

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

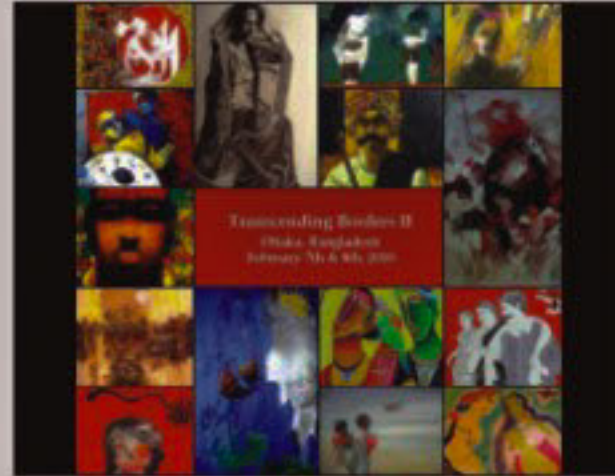
Ekushey Book Fair

Venue: Bangla Academy
Date: February 1-28
Time: 3pm-9pm



Group Art Exhibition

Title: Transcending Borders II
Venue: Radisson Water Garden Hotel, Airport Road, Dhaka
Date: February 7-8
Time: 11am-10pm



Solo Painting Exhibition

Artist: Sk. Mehedi Kamal
Venue: Shilpangan Gallery, H-26, R-3 Dhanmondi
Date: January 29-February 7
Time: 12pm-8pm



Art Exhibition

Artists: Tajuddin Ahmed and Kamal Kabir
Venue: Tivoli Art Gallery, F-33, Second Circle, DCC Market, Gulshan,
Date: February 8-21
Time: 10am-8pm



Boi Mela thoughts

"Boi mela has played a key role in the growth of Bangladeshi publishing industry"

-- Ramendu Majumdar

Pioneering theatre personality and President of ITI Worldwide Ramendu Majumdar believes that Ekushey Book Fair has become an indelible part of the Bangladeshi cultural identity.



"It is undoubtedly one of the biggest cultural events in our country," says the Ekushey Padak (2009) recipient.

"Apart from being a hub for readers, writers and publication houses, the fair gives everyone an opportunity to share and exchange ideas and views," he adds.

"Our publishing industry eagerly awaits this fair. It wouldn't be an overstatement to say that the boi mela has played a key role in the growth of Bangladeshi publishing industry," he says.

Majumdar's troupe, Theatre, has a stall at this year's boi mela. The stall offers, as one would assume, theatre-related publications -- scripts, essays [on theatre], translations [of plays] and more.

The latest issue of Theatre's quarterly publication will also be available at the stall.

Though these are the first few days of the month-long event, Majumdar thinks that the turnout is quite all right.

The waning magic of puppetry

Call to regenerate interest in the art form at Putul Nach Utshab 2010

MAINUL HASSAN

As part of its initiative to promote rural art forms, the Department of Theatre and Film, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) is holding Putul Nach Utshab (Puppet Dance Festival) 2010.

Promod Mankin, State Minister for Cultural Affairs, inaugurated the three-day event on February 4 at Experimental Theatre Hall, BSA.

Ten puppet troupes from across the country are participating at the festival.

"One of the main reasons for holding this event is to promote folk art forms and generate public interest in it," said Sara Ara Mahmud, director, Department of Theatre and Film.

Among others, Dr. Capt. (Rtd) Mozibur Rahman Fakir; State Minister for Health and Family Welfare; Hedayetullah Al-Mamun, secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs and Kamal Lohani, director general, BSA

were present at the inauguration.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Capt. (Rtd) Mozibur Rahman Fakir said, "In this age of the invasion of satellite TV channels we have no alternative but to revive our folk art forms such as putul nach and introduce them to the youngsters."

Kamal Lohani said, "BSA is committed in promoting our culture and folk art forms which we have inherited. We will hold more such festivals in the future."

Promod Mankin said, "Putul nach is an amazing art form. The way a puppet comes alive in the hands of an expert puppeteer is simply magical."

"Putul Nach is part of our folk culture and we must never forget our roots," Promod Mankin pointed out.

On the opening day two puppet troupes Royal Bina Putul Nach and Hridoy Jhumur Jhumur Putul Nach staged their acts.

"There was a time when the village fairs or any celebration was



The decline in popularity is forcing many puppeteers to choose other professions.

PHOTO: MUMIT M.



incomplete without puppet shows. People used to gather in hundreds and enjoy the performances, but those days are long gone," said Abdul Matin, puppet master of Royal Bina Putul Nach (from Brahmanbaria). Abdul Matin has been staging puppet shows for over thirty years.

