

# A Niche for Upcoming Talents



*The Young Artists' Exhibition biannually organised by the Shilpakala Academy has a history of bringing new talents into the limelight. In context of the present ongoing 15th show, Mustafa Zaman of Star Weekend Magazine (SWM) meets Subir Choudhury, the Director of the Department of Fine Arts of the Academy.*

**SWM:** *A lot has been invested -- both in terms of money and energy -- to make this show a success, but the impact of this year's exhibition seems a bit low, why?*

**Subir Choudhury (SC):** I think we made quite an impact on the media. The news items following the inaugural day testify to that. Most of the dailies ran it; *Ittefaq* and *Janakantha* gave it prominence. As a whole, I think culture now gets less attention from the media. Matters of political importance get the upper hand. The presence of the information minister helped get the exposure we received.

**SWM:** *What about those enthusiastic pieces that come out in weekend supplements of newspapers that usually help generate interest in art lovers?*

**SC:** We have not had the luck of seeing many reviews of that kind. Many articles are yet to be published. The problem is that there are not enough writers and the newspapers often ask us to provide them with a piece, which is not our job.

**SWM:** *The impact on the participating artists -- the young and striving ones -- too seems to be on the wane.*

**SC:** I agree on this point. You see, there has been a shift in attitude of the young people who are enrolling into the art institutes nowadays. The method of teaching has gone through a change. Less and less

students are opting for art as a serious pursuit. Most are getting involved in works related to animation as early as possible. The very culture of producing images and aiming for a life as a freelance artist is disappearing. Yet, the works we have received have boosted our morale. When we received the photographs of work for screening, we were a bit disappointed, but the real works made us feel relieved, as after all the hard work we never want to put together a shoddy show.

**SWM:** *The selection of prizes used to spark a lot of controversy...*

**SC:** One consoling factor is that, along with the ebb in the excitement around the young artists' exhibition, the hassles of having to deal with enraged and irked artists whose works were disqualified or didn't get the award have also disappeared.

**SWM:** *Are you happy with this year's winners?*

**SC:** It is difficult to choose a few paintings as the best ones among a lot of others, and it is even more difficult to agree on one particular painting as the best one. One interesting factor was that, this year's jury consisted of a contingent where Monir's presence, with all his international experience, made a difference. Having Monir in the jury certainly makes us proud, and it is also a matter of great honour for the artists who received the awards.