T. Achmas, "A Woman's Work" by Japan's Kentaro Otani, "Death row" by the Joel Lamangan of the Philippines and "The Rule of the Game" by Taiwan's Ho Ping.

A seventh rival film, from China, was pulled out of the four-day festival by China's cultural centre over complaints that the Taiwanese flag was



Indonesian actress Dian Sastrowardoyo poses with her trophy after she was awarded for Best Actress for her performance in the Indonesian film "Whispering Sands" during the awards ceremony held in Deauville, Western France on March 10, 2002 at the Asian Film Festival

displayed at the event. The best actress prize went to Dian Sastrowardoyo, the young heroine of the Indonesian film "Whispering Sands".

Best screenplay went to Taiwan's Kuo Chen for "The Rule of the Game", while Hong Kong's "Peony Pavilion" won the prize for best cinematography.

Around 40 films were shown at the event.

The festival jury included Shin Sang-ok, a South Korean-born director who now lives in the United States, and Hong Kong actress and singer Karen Mok as well as French personalities.

In last year's festival, the South Korean film "Joint Security Area (JSA)" also walked away with the top prize.

Music

Ex-Beatle McCartney previews first art display

AFP, Liverpool

FORMER Beatle Paul McCartney showcased his first major art exhibition Friday in a preview ahead of its opening in the band's home city of Liverpool.

Some 70 of McCartney's paintings, sculptures and photographs will be shown in the collection at the northwest English city's Walker Art Gallery.

The exhibition, which runs from May 24 to August 4, will include landscape, portrait and abstract pieces, including a painting of his late wife Linda.

McCartney said he and his fellow ex-Beatle John Lennon enjoyed visiting the gallery in their youth.

"John and I spent many a pleasant afternoon wandering round the Walker when we were young," he said.

"Going back with my paintings will complete some kind of circle for me and I'm really excited about it."

McCartney began painting in the early 1980s. He put on a small show in 1999 in Germany, and the response to that encouraged him to bring a more comprehensive exhibition to Liverpool.



Of the original four Beatles, two have since died, Lennon when he was shot dead in New York in 1980 and George Harrison from cancer last year.

The other surviving band member is drummer Ringo Starr.

Controversial British rock band to play concert in Cuba

AFP, Havana

BRITAIN'S Asian Dub Foundation, a controversial band that blends the funky rhythms of rap and punk rock with classical Indian music and political statements, is to perform in Havana on Saturday, along with local groups Sintesis and Equis Alfonso, members of the band announced.

The group said it is "very happy" to be visiting Cuba at the invitation of the Cuban culture ministry and The British Council.

Born in Britain, but of Indian and Bangladeshi descent, the members of Asian Dub Foundation began their experimental work in 1993, incorporating political statements and refrains into their rock songs.

"They are our opinions," the band members told reporters here

Thursday. "They are not part of any particular ideology; they are simply our ideas."

The members of Asian Dub Foundation have been described as "the first citizens' of a musical universe where dubs, pulsing drum

and bass beats, digital reggae, slicing hard-rock guitar riffs from the post-punk era and traditional and contemporary Asian music are transformed, simply, into part of the environment," the Cuban Institute of Music said.