"These days we may get one or two invitations for performance every two or three months, with traditional fairs almost gone from the rural areas. The general concept of entertainment has changed as well. Now, there's hardly any interest in puppet shows," Abdul Matin added.

The decline in the trade is forcing many puppeteers to choose other professions. Abdul Matin now works as a tailor on the side to make ends meet.

Uzir Ali, proprietor of the Hridoy Jhumur Jhumur Putul Nach (from Dhaka) said, "May be the puppet troupes in Dhaka are a bit fortunate, as in the Old Dhaka area there is still some interest for putul nach."

Royal Bina Putul Nach was the first to stage its show on the opening day. The act included "Behala Badok" (a puppet playing a violin), "Machh Shikari" (in which a greedy fisherman is devoured by a crocodile)

and "Kathuria" (narrating the revenge of a forest on a lumberjack who cuts more wood than he needs).

The Hridoy Jhumur Jhumur Putul Nach act included horse race, snake charmer, traditional boat race and so on.

Yesterday a seminar on putul nach was held as part of the festival.

Today the event will start from 5 pm and will continue till 8:30 pm. Four puppet troupes -- New Nizam Putul Nach (from Satkhira), "Ashar Alo Putul Nach (Dhaka), The Azad Putul Nach (Bagerhat) and New Sonargaon Hashi Khushi Putul Nach (Narayanganj) -- will stage their acts at the festival today.

