

RECOMMENDATIONS

Pottery show

First solo show of hand painted pottery by Sadia Hasin is being held at the Haseen Gallery, 13/A/2, Kamal Ataturk Avenue, Gulshan-2. Exhibition runs daily from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. till April 9.

Photography Exhibition

To commemorate September 11 tragedy and to pay tribute to the innocent victims, a photography show sponsored by The American Centre of the U.S Embassy, opens on April 7 at 6:30 p.m. at the city's Drik Gallery, House # 58, Road # 15/A, Dhanmondi. The show will be showcasing 27 pieces taken by renowned photographer Foel Meyerowitz from World Trade Centre site. Exhibition will stay open from 3 to 8 p.m. till April 20.

Art show

An art exhibition by artist Nisar Hossain is being held at the city's Gallery 21. The show runs till April 5.

Solo art show

A solo art exhibition of Ronni Ahmed is going on at the Alliance Francaise de dhaka art gallery in the city. The exhibition remains open for all till April 5.

Art show

An exhibition of recent paintings by Murtaza Baseer is now being held at the city's Gallery Shilparag, House # 15, Road # 16 (new) at Dhanmondi. The show is open to all from



11:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. everyday till April 10.

Exhibition

On the wings of the butterfly

Country's ace artist Murtaja Baseer holds solo at Shilparag in the city

FAYZA HAQ

MURTAJA Baseer, who is having his solo exhibition at Shilparag, says, "When I was studying in school I was a member of a left-winged students' organization before the Partition. After finishing my high-school, the Communist party advised me to take admission in the Art College, which was then recently established, so as to organize the party in that cultural arena. This was in 1949 and at that time art was not so socially rooted as it is today and people believed in 'Art for art's sake' as in the case of Nanda Lal Bosu and Abanindra Nath Takhur. As a child I loved to see reproduction of paintings in various magazines in my father's library, by father being Dr. Mohammed Shahidullah. These included 'Modern Review', 'Bichira' and 'Bharat Barsha' in which there were the works of Abanindra Nath

Takhur, Nanda Lal Bosu, Ashit Kumar Hawladar and Ranjan Khastagir. I myself was not good at the compulsory drawing classes. "However, due to my affiliation with my party I used to do portraits of Karl Marx, Lenin and Stalin for the party office. I learnt the technique from the billboard artists of the streets. I blew up pictures with the help of graphs. Meanwhile, as a child, my imagination developed through my mother who taught to me see images of cows, sheep and birds in the formation of the clouds in the sky." Talking about who guided and inspired him, Baseer says, "I got tremendous inspiration from the early Italian painters of the 13th and 14th century like Giotto, Cimabue, Duccio, Fra Angelico, and the Byzantine works. On the other hand, I never liked the Renaissance painters whose works I often saw at Uffizi gallery. Michael Angelo, Raphael or Titian never appealed to

me. Instead, I went to the churches where Masaccio's works were present. The painters that I liked limited themselves to the two dimensional work and their works were a little bit archaic. At that time the artistic perspective had not developed that much. My painting with figurative works was like that. "Later on Picasso inspired me and whenever I had a problem I pondered before his work to study how he composed and used his colours. He ha always been advancing and not sticking to one particular works. In my early student life, Van Gogh was also dear to me. Modigliani also appealed to me enormously, although, when I saw his entire works in Paris I was disappointed because I felt that all his paintings were similar. If you see my paintings you can remember each painting as an individual piece." Recounting one of his memorable experiences as a student overseas,

Baseer says, "While I was a student in Dhaka with Zainul Abedin as my principal guide, along with Qamrul Hassan and Shafiuddin Ahmed, the method of teaching was very much different from that in the Fine Arts School in Florence. When I had a problem in Dhaka, the teacher would take my palette and brush and correct my work while I watched how they did the correction. My teachers had experience of decades while I had only that of a couple of years. In Italy I was using my father's head earned money and had no scholarship to go by. I used to work with viridian green and cadmium yellow. Next I wanted to combine blue and yellow and asked my Italian professor Capuccini about it and he said 'This is your painting. You do what you like'." "The professor would visit the studio every day, watching the students work, but didn't talk to the students. However twice a week he would



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stand before our work and criticize. The professor wanted the students to have confidence in themselves to improve their own work themselves. As a teacher myself for the last 28 years, I used exactly the same method with my students. Thus I introduced my own experiences as a student into my life as a teacher in Chittagong. I understand that the work of the student of Chittagong is different from that of those of Dhaka Institute of Fine Arts. Each student have his own mark on the canvas rather than the influence of the teacher."

