

Ronni retorts, "The idea of 'self' is absent in our time, identity itself is determined in context of a changing reality as there is nothing constant in the world." Ronni ventures more into his philosophical terrain and explains how the trends in art relate to the patterns of civilisations which are always virtual in nature.

MEANWHILE, in the glass-walled left corner of the ground floor, a virtual play on rain is in progress. Eminent artists Mohammad Eunus is melding his brush on an almost finished painting. Ronni is working on canvas right next to him, but Eunus is working on the prescribed corrugated board. In fact he is the only artist who should feel most at home working on corrugated board. He is used to it, as he has been working on similar surface for the last ten or so years.

"Corrugated board itself is a painting. Once the board is peeled, the layers are a visual feast to the eye. Often there are signs and letterings on the board that can be used as elements," Eunus exclaims.

He puts several CDs on the middle in a row in his longish work laid out on the floor. "They are to affirm my connection with modern technology," the artist comments. The work, according to Eunus, is a symphony of rain.

Right beside him, another visual symphony is in the making. It is a unique experience to witness so many artists working so close to each other on multiple works.

Nilufer Chaman, who boldly declares to her neighbour that she has reached 42, certainly looks younger in person. She is busy working on a Durga's hand spinning the chakra while talking to the 50-plus artist Yunus. Although Chaman is adamant about not conceding her artistic principles and start doing the informal abstraction that some have taken up, the two agree on one point:

that the workshop provides a space where artists can interact as co-workers.

"This is the first time I am getting to know you by talking to you in an informal manner. I have known you through your art, but now this workshop has created an opportunity to interact on a personal level," Chaman lets her neighbour know.

However, she is unflinching in retaining her own signature image. "I don't belong to the mode that sir (Monir) practices, so I thought I would learn his techniques and wait to use them at an opportune moment," she declares.

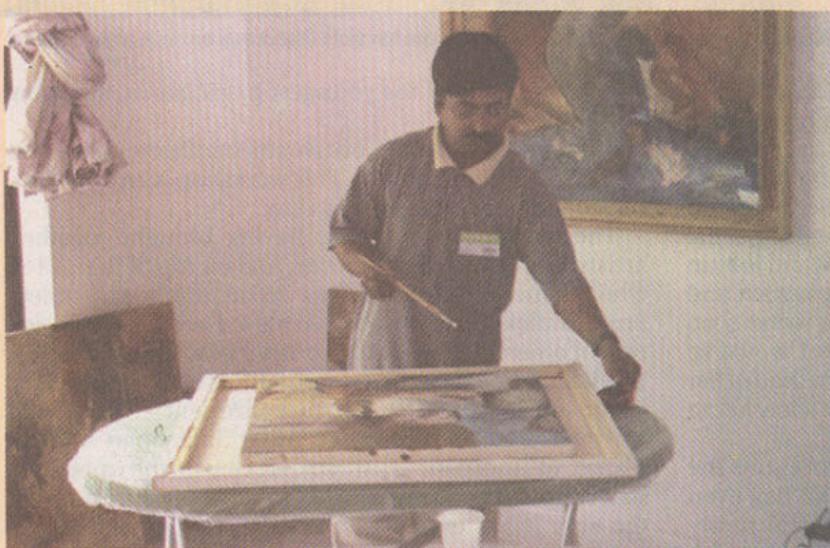
Her other neighbour, Tarun Ghosh, is intent on using the recently acquired knowledge with zeal. He applies the black colour made out of the rice dust in all three of his works. Ronni and Eunus both try out its application with excellent results. As far as collage is concerned, however, Ghosh, has his usual kind of material, which is the golden and silvery papers taken out from cigarette packets.

"I have the habit of collecting them, they add to my imagery," Ghosh says.

"As Monir sir has demonstrated, the corrugated board holds immense possibilities, all I am trying to do is combine this with my own images," he adds, insisting, nevertheless, that his subject-matter essentially remains the same, only the technique has seen a newer direction.

Here, in the middle of all such artistic drama, most participants value one thing -- sharing of the experience and ideals. As Ghosh puts it, "It is an opportunity to observe the relationship each artist has with his or her work."

Artists at work, applying their own crafts with their idiosyncratic styles, the transforming of canvases or paper after going through phases after which little remain in the final products, all this is revealed to the layman's eyes in a workshop. For any visitor intent on coming to an understanding of the creative process, a workshop of this nature opens up hitherto unknown doors.



Shiddharta Talukder at work: Nature is the springboard for his abstract works.

THREE young women artists have placed themselves in the small space at the end of the stairway. Meanwhile Zahed *bhai*, our photographer, has acquired a better digital device from Monir himself. In fact, he has been trusted to record the day's events for the maestro. As we walk up to the second floor, the glass-walled corner allows for a view of the roof, where we spot Dilara Begum Jolly and Tayyaba Begum Lipi, two well-known artists. We walk up to them and interpolate their bi-lateral