

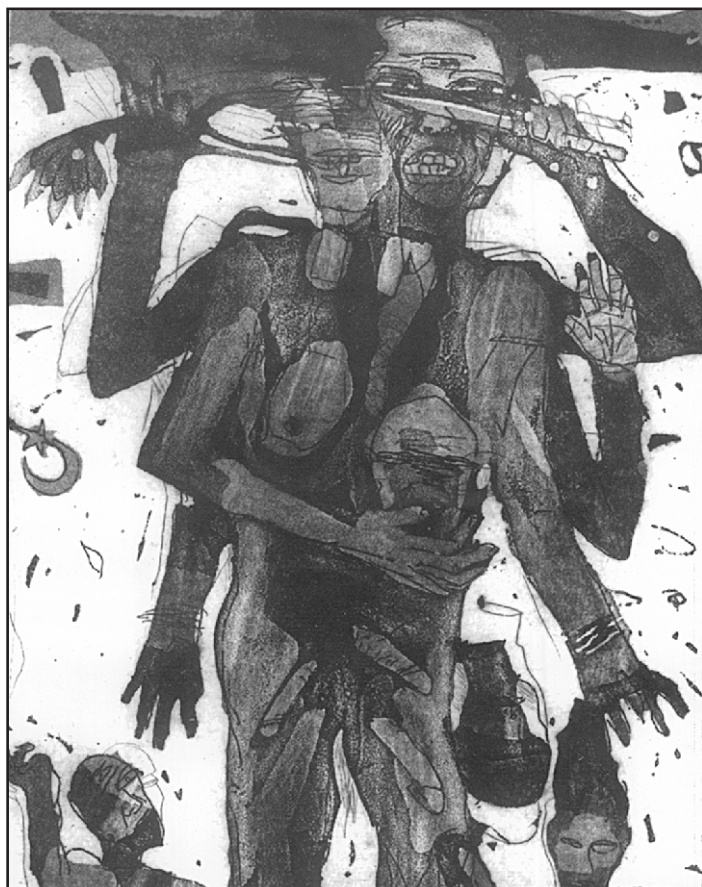
Exhibition

Satirizing society with incisive symbols

Mahbubur Rahman's solo exhibit at the Goethe Institut

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M AHBUBUR Rahman, speaking about one of his works "Conflict", an etching and aquatint, at his recent solo exhibition at the Goethe Institut says, "This is a drawing and a print. Some of works has been taken from 'War my love', an earlier display from 2000 to 2002. I have dealt with social and political crises as well as the unstable economic situation with stress on warfare and religious oppression." The first one has the face of a man but the chest of a woman. It has apparently many hands and legs but these are actually a couple of pairs of limbs -- the hands and legs-- shown in different positions. The figure wears a necklace of human heads shown in distorted forms. It sits on a cow in which Mahbub brings in the irony of how a religious animal for the Hindus in our neighbouring country is sent here to be slaughtered when it gets old for our Muslim religious festival. There are tiny rockets, tanks, graveyards and flies scattered all over the paper heightening its bizarre atmosphere. There are ugly human heads veering from the back of the central figure. All the images are in shades of gray or black.



The artist says, "The head has 'eyes of wisdom' but these are gradually falling out of the head to the ground below so that man's capacity to think rationally is apparently diminishing with time. Even after two World Wars he gets involved in more wars with one excuse or another, resolving or gaining nothing to celebrate. There are contradictions in ourselves as the figure plays with human heads on one hand and appears innocent otherwise. To lend thought-provoking elements to ourselves the bodies contain elements of both men and women. To satirize the existence of war around us on the globe I have given child-like hands to the airplanes. Elements of war have been combined with that of normal nature such as that of the flies. The figures often wear boots to ridicule the military junta. As for the cow at the bottom it brings in religious irony and satire once more."

In etching, aquatint, open bite, "Self-slaughter-1" has three pairs of hands which once again denote a pair of limbs in action. One bears a knife which is about to slice off the neck. Below are figures gazing at him/her. The heads of slaughtered people are carried in the hands in the manner such as we see in the statues of Hindu goddess Kali or Durga. There is the crescent and star of the Muslim world at one end at the top." This is taken from a series which I had done last year. This depicts the fact that people are destroying their own society around them. There is rape, high-jacking, murder around us as we see everyday in the news media. Thus we are destroying our fellow beings ourselves. The total arrangement of the figures with people looking on represent our present chaotic society. The star and crescent moon stand for our religion while the drooping lotus is our national symbol," Mahbub says.

ing and kissing by which I have suggested that instead of going to war with one another why not live in peace and harmony when you can progress and live in contentment? I brought in nude figures to depict the ugliness and harshness of war. The kiss stands for historical peace efforts when princesses and princes married for political reasons."

In "War, my love-2" we see the same theme with charcoal and tea on paper. One figure wears a "burqa" while the other is prepared for biological warfare with gas masks. While the "burqa" is there to protect the woman from outside aggression so the war gear is to guard the male figure against attacks of chemical weapon. The female form not only sports a heavy veil but also gloves on her hands. The simplified floating heads are there to enhance the atmosphere of confusion and chaos.