Dwelling on how his style changed over the years, Baseer says, "Picasso's work influenced me at the outset. Rafi Kaiser, an Israeli colleague of mine at Italy, and now famous in his own rights, once told me that a painter should be like a cobbler making new shoes all the time. An artist's products must change with time. My work changed from the figurative which I did from 1966 to 1970 and later did the 'Epitaph of Martyrs' based on stone pebbles, which I exhibited in 1976, and furthermore I did some figurative work influenced by 'khalighat' and 'pal' work. Next I did the 'wings'." My works have remained close to nature whether working on pebbles, walls or wings.

"In the mid sixties during the then East Pakistan times abstract art had emerged. I wanted to do abstract art too but wanted to maintain some touch of reality in it. I then saw moth eaten walls and pebbles. I took photographs and notes of this with colour and pencil and did my work in



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the study. While in Paris, during the Liberation War, I saw the death of thousands of freedom fighters and my heart went out to them. I felt that I must dedicate something of them. In the ancient times stones demarcated the open soul of soldiers and this was called 'menhir'. I then used pebbles to mark the epitaph of the unknown soldiers. Similarly I studied the wings of butterflies under the microscope and made my present set of paintings.

"My present series is so macro that if I don't explain you may not understand the origins of the paintings. The other later series is 'memory' and this marks my movement from a house I had lived in for 20 years which bore the signs of habitation even when furniture, paintings, earthenware vessels and posters had been removed from it. I hope to continue the 'wings' and 'memory' series in future as I still have scope to work on these themes. "When I had first begun the 'wing' series it was a bit rigid but this time the paintings are more lucid. The merging of the colours with the background has come in and the painting is more alive."

Talking about the problems that he faced as an artist, Baseer says, "The greatest problem that I face in my seventieth year is that it is difficult to survive as an artist alone. There is no true art collector. Those who buy in Europe and Pakistan that the buyers are people who invest their money in paintings so that they will gain more value with time. In my 1970 exhibition in

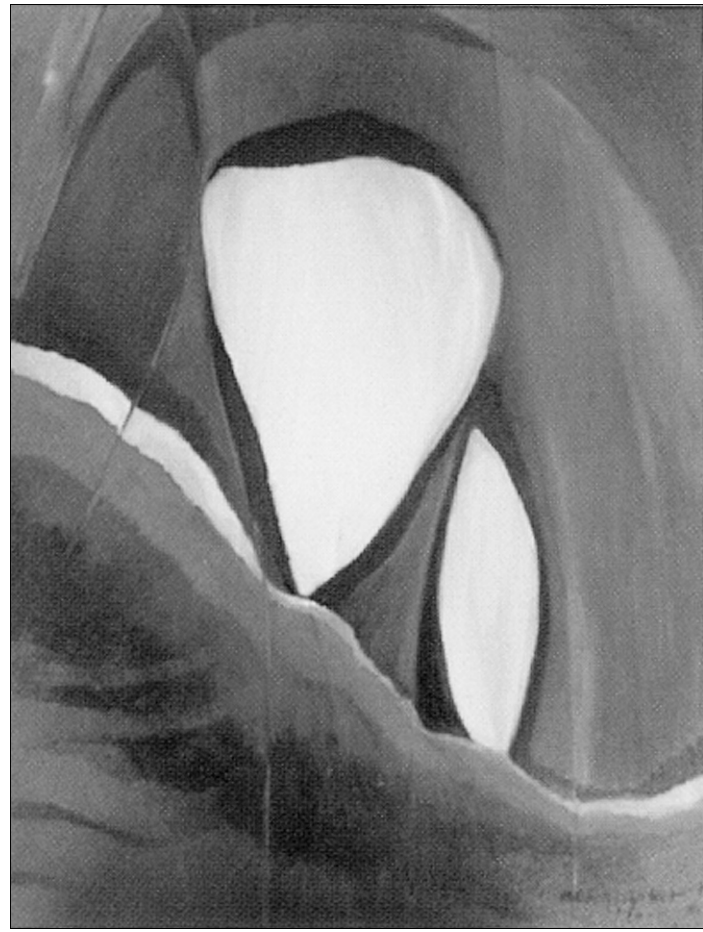


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Karachi I came upon a buyer called Farid, who was not an art connoisseur. I asked him his reason for buying my work and he told me bluntly that he was a merchant in fine arts. Later when he would sell my work, he would make a huge profit. Just as people invest their money in the share market and land so they put it in paintings.

"Today my paintings are for some thousand takas but the day I die the paintings will fetch more just as when Zainul Abedin was alive his paintings did not bring in the fortunes that they do today. Jean Cocteau had said that the bourgeoisie recognize artists without giving them the opportunity to survive with dignity. I am not sure of my survival from month to month and hurry to hold painting exhibition in order to eke out a living."

