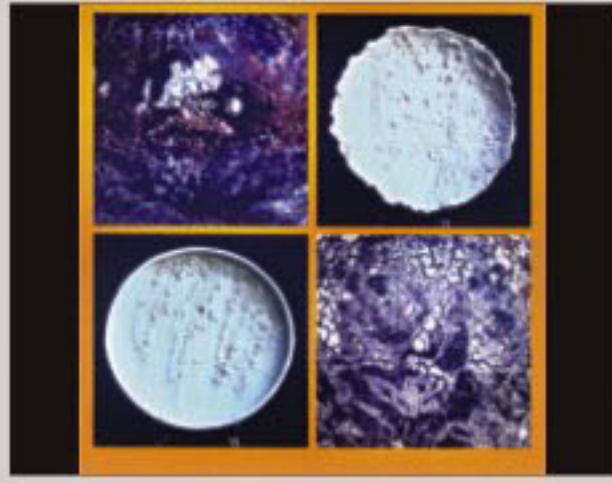


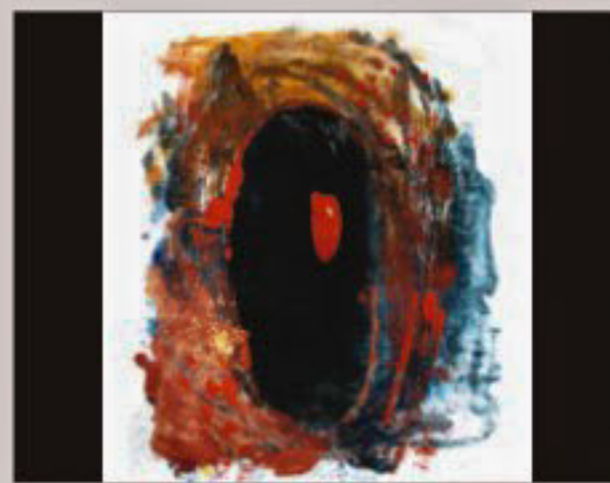
WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Ceramics Exhibition
 Title: Aesthetic Studio Ceramics
 Artist: Syed Shahadat Hussain
 Venue: Alliance Française de Dhaka, 26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi
 Date: December 18-30
 Time: 3-9pm (Monday-Thursday) 9am-12pm & 5-8pm (Friday & Saturday)



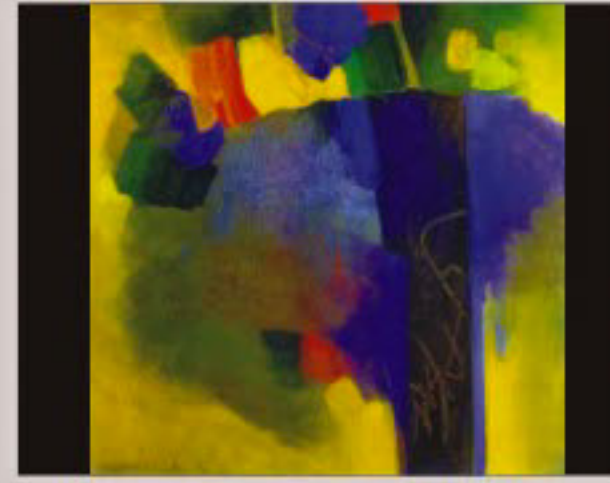
Solo Monoprint Exhibition

Title: Seeds
 Artist: Soumyajit Choudhury
 Venue: Bay's Galleria, Radius Centre, Gulshan-1
 Date: December 22-29
 Time: 10am-8pm (Fridays 3-8pm)



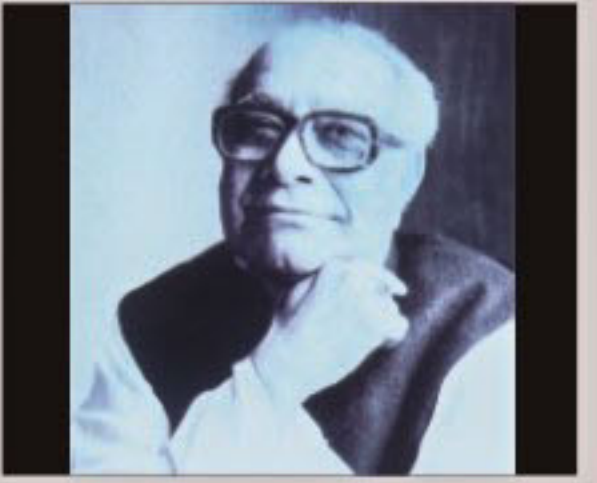
Solo Art Exhibition

Artist: Hashem Khan
 Venue: Nalinikanta Bhattacharya Gallery, National Museum
 Date: December 18-January 2
 Time: 12pm-8pm



Memorial Programme

In Honour of Kalim Sharafet
 Organiser: Bengal Foundation
 Venue: Bengal Gallery, H# 275/F, Rd 27 (old), Dhanmondi
 Date: December 26
 Time: 7pm



Tagore Classics, European Notes

Francesca Cassio and Ugo Bonessi perform English adaptations of Rabindra Sangeet



Rabindranath Tagore and Alain Daniélou met in 1932 at Shantiniketan and formed a deep mutual understanding and cultural affinity. Daniélou was a French artist and scholar, with an intense interest in everything Indian. He learned the languages, as well as Indian art, literature and most of all, the Hindustani classical music tradition. Daniélou found in Tagore an inspiration. And in him, the Nobel laureate poet found a perceptive interpreter.

Daniélou writes in his autobiography, Tagore requested him to transcribe some of the Rabindra Sangeet in the western vogue of the time -- for voice and piano. The bard wanted some of his songs to be accessible to the western audience.

Daniélou translated into English and French, and transcribed for piano only 18 of Tagore's songs, without distorting the original melodies. While translating, the Indophile matched not only the meaning but also the melodies, and the length of the syllables.

Italian performer duo -- Francesca Cassio (vocalist) and Ugo Bonessi (pianist) -- rendered some