Readers' Corner

Ghiyasuddin's pilgrimage for peace

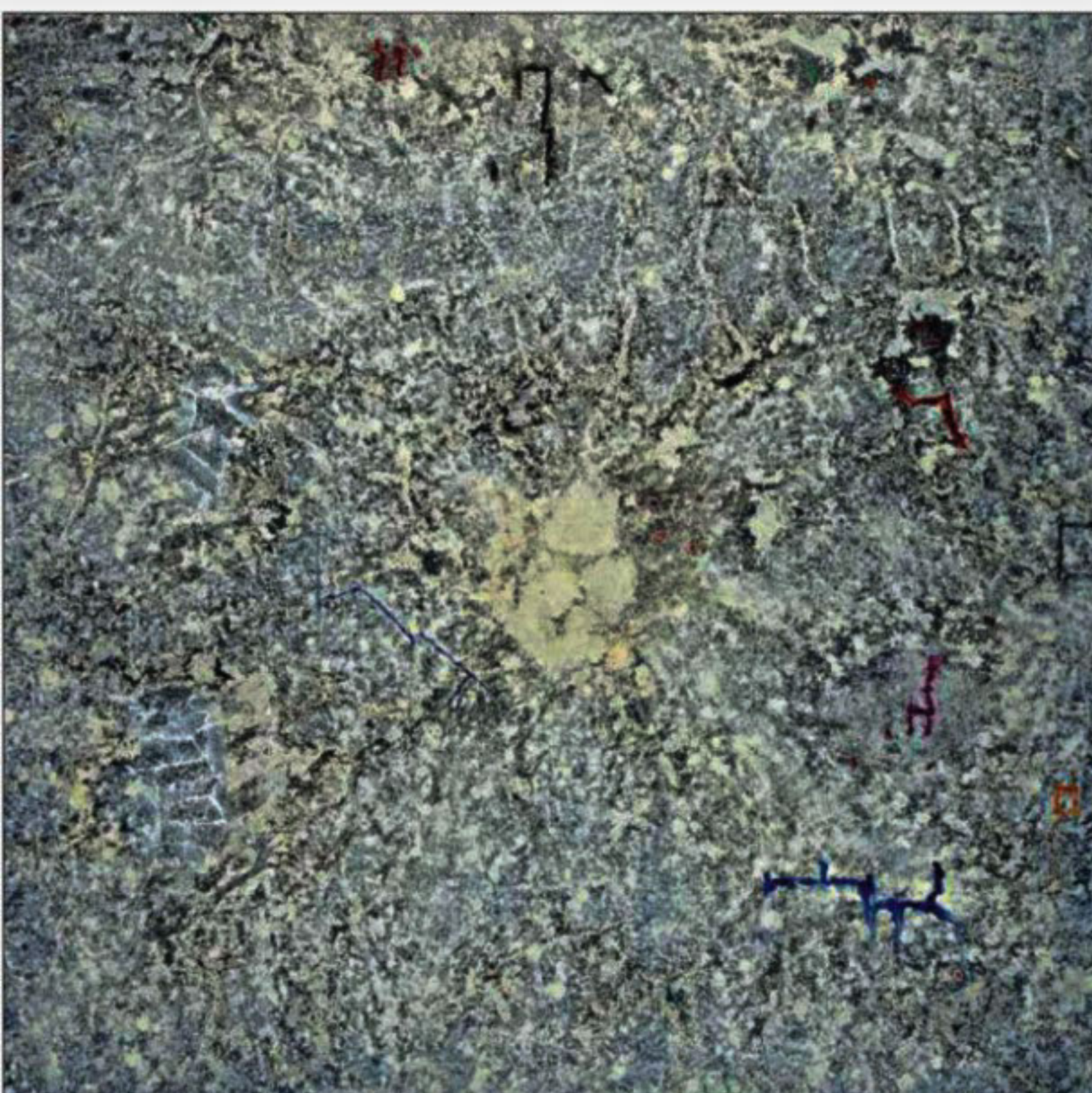
JESMINA SHANTA

Painter Kazi Ghiyasuddin has an intense connection with nature. At the age of 15 he became a student of the Art College. In his adolescence he felt that he had heard the music of nature, which till today inspires him to paint in quest of peace and experiment with natural sounds which are then transformed into art. In his view, nature transmits messages through its 'music' at different points of time: dawn, day, night and so on.

Kazi Ghiyasuddin's solo exhibition, titled "A Pilgrimage For Peace", is now on at Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts in Dhanmondi. Renowned artist Mohammad Kibria inaugurated the show on January 29. Among others, Harumitsu Hida, Charge d'Affairs,



Embassy of Japan and Matiur Rahman, editor Prothom Alo were present as special guests at the inaugural.



Paintings from Kazi Ghiyasuddin's "Nature" series.

The Tokyo-based Ghiyasuddin is influenced by Japanese heritage, culture, art and philosophy. About 20 years ago, he adopted a new style. At that stage he erased his earlier canvases by painting over with white, light grey and light blue.

This exhibition contains his paintings of this period. This fondness for white and whitish shades, in quest of peace or serenity, is a Japanese trait.

This exhibition features 47 of his recent pieces. Sometimes it takes the hardworking Ghiyasuddin four to five years to complete a piece of art. During this span of time he often pauses to enhance his maturity of expression.

The oil paintings of the series, "A Pilgrimage For Peace", reflect peace and harmony. The painter says he is concerned as peace wanes in the urbanised part of the world. As a nature lover he believes that nature is the ultimate destination for peace. He tries to articulate the music of the moonlit light. The artist is adept in both oils and watercolours.

"Myth 3", "Myth 4" and "Sound 2" are excellent works on display at the exhibition. In these paintings Ghiyasuddin has used light blue shades. On the surface he has drawn lines, dots, squares and small figures to create texture. Ghiyasuddin's genre of work is abstract but he finely sketches figures or objects on the canvas. Sometimes he has taken a realistic theme but expressed it through abstract, for instance "Beside the Park" and "Beside My House".

His other noteworthy works are "Sound of Rain", "Story" and "Nature". Some of his works are on handmade papers, and that creates a further dimension.

