

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

12th Annual Bonsai Exhibition
 Organiser: Bangladesh Bonsai society
 Venue: WVA Auditorium, H-20, Rd-27 (old), Dhanmondi
 Date: October 14-17
 Time: 10am-8pm



Painting and Installation Exhibition

Title: Dhaka Traffic: the City Can't Wait
 Artist: Sulekha Chowdhury
 Venue: Goethe-Institut Bangladesh, Dhanmondi
 Date: October 4-28



Group Art Exhibition

Title: Life of a Vagabond
 Venue: Tivoli Art Gallery, DIT Market, Gulshan-2
 Date: October 11-20
 Time: 10am-8pm



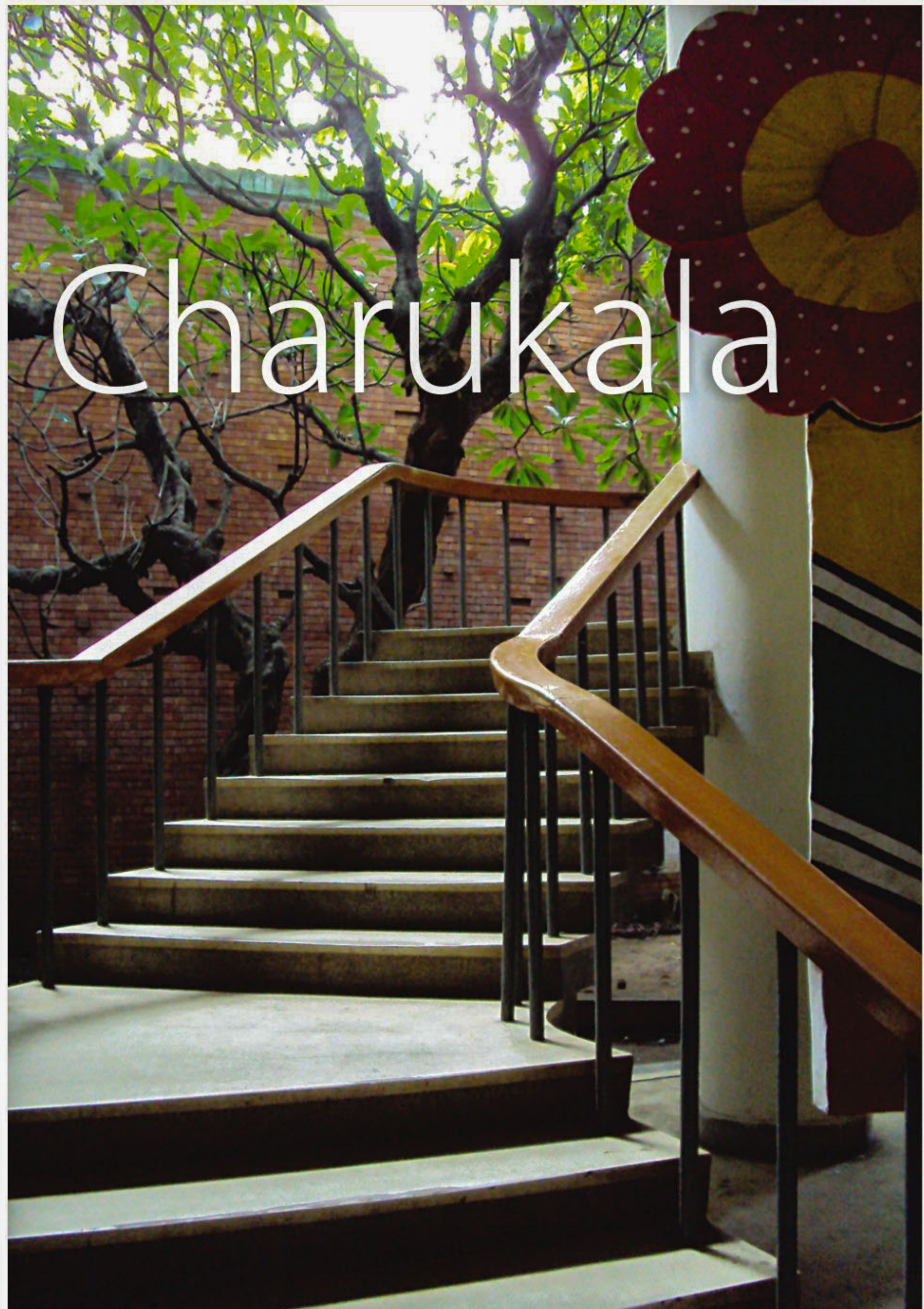
Group Art Exhibition

Title: Rooted Creativity-5
 Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, 275/F, Rd 27 (old), Dhanmondi
 Date: October 15-26
 Time: 12pm-8pm



Cradle of contemporary Bangladeshi art

The institute is seemingly a working progress. The number of students enrolled annually has gone up -- from 80 to around 120. The Graphic Design department has a new computer lab. Students of FFA now have options to work part-time (at media houses and ad firms) and the commercial aspect of BFA and MFA degrees from the institute now seems favourable...