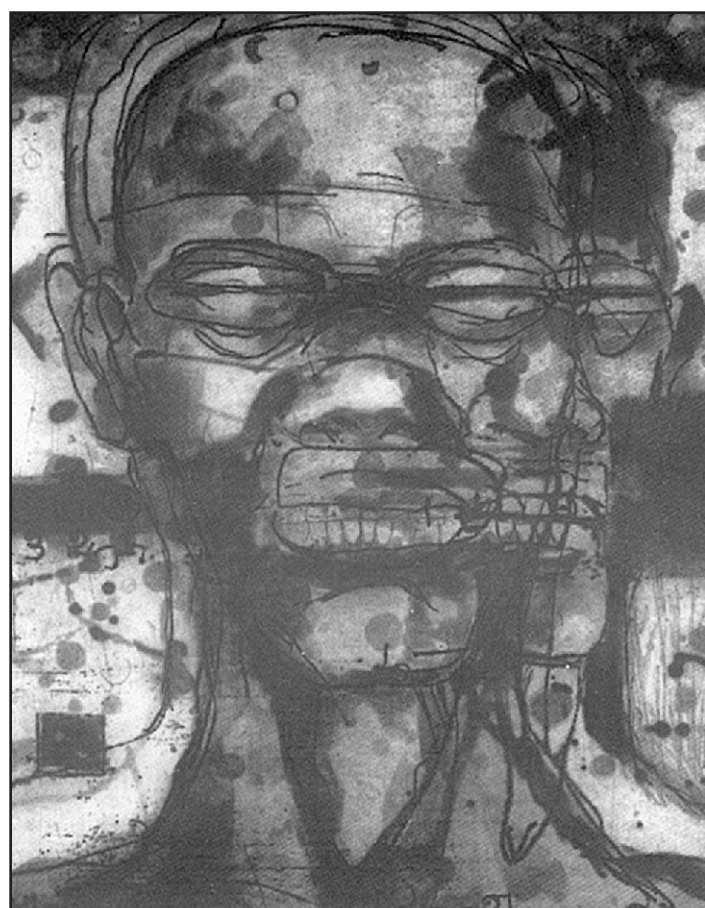
"Self-slaughter-2" dry print, presents a figure that is like some hermaphrodite. The heads appear like two in number while the hands are numerous to denote action." They are not numerous heads or limbs but the normal ones seen at different times," Mabub says. "The blue that I have included in it brings the colour of the coolness of the night to provide some contrast. As society is hell bent in destroying itself, so I have given the work that particular title."

The etching and aquatint "Madonna" brings in a woman with feathers and a tail of a hen and around her are scampering chicken with human heads. The mother hen carries the head of a man on her shoulders. Mahbub says that this work is based on the fact that his younger sister becomes a widow at a young age and has to look after her child, so fending against the world on her own. This, Mahbub says, is the case of many luckless women in our country where the little child asks the mother the poignant question, "When will my father return and where is he?". This work does not have the purposeful harshness of the other works although this too is surrealistic.

Another gentle theme is found in "Me and she" and aquatint in which a couple are simplified and at the same time some of the elements of their features are elaborated. She wears a necklace, has a "teep" on her forehead and she is weeping. This relates to the time when the artist was away at a Delhi art camp and his wife, Lipi, longed for him. The texture work included in the composition are experimentation on that print.

Asked about the purpose behind his work which is not particularly aimed at sale, Mahbub says, "We are moving through various problems so that within us we have an internal pain. A man who has the ability he buys such items and decorates him to escape from the pain of existence. My work is to express the harshness of life such as a man abusing another or hitting someone. I get relief by expressing the problems that we face everyday. I do not want to capture the natural beauties around us and so forget our conflicts. The people who would normally buy my paintings are people who are creating the mayhem and confusion around us. They would not want their life to be reflected around them. I survive by saving the prize money such as the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Award 1998, the Grand Award of the 9th Asian Biennale 1999, Honourable Mention in the First Art Biennale of Bangladesh Charu Shilpi Sangshad in 2000, Honourable Mention in the 5th and 7th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh and also the award from Patua Quamrul Hassan Oitijah Prasad as the "Best Student of the Year" in 1991. There was also the Unesco-Auschberg bursaries for artists in 1993 and the money from the Irish Museum of Modern Art."

Mahbub has had six solo exhibitions at Indonesia and Bangladesh. He has taken part in many workshops as in Nepal, Japan, India, Ireland, Germany, Indonesia etc. His collections are there in Japan, Katmandu, Germany and the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.



heatre Festival of Natya Kendra or 12th year of the organisation

Table listing theatre festival events from October 11 to 17, 2002, including dates, titles, and venues.

TV GUIDE

Table listing TV programs on BTV, STAR PLUS, and CHANNEL-i, including times and titles.

Table listing TV programs on STAR PLUS, including times and titles.

Table listing TV programs on NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, including times and titles.

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