

Exception to the rule

Group show at Art & Soul Gallery

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

SIX young artists, Uttam Kumar Roy, Mohammad Wahiduzzaman, Nusrat Jahan Nazlee, Syed Mohammad Shamim, Shyamal Roy Chowdhury and Arif Al Karim Bhuiyan, going by the name "Exception", recently launched their fourth group show. Inaugurating the exhibition on April 20 at the Art & Soul Gallery, Professor Abdus Shakoor Shah praised the group's individual styles and lauded their achievement of four exhibitions in the span of one calendar year.

"Exception" was formed back in 1999 when the artists attended a six month long workshop at Gallery Tone, run by Khaled Mahmud Mithu and Kanak Champa. "We were drawn to each other and felt very much like a team," says Mohammad Wahiduzzaman, the most vocal group member. There is a feeling of mutual confidence and a shared commitment to promote art; the name was adopted jointly.

Uttam Kumar Roy, another member of the group, started painting in 1996 and had his first exhibition three years later. He has a preference for oils, as this medium enables him to work at his own leisurely pace. Uttam's paintings are dominated by spiders and webs in geometric patterns, which are symbolic of mankind's repression by society. Having a botany background, he has also done a series on the ozone layer.

Painting came naturally to Wahiduzzaman, whose talent was encouraged in childhood, leading up to his first exhibition at Gallery Tone. He is usually inspired by a key word, resulting in a particular series of acrylic on paper. For the current show, the artist has used 'family' (shongshar) as his central dogma, representing trust, understanding and inner crises of individuals coming together, using mathematical symbols to "put life in a frame".

Nusrat Jahan Nazlee is self-taught and had her first solo exhibition at Gallery Tone in 1995. Initially working in oil, Nazlee's medium of choice is now acrylic. Flowers in various forms



Friendly (L) by Nusrat Jahan Nazlee and a painting by Shyamal Roy Chowdhury

and colours lie at the heart of her work. "Life is complicated enough and my flowers represent a simplistic view; they match my lifestyle. Of course, there will always be problems." To Nusrat, recognition in one's own country comes high on the wish list. She feels that talented Bangladeshi artists are much more appreciated abroad than at home.

Like some of his fellow group members, Syed Mohammad Shamim also studied art at the Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts, starting in 1992. He held his first solo exhibition in 2005. He is partial to the flexibility of mixed media, the various textures appealing to his style. Shamim concentrates on the bucolic themes of nature, village life, boats and rivers in his pieces entitled "In Search of Peace" (Shantir Khojey). Shamim is not bound by the norms

of colour; he likes to experiment with colour and works from memory using the fronds of a coconut branch, instead of a brush.

Shyamal Roy Chowdhury is currently a student at Rabindra Bharati University in Kolkata. Shyamal has previously painted a dolls series and does more abstract work now. Arif Al Karim Bhuiyan's landscapes were also part of the exhibition.

"Exception" has come a long way since their first show at the Zainul Gallery almost exactly a year ago, a second hot on its heels in Chittagong. The third exhibition took place at the Academy of Fine Art, Kolkata, earlier this year. The artists waxed lyrical about their Kolkata effort and the fantastic response from viewers, critics and artists alike. Notable persons from the cultural arena, artists

Shuba Prasanna and Ramlal Dhar, author Taslima Nasreen and poet Belal Chowdhury were among those who attended. The group feels that there should be more such cross-border interaction.

Wahiduzzaman feels the exchange of views between group members with very different rationales brings them closer, making a positive contribution to their innate styles. This association is particularly appreciated when a member has a solo exhibition; they can always rely on someone for help with catalogues, galleries, publicity. "Exception" intends to donate proceeds from future exhibitions to relief work in cases of natural disasters.

The exhibition is on till March 29.

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In Meghey Dhaka Tara the protagonist Nita is the bread-earer in a refugee family of five. Everyone exploits her and the strain proves too much. She succumbs to tuberculosis. The film reaches its highpoint as the dying Nita cries out "I want to live..."; the camera pans across the mountains accentuating the indifference and eternity of nature even as the echo reverberates over the shot. Ghatak followed it up with Komal Gandhar concerning two rival touring theatre companies in Bengal and Subarnarekha, a unusual film using melodrama and coincidence as a form rather than mechanical reality.

Ghatak also had a brief stint as vice principal of the Film And Television Institute of India (Pune), a time he recalled as a "happy experience". However his next film Titash Ekti Nadir Naam (1973) was on the life and eventual disintegration of a fishing community living by the river Titash. The film was completed after many problems at the shooting stage including his collapse due to tuberculosis and was a commercial failure.