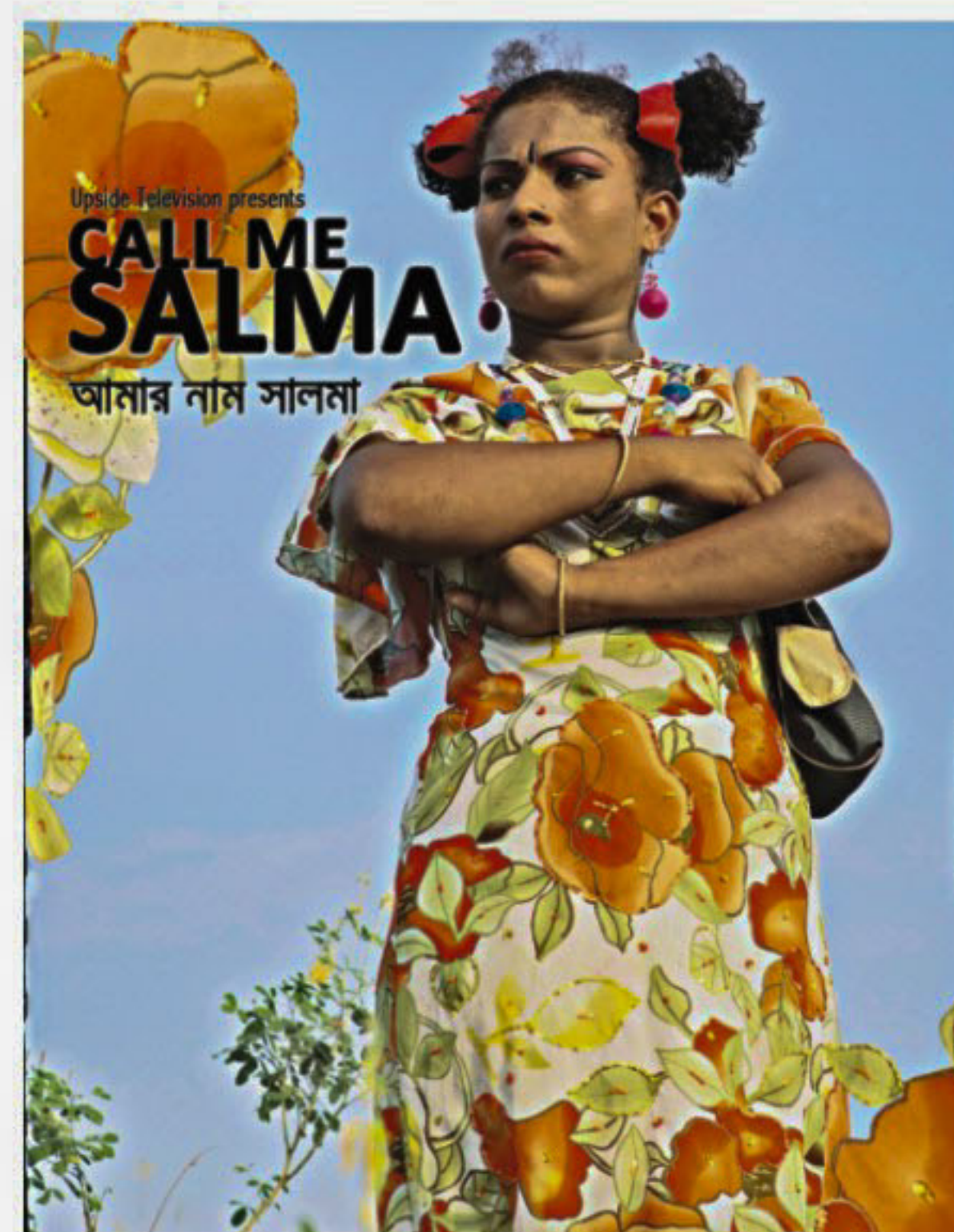
The artist stays six months of the year in Bangladesh. He has a studio in Savar, where he can devote himself wholly to his art.

Ghiyasuddin's exhibition at Bengal Gallery will run till February 11.

The writer is a freelance contributor.

Premiere

"Call Me Salma": Life and times of a transgender teen



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The premiere of "Call Me Salma", a documentary on a transgender teenager, was held on February 4 at the auditorium of University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) and Bandhu Social Welfare Society organised the premiere.

Directed by Canadian filmmakers Sébastien Rist and Aude Leroux-Lévesque, the film is a story about "love and loss."

The film follows Salma, a 16-year-old transgender individual, who leaves her family and village, and moves into the hustle and bustle of city life in search of an identity, a new family and above all, a sense of acceptance.

Emotionally torn between her youth and her desire to be a woman, Salma decides to return to her village and face events that force her to question the preconceived notions of gender. The documentary is nearly 54-minute long.

ULAB Vice Chancellor Professor Rafiqul Islam formally inaugurated the premiere show. Anisul Islam Hero, director, Bandhu Social Welfare Society, also spoke on the occasion. The directors and Salma, protagonist of the film, were present and answered questions from the audience.

The filmmakers Sébastien and Aude have been in Dhaka for the past few months and followed the lives of local transgender communities as part of their research for the film. The film will be aired on a French TV channel later this year.

Backstreet Boys to rock Delhi

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Popular American pop band Backstreet Boys is all set to rock India with their first-ever live show in the country on February 20.

The band, which had made the world sway to their music in the '90s, particularly with hugely popular albums like "Millennium" and "Black and Blue", will perform at the rock music festival at NSIC Ground in Okhla, Delhi.

Pop music lovers are counting the days to watch the Backstreet Boys quartet of Brian Littrel, AJ McLean, Howie Dorough and Nick Carter and listen to their songs. And why not? A whole generation across the world grew up admiring their music.

"Our show in India will be one of the grandest shows we've ever done," Brian Littrel told an Indian newspaper.

"We have been wanting to perform in India for such a long time and we're very excited," he added.

Littrel said that it's going to be a two-hour show featuring 24 songs including "As Long As You Love Me" and "Quit Playing Games".

According to Littrel, he has chanced to meet Indian fans at the band's shows across the world and "Every time they had asked me when we are going to India."

But if you think Backstreet Boys will delve into its past to regale '90s pop lovers, you are mistaken. For Littrel said they are also looking forward to a whole new generation of music lovers, which does not know the band.

All in all, music lovers can expect to create a new fusion of the past and the future in their performance in Delhi.