It is a faculty under Dhaka University but has its own identity. From the moment you walk through those gates, everywhere you look around -- even in the untiest of nooks and corners -- there is some element of art. Case in point, whereas walls of public lavatories function as phonebooks or broadcast profanity, the ones here are decked with otherwise appealing drawings and doodles. But most importantly, Faculty of Fine Art (FFA), or 'Charukala' as it's known to the

Nabi, who was a student of the institute from 1959 to '64, says that back then it four departments -- Drawing and Painting, Commercial, Printmaking and Oriental Art. In the mid '50s the school was in Old Dhaka and later it shifted to the Shegun Bagicha area for two years. After that it moved to its current location in Shahbagh, close to the National Museum. Architect Mazharul Islam designed the institute. The institute has been christened and re-christened quite a few times.

include four-year Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA Honours) and two-year Master of Fine Arts (MFA) for all departments. The institute is seemingly a working progress. The number of students enrolled annually has gone up -- from 80 to around 120. The Graphic Design department has a new computer lab. Students of FFA now have options to work part-time (at media houses and ad firms) and the commercial aspect of BFA and MFA degrees from the institute now seems favourable,

aware of the latest trends in graphic design. One can now take a degree from Charukala seriously." Preferences towards certain departments are changing as well. Traditionally Drawing and Painting and Sculpture have had the most number of students. However, the number of enrolments in Ceramics, Crafts and Graphic Design has increased over the years, according to Abir Shome, a second year student of Drawing and Painting. Rajeeb Ahmed, a second year student of Graphic Design, particularly likes the friendly atmosphere on campus. "Everyone knows everyone here. During festivals like *Pahela Baishakh* or *Sharat Utsob* junior and senior students work together." Charukala's *Baishakhi* parade has become part of Dhaka traditions. Days before the big event, life-size replicas of birds, animals and other motifs start taking shape, flamboyant masks ornate the FFA classrooms. On *Pahela Baishakh* when the students and teachers of the institute bring out the parade, rest of the Dhaka revellers join in.



average Dhakaitte, should be considered the cradle of contemporary Bangladeshi art, as majority of the noted Bangladeshi artists have studied at or graduated from this institute. The nitty-gritty: Charukala is the first art institute in the country founded by Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin. He was the founder Principal of Dhaka Art School, as it was known back then. According to renowned artist and cartoonist Rafiqun Nabi, former Dean of FFA, the institute opened in 1948.

According to Nabi, during the Pakistan era it was called 'East Pakistan College of Arts and Crafts'; post-Independence it was renamed 'Bangladesh Govt. College of Arts and Crafts'; in 1983 the institute merged with Dhaka University and was known as 'Institute of Fine Art' and in 2008 it converted to 'Faculty of Fine Art'. At present the institute has eight departments -- Graphic Design, Oriental Art, Ceramics, Drawing and Painting, Sculpture, Crafts, History of Arts and Printmaking. Programmes

opportunities Nabi's generation didn't enjoy. As Nabi puts it, "When we were students, artists couldn't consider making a decent living off painting. Colours, brushes and other art supplies were not easily available. The average individual was not exposed to what the institute did or the impact of arts. "Things have obviously changed. Now the students can work at newspapers, ad firms etc. Thanks to internet access, an FFA student is always

But what really sets Charukala apart from other public educational institutes? "Political tolerance" -- according to Rafiqun Nabi and all FFA students interviewed. Farnaz Shahreen Toma, a student of Drawing and Painting, says, despite being right next to Dhaka University campus, which often becomes a battleground for student activists belonging to rival political parties, violence and destructive demonstration of political convictions are absent at Charukala. "It's not that we don't have political opinions; we have student activists here as well but we're more tolerant and easy going. Violence and conflict never solved anything," she says. Agreed.

FEATURE AND PHOTOS BY KARIM WAHEED