

Sightseeing

through the Eyes of an Artist

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It is landscape that inspired Mohammad Fokhrul Islam at the onset of his career to take up painting and it is landscape that still makes his work worth a glimpse. Not that he is bad at handling other forms of expression. A ceramic artist-turned-painter, he simply has this knack for creating atmospheric images; and a landscape-like setting seems to provide him with the appropriate vehicle.

Fokhrul is a prolific abstractionist. Twelve solo latter, it is the horizontally put imagery, which lies somewhere on the boarder between abstract expressionism and imaginary wilderness, that still buzz. The rest can also be enjoyed in various terms. However, the most engaging as well as memorable visual experience is made possible through the ones that fit in the category of landscape.

Fokhrul's landscapes are images that have fare portion of fantasy tied up with the empirical sources, from which they spring. Seen through the prism of his imagination, they are more a result of solitary musing. The sense of being lost in space is one strong emotion that one feels through his dot-filled pictures. As usual, his recent picture plains are also subjected to the extrusions that leave them with dots and lines, mostly dots. But, the recent yields are more about composition than about revealing the emotional engagement during creation by leaving the clear signs of struggle in what becomes the finished paintings -- the end results. Therefore, this batch of oil-on-paper works veer to a kind of subtleness that render them 'less biting'.

The "extreme sophistication" that Patrizia Guiotto, the Italian architect, talks about in the preface of the catalog, is one thing that tones Fokhrul's otherwise impassionedly drawn images. With most of his recent works, the "highbrow taste" seems to want to overwhelm the passion-fuelled Bangali who used to thrive on the roughness of the land and the spontaneity that ruled his process of creation in the early works. After gazing at the relay of images in the recent show, one feels that the artist has distanced himself from his immediate reality. Now the artist at his 40 has his eyes set on good taste rather than expanding the horizon. It is obvious in the inclination to set things in the bound of geometric design.

Fokhrul first burst into the art scene with his unique creation using printing

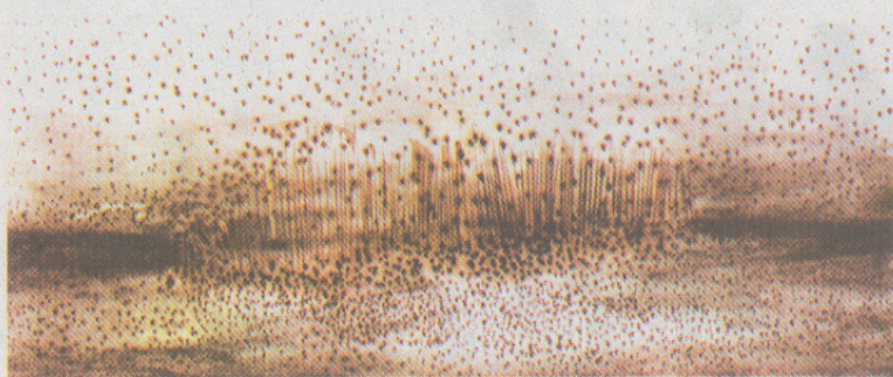


Image-4, oil on paper.



Image-8, oil on paper.

ink on paper in the mid nineties, and it is time that he re-evaluate his continuous success in producing visually interesting pictures. Art is not only about the method and the ability to strike a compositional balance, but also about breaking newer grounds. This he might know well, as he himself had done the same few times before, first with ceramic and later with painting.

The show is on at La-Galerie, Alliance Francaise, Dhaka, from January 2 to January 12 of 2005.