Murtaja Baseer studied at Accademia delle Belle-Art at Italy (1957-1958), Ecole Nationale Supereure des Beaux-Arts, Paris (1972-1973) and Academic Goetz, Paris. He has held solo exhibitions at Floreane, Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi and Dhaka. He has taken part in joint exhibits at London, Chicago, Tehran, New Delhi, Cagnes sur Mer (France), Hong Kong, Fukuko City (Japan), Kualalapur (Malaysia) and Sao Paulo (Brazil). He got the Kushe Padak in 1980, the Prix National in 1972 and Shilpakal Academy award in 1975.



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Photography

Through the lens of an artist

Bangladeshi photographer Shakoor Majid holds a joint exhibition with Nimai Ghosh in Kolkata with works based on contemporary theatre productions

AZIZ AMIRUL

SHAKOOR Majid, a Bangladeshi amateur photographer, holds a five-day long exhibition entitled 'Rhythm on the stage' at the Gaganendra Pradarshanshala of Rabindra Sadan in Kolkata from April 4 - 8, jointly with another Bengali, Nimai Ghosh, who is well known for his contributions as a still photographer in films of Satyajit Ray.

The 10th Sanglaap Samalaya Utsav 2002, a grand festival of cinema, theatre, drama, fashion and handicrafts that kicks off at Kolkata's Nandan Chatter from today will feature the joint photo exhibition along with presentations from Bangladeshi fashion designer Bibi Russell, filmmaker Tanvir Mokammel, several theatrical groups and others.

The festival includes performance and display of troupes and individual artists from West Bengal and Bangladesh. Being a nine-day affair, the fair, for the first time, includes photography as an item of presentation.

A total of 47 print works of Shakoor receives place in the gallery, all in colour and his topic is a unique one, so to say, the undulating form of colour, sparkle and emotion on settings of stage drama in the country.

Shakoor Majid, who is now in Kolkata in connection with the festival, hopes to present some 45 of his recent theatrical photographs in the exhibition, all of which have been captured during the course of last three years from notable stage productions in Dhaka.

"I am inclined to the hobby of photography since college days but it was only three years back when I first realized the importance of capturing scenes of stage drama", mentions the new-generation photographer. "A Norwegian professional photo instructor, Harry Johansson, who is a world-



'Prithula Prishun'

renowned theatre photographer, visited Dhaka in 1998 to arrange a workshop here on the topic. Hence, after attending the course I was immensely struck with the notion of his conjecture and found it to be worthwhile", Shakoor adds.

There is a matter of rhythmic flow and artistic style in the entire process of stage movements while the scenes proceed, and, as Shakoor Majid feels, this very rhythm has in it a flavor and essence of life that is enough to inject vigor in the theatre-



'Mohua'

cal atmosphere. As Shakoor carries on, "Through my creation of prints I am practicing to bring out all sorts of rhythm from the productions, be those of group or individual actions, light, costume or intune'.

One of the most vital aims of Shakoor Majid is to explain the theme and plot of the drama through a scene or two. He wants to depict a character through a particular scene. When one sees the character of Nuroldin in Shakoor's frame



'Nityapuran'

with an upright and pointed finger, the implication is clear.

In the same way, a single frame showing the lead female character in 'Joibati Konyar Mon', with an appeal of hers towards the audience, explains almost the entire

synopsis. The young girl protests in a disheveled way to show her helpless and petrified situation. A photograph of a scene from the production 'Prithula Prishun' depicts a swerving effect in the blurred image and almost brings life in the print



'Joibati Konyar Mon'



'Nuroldiner Shara Jibon'



'Araj Charitamitra'

work.

As Syed Manzoorul Islam, a literary critic says, "Majid believes that his subjects have first to speak with him and he often picks up mute and insensitive things and dull moments, those, all of a sudden, become evocative. These objects and moments, in their ordinariness, have a story to reveal, listened by the patient artistic photographer'.

Professor Manzoor further feels that the photos of Shakoor Majid are too, important in the sense that they are a moving record of how Dhaka's theatre, in its relentless search for form and style, develops in a more dynamic manner with every passing year.

The magical touch of sparkling hue found in many of the works of Shakoor contemplates a refined and modern outlook of the traditional extravaganzas of the South Asian theatrical setting. Shakoor likes to provide that special blurred effect in most of his snap shots in an attempt to intensify the flashy tinge of light and colour found in contemporary settings of drama in the subcontinent.

Shakoor Majid had started serious photography during the early-90s when UNICEF arranged a photography contest in Dhaka titled, 'Girl Child'. Shakoor made his mark by winning an award on the very first competition of his carrier in photography.

His first solo was held in the city in 1997 titled, 'Face of Bengal' and a second one, 'Traveler's clicks' was held two years later at the gallery of Alliance Francaise de dhaka.

The amateur photographer is a young practicing architect busy with his consulting company. He is also involved in screenplay writing and in making documentary video productions. His still photographs on various subjects have widely been published in local newspapers, calendars and advertisements.