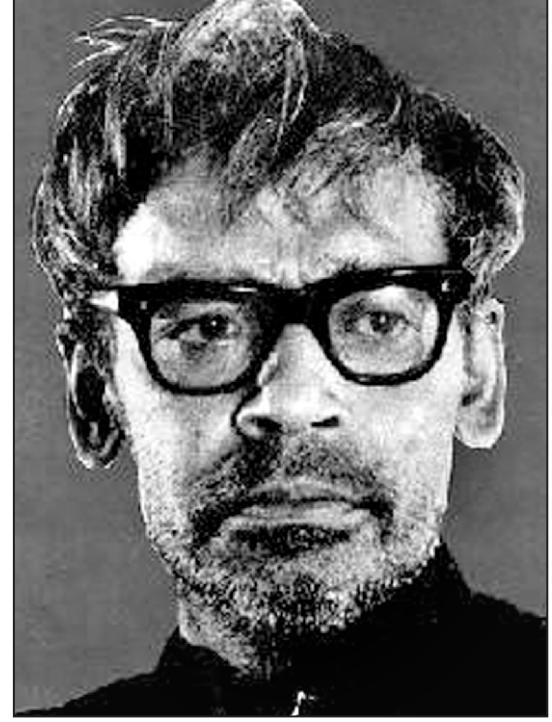
Ghatak made one more film before his death Jukti Takko Aar Gappo (1974) the most autobiographical and allegorical of his films. He himself played the main role of Nilkantha -- an alcoholic intellectual -- and the film is remembered for his stunning use of the wide-angle lens to most potent effect.

Incredibly, in a memorial lecture on Ghatak, given after his death, Satyajit Ray had this to say: "As a filmmaker and artist Ritwik was a Bengali to the core, much more of a Bengali than myself. For me that is the last word about him, and that is his most valuable and distinctive characteristic."

Compiled by Cultural Correspondent

ALL TIME GREATS

Ritwik Ghatak: Unmistakable Bengali brilliance



It was only after his death at age fifty in 1976 that Ritwik Kumar Ghatak has come to be regarded as one of the greatest figures in Indian cinema. His brilliant and abrasive films are among the most revolutionary achievements in contemporary Indian art. Ghatak was truly an original filmmaker with no cinematic predecessors. The product of an early involvement in politics and people's theatre, Ghatak, as a filmmaker, was bent on wedging his political activism with cultural content as he fashioned popular forms -- melodrama, songs, dances -- into appropriate vehicles for radical political expression.

Ghatak was born on November 4, 1925, in Zindabazar, Dhaka. By and large his films revolve around the experience of being uprooted from the idyllic rural milieu of East Bengal and the cultural trauma of Partition (1947). His films are heavily influenced by his personal experiences of Partition.

Ghatak came of age during the convulsions of the 1940s -- World War II, the terrible "man-made famine" (1944), the communal violence that followed Independence (1947), and especially the partition of Bengal, which obsessed him all his life. His subjects are almost invariably chosen from among the uprooted and the dispossessed: parentless children, homeless families, disoriented refugees, and the petit bourgeoisie, economically broken by their exile. Yet, there is a glimmer of hope in even the darkest moments.

An artist across many mediums, Ghatak wrote, performed in, directed and produced numerous plays on the stage and on the streets for the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). He later formed his own theatre group, Group Theatre, following differences with IPTA.

It was the massive size of the film-going audience, rather than a love for the cinema, that Ghatak claims made him interested in cinema. Ghatak's work in the cinema itself never settled into any certain genre. "My first film was called a picaresque episodic film along the lines of the eighteenth century Spanish novel *Gi Blas De Santillane*; the second was called a film of documentary approach; the next was a melodrama, and the fourth, nothing at all, just no film," he once said.

Ghatak's first film *Nagarik* was about a young man's

search for a job and the erosion of his optimism and idealism as his family sinks into abject poverty and his love affair too turns sour. The film was completed in 1953 but in fact released posthumously in 1977. Satyajit Ray once said, "Had *Nagarik* been released before his *Pathey Panchali* (released in 1955), *Nagarik* would have been

accepted as the first alternative Bangla film."

