

Chobi Mela 1V begins from November 9

Exhibition, workshops and discussion sessions on the cards



Photographs by Mahabub Alam Khan of Bangladesh (top) and Sucheta Das of India

CHOBi Mela is the name of a festival, which is fast becoming a culture in Bangladesh. This event, one of the largest of its kind in Asia, brings photographers and their works to the forefront. The three-week long Chobi Mela IV is scheduled to take place from November 9 to November 30, 2006. The festival with more than thousand images has 'Boundaries' as its theme.

Festival Director Shahidul Alam expressed his views on this year's theme 'Boundaries':

"Photography creates its own compartments. The photojournalist, the fine artist, the well paid celebrity, the bohemian dreamer, No photoshop, yes photoshop, Canorites, Nikonites, Leicaophytes, digital, analogue."

"The haves, the have nots. Heterosexuals, metrosexuals, transsexuals, homosexuals. The straight, the kinky, WTO, subsidies, sperm banks, kings, tyrants, presidents, prime ministers, revolutionaries, terrorists, anarchists, activists, pacifists, the weak, the meek, the strong, the bully. The good, the

evil. The hawks, the doves. The crusaders, the Jihadis."

"Boundaries -- seen and unseen -- define our modes of conduct, our freedoms and our values."

Chobi Mela, South Asia's first major photography festival, is one of the many initiatives of Drik, which operates from Dhaka. Drik began operations in 1989 in a small house in Dharmundi, Dhaka. Mark Sealby, Director of Autograph -- the Association of Black Photographers, London -- remembers hearing about Drik's ambitious aim to be a 'fully self-funding picture library that would act as a hub for images produced by Bangladeshi and other South Asian photographers'.

Since 2000, every two years the Drik Picture Library and its partners in Bangladesh and other countries organise the Chobi Mela International Photography Festival. Over the years this festival has gained immense popularity and acceptance. Therefore, incredible though it may seem, 20 countries are participating in this event this year - a fact that bears testimony to its growing recognition. At the same

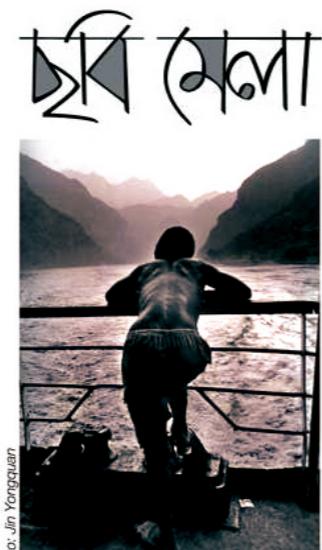


Photo: Jin Yongjian

BOUNDARIES

time it's not very surprising to learn that the highest number of entries came from Bangladesh itself.

In December 2000 Chobi Mela

was first launched by Drik as South Asia's first festival of photography, which incorporated 18 exhibitions, including 'The War We Forgot', a photographic study of the 1971 'War of Liberation' by 30 international photographers, including Don McCullin, Marc Riboud, Mary Ellen Mark, Raghu Rai, Abbas, Rashid Talukder and Kishore Parekh. 'The War We Forgot' exhibition met with a heavy-handed 'request' for certain images to be removed. But Chobi Mela did not compromise; the whole exhibition was moved from the gallery and exhibited at Drik's own gallery.

The second Chobi Mela held in November-December 2002 was themed as 'exclusion'. Shahidul Alam wrote: "There are others who have stretched the medium to its limits. From the concerned photo-journalists who have stood up for the oppressed, to the conceptual artists who have taken on social issues as their motif, there have been photographers who have aligned themselves with the excluded, voicing their concerns, and fighting for their rights. This is especially so in the majority world, where photography neither has the

glamour, nor the economic returns often associated with the profession in the West. The media however, has become a tool of the powerful. Media distortion and suppression, combined with the acquiescence of those who stand to gain, ensures that propaganda is packaged as news, silence is bought and consent engineered. Each pen that fails to write, each shutter that fails to open, each voice that refuses to shout in protest, when governmental and corporate power flexes its muscles bears the guilt of compliance. This festival, in giving space to the excluded, pays homage to the few who have continued to say no."

The theme of the third edition of the Chobi Mela, held in December 2004, was 'Resistance'. Regarding the theme, Shahidul Alam wrote: "To resist, to challenge, to question, to go against the grain, to deliberately choose the untrdden path is a conscious decision. It is a risky route fraught with danger, but a route we must follow, if change is to come."

No doubt Chobi Mela IV will be very interesting and different from the previous ones (as they always are). Chobi Mela IV received more than 300 digital and analogue entries, out of which 44 entries will be exhibited at the British Council, National Museum, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Bengal Gallery, Alliance Francaise, Goethe Institut, Russian Cultural Centre and Drik. Apart from this, there will be an open-air and moving exhibition on 18 rickshaw vans. In addition to this, seven workshops and discussion sessions will be held at the Goethe Institut, Dhaka.

Since the stage is now set, all we have to do is be patient and await the festival to begin.

The Daily Star is the media partner of Chobi Mela 1V.

Source: Drik Media Cell



Child artistes display creativity

Grand finale of L'il Champs held

KAVITA CHARANJI

Diwakar Sharma, 13, is truly differently abled. Despite being visually impaired he continues to hold audiences in thrall with his wonderful melodies. This correspondent had the chance to interact with him five years ago when he was a student of

the Delhi-based National Association for the Blind (NAB). Interspersed with English lessons, games and Braille lessons, the children avidly sang a mix of English and Hindi songs. Even then his talent was visible, particularly his rendering of the patriotic *Ai mere watan ke logon*. Now he is a student

adjudged the first runner up in Zee TV's grand finale of *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa's L'il Champs* programme. The No 2 spot went to Sameer Mohammad from Mumbai while the elated if disbelieving --Sanchita Bhattacharya from Kolkata walked away with the first prize. As the winners went away with the prizes, it was an exciting moment for the participants, audience and parents alike.

The judges of the contest were singers Abhijeet Bhattacharya, Bappi Lahiri and Alka Yagnik. It was a tough task for them to zero in to the winners as the competition was close and talents were aplenty. The popular anchor of the show was Shahnaz.

Stars such as Shah Rukh Khan, Anupam Kher, Chunky Pandey and Puja Bhattacharya graced the occasion. The biggest applause was of course reserved for Shah Rukh, who pointed out that the programme was "a great opportunity to see and listen to the children. I am here in my capacity as 'Don's uncle'." Shah Rukh announced the winners amidst much fanfare.

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Diwakar, the first runner up

of a mainstream school in Delhi.

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adjudged the first runner up in Zee TV's grand finale of *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa's L'il Champs* programme. The No 2 spot went to Sameer Mohammad from Mumbai while the elated if disbelieving --Sanchita Bhattacharya from Kolkata walked away with the first prize. As the winners went away with the prizes, it was an exciting moment for the participants, audience and parents alike.

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