

CULTURAL FEAST

Exhibition

Arts and crafts from Switzerland

Organiser: Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh
Venue: Bangladesh National Museum, Shahbagh
Time: July 30-August 10, from 10 am to 5 pm

5th Solo Painting Exhibition
Artist: Iflara Ara Dewan
Venue: Shilpangan, Road 5, House 25, Dhamondi
Time: July 23-August 1, From 10 am to 1 pm and 5 pm to 9 pm

Abhijit 6th Solo Exhibition
Venue: Alliance Francaise, 26, Mirpur Road, Dhamondi
Time: July 30-August 15, From 9 am-4 pm, 5 pm-8 pm

Books and Albums
Exhibition
Title: Day of National Flag of the Russian Federation
Venue: Library of the Russian Cultural Centre
Time: August 01-22

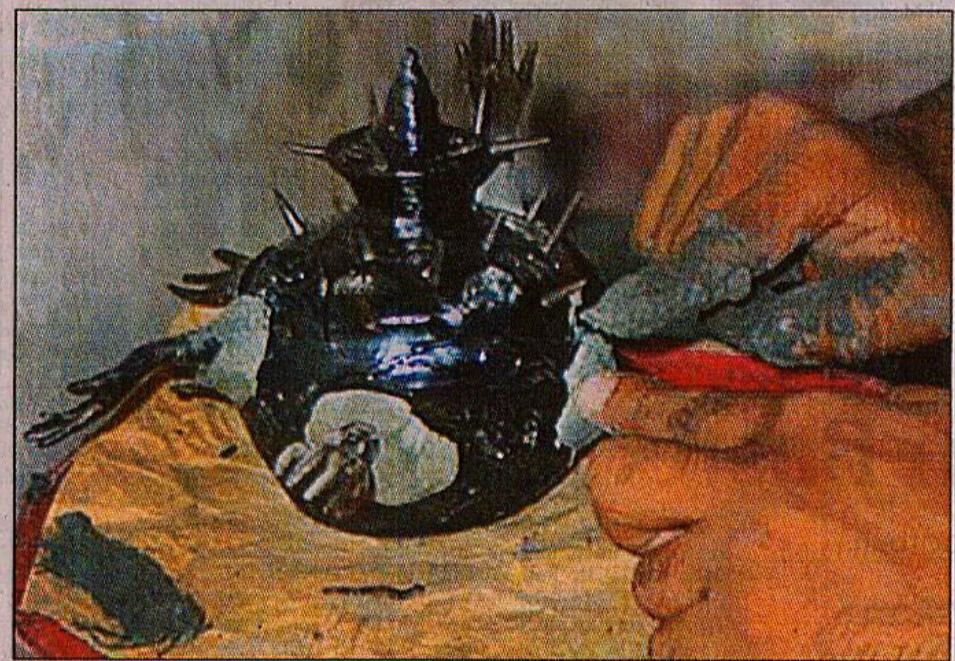
Solo Exhibition
Artist: Babul Ahmed
Venue: Exhibition Hall of the Russian Cultural Centre
Time: August 02-08

Commemorating Lectures on Hiralal Sen
Participants: Mustafa Monwar
Organiser: Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies
Venue: Biswa Shahitya Kendra auditorium, 14, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue
Time: July 31, at 6:00 pm

Musical Soiree
Title: Achin Pakhi
Performer: Farida Parvin
Organiser: Orchestra
Venue: All Community Club, Gulshan 2, Dhaka
Time: July 30, at 6:00 pm

Bristi Nisha Bhaba
Shondhyabala
Organiser: Nandan, a cultural group
Venue: Bangladesh YWCA Bhaban, 3/23, Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur
Time: July 30, at 6:00 pm

Dokra: Revival of a lost wax metal craft



A craftsperson gives a final touch to a Dokra piece

AFSAR AHMED

NOMADIC tribes who roam the earth restlessly—what permanence do they leave us with, as a mark of their passage? The Dokra or Dhokra group of tribal craftsmen who range through the landscapes of West Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh give us a timeless heritage of beautifully shaped and ornamented products of cast metals.

And that is what we called Dokra today.

What makes Dokra unique is that no two pieces are alike. Deftly created by hand, the objects have an individualistic touch. Primarily made from brass scrap, the objects also have a core of clay preserved within the metal casting, unlike other metal work.

In Dokra life revolves around creating beautiful shapes out of alloys. The shapes range from the charmingly traditional to the elegantly modern. Usually made of brass, the objects have patterns that are geometric, with straight lines and curves forming simple and striking presentations such as through various kinds of images and figures of gods and goddesses, like Lakshmi, Lakshmi-Narayan, Siva-Parvati flanked by Ganesh and Kartik, and birds and animals like elephants, horses, owls and peacocks. Originally, these craftspeople were nomads, and the intrinsic beauty of Dokra also match the nomadic biography.

Britta Arts Trust— an artist-led organisation recently organised a workshop on heritage craft to promote its making process amongst the younger artists of the country. And for that they have brought a Dokra artisan Ramu Karmakar from Darlipur in Burdwan district. A total of 21 participants took part in the workshop. A similar workshop was organised in Chittagong as well.

Dokra reached its pinnacle of glory in the mid-

nineteenth century due to royal patronage. Starting from temple carving to religious idols to exquisite animal figures, the art form became very popular, recalls Ramu. The industry ebbed at the outset of the Second World War. After the war there arose a tremendous scarcity of raw materials as well as the patrons of this form of art. This led to the virtual extinction of the art, he added.

The making of Dokra is very interesting. Dokra system of metal casting is said to be oldest form of metal casting and is technically known as 'cire per due' or lost wax process. The making is a very long process. After going through 8 to 9 steps the Dokra reveals with its own intrinsic character, says Ramu. Brass, wax, mustard oil, resin or dhuna or dhoop, clay and small furnace are needed to create Dokra.

The next stage is to make an oven out of clay and put the baked, the clay hardens, the wax melts and flows out of a hole conveniently placed in the bottom, the metal also melts and flows from the top to fill the empty space left by the wax. The casting is complete. The whole process is done under 1400-1500 degree centigrade and takes 6 to 7 days for cooling down properly. After the whole thing has cooled, the clay covering is broken open and the rough edges of the object are filed down.

It is unbrokeable and may be polished with tamarind, coir fibre or a soft cotton cloth dipped in Brasso,' said Ramu.

During the workshop Ramu was quite tense as it was difficult to dry the products because of rain. Bangladeshi artists are really talented and they can pick up the craft very easily, said Ramu.

In the past, before making bronze idols, the craftsman had to carefully study the verses from the *Shilpashashtra*. The verses were called *diyana* and instructed the craftsman on the physical measurements, proportions, description of the deity, characteristics, symbolism and above all, aesthetics. But those days are gone. Now these craftspeople are struggling to survive. That's why we hear a melancholy appeal from Ramu, 'This craft is now almost extinct as the artisans are not getting any patronage from the government.

The process of making a Dokra art from



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Shah to release English version of *Devdaas*

Producer and film financier Bharat Shah is planning to release the English version of *Devdaas*.

There is a strong buzz that Shah Rukh Khan, Aishwarya Rai and Madhuri Dixit starrer *Devdas* might be released at Indian metros in the dubbed English version.

Bharat Shah claims that he has already made two English versions of the film—2 hours and 3 hours' duration—and in the coming days he plans to release the English version.

Shah says the idea to release the English version is to target the film at the multiplexes in Mumbai and other metros.

Although he once played the reluctant 'Hero' in a movie of the same name, Dustin Hoffman wasted no time rushing to the aid of an allergic bee sting victim.

The Oscar-winning actor's real-life heroics occurred two weeks ago when a woman walking on the beach with friends was stung by a bee near Hoffman's home in Malibu.

Lydia Graham began having an allergic reaction and a friend rushed to get help from the beach patrol and people nearby. 'I could feel my eyes starting to sting and swell and my lips starting to swell up as well,' Graham said Tuesday on CBS' *The Early Show*.

Hoffman and his wife, Lisa, were on deck chairs outside their home when they heard what happened.

Hoffman's wife, who is also allergic to bee stings, retrieved an emergency injection kit from their home and the two rushed to the wavy Graham's aid.

After she began to recover, they invited her to their deck to rest.

Graham, 36, said that as her throat was closing up, she recognized a familiar face or the sand with her.

'I did recognize that it was Dustin Hoffman but I was sure that... I could possibly die,' Graham said.

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