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Sohana Saba: Actress on the rise

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

When Sohana Saba made her entry in the cultural arena as a dancer, she hardly knew that there was more in store for her. After receiving the Meril Prothom Alo Award '06 recently, a teary eyed Saba told the packed audience, "Although I had practised a 'thank you' speech in front of the mirror ever since I started dreaming of becoming a star, right now I'm speechless." She won the award for her role in the movie *Aaina*.

Initially Saba took to modelling and within a short time she entered filmdom. Actor-director Kabir Kabori was on the look out for a new face for her movie *Aaina*. Saba seemed to fit the role perfectly. The young actress proved her skills through her work. Very soon she was selected for her second movie by Moshedul Islam. The film *Khelaghar* was much appreciated by film enthusiasts and Saba received warm response for her portrayal in the lead role. In an exclusive interview with *The Daily Star* (TDS) the talented actress talks about her flourishing movie career:

TDS: What was your reaction after winning the Meril-Prothom Alo award?



Saba: I consider myself extremely lucky to receive such a positive response from the moviegoers. Meril Prothom Alo Award is a recognition of my work and the feeling is simply out of the world. At the same time, it calls for added responsibilities. I have to be selective when choosing roles.

TDS: How did your career in the media start?

Saba: Initially I used to perform as a dancer. That made way for me to do a few TV commercials and eventually I started acting in TV plays. The offer to do movies came as a surprise to me.

TDS: Do you have plans to be regular in movies?

Saba: I am not quite sure. I do wish to continue working in quality movies where I can get opportunities to make a mark. I want to nurture the image that movies like *Aaina* and *Khelaghar* have created for me.

TDS: What about acting in TV plays? Will you continue it at the same time?

Saba: Of course. One memorable movie role can make you immortal. But you can always be in touch with the contemporary audience through TV plays. Which is why I'm interested to work in both media.

TDS: You've gotten married recently?

Saba: I've gotten married to director-playwright Murad Parvez.

TDS: It's often said that the quality of our movies have deteriorated in recent years. Do you agree?

Saba: Good and bad movies were always there. Lately, many

young and talented filmmakers are coming up with interesting projects. But at the same time, I strongly believe that if the audience remain reluctant to watch movies in theatres, the situation won't improve. I believe that only 'wishing' for better movies won't help. Our movie industry has to be encouraged and supported at the same time.

TDS: Tell us about your future plans.

Saba: I want to do something significant. But first I plan to complete my education. I want to do memorable roles for which viewers will remember me for time to come.

Photographer Munem Wasif selected for Joop Swart Masterclass Grant '07



A photograph by Munem Wasif

Wasif has also won two bronze prizes in The 3rd China International Press Photo Contest 2007 and 1st Prize in Contemporary Issues in Polish Press Photo Contest 2007. He is currently working for Drik News, an International

TV GUIDE

PICK OF THE DAY

Channel-i Krishi Padak 2007

On Channel-i at 7:50pm

Honouring Kartik Pramanik

for his contribution to tree plantation



American Idol

On Star World at 8:30pm

Talent Hunt

Host: Ryan Seacrest



04:30	Karam Apnaa Apnaa	11:30	Impact Stories of Survival	12:00	Sunil Gavaskar
05:00	Paraya Dhan	12:30	Yatra-Indian Travels	03:00	Pine Valley Beijing
05:30	V Trailers - Star Plus	01:00	Finest Hotels In The World	04:30	Open
05:55	Bolly V - Star Plus	01:30	Africa Week	05:30	Tna Xpllosion
06:00	Meri Awaz Ko Mil Gayi	02:30	Detective Stories	06:30	Around The World
	Roshni	03:30	With Tippi	07:30	Tna Xpllosion
06:25	Bolly V - Star Plus	04:00	Kahaani Ghar Ghar Kii	08:30	Nokia Football Crazy
06:30	Kasturi	04:30	Shararat	09:30	India's Best With Sunil Gavaskar
07:00		05:00	Bolly V - Star Plus	10:00	Cricket Crazy
07:25		05:30	Baa Bahau Baby	10:30	Tna Xpllosion
07:30		06:00	Karam Apnaa Apnaa	11:30	Ace By Sony
07:30		06:30	Kasautii Zindagi Kay	12:00	Ericsson
07:30		07:00	Meri Awaz Ko Mil Gayi	12:30	Masters Series
07:30		07:30	Roshni	13:00	Monte-Carlo Pres
07:30		08:00	Future Perfect	13:30	Future Weapons
07:30		08:30	Paraya Dhan	14:00	ESPN
11:30		09:00	Karam Apnaa Apnaa	14:30	X-Games 12
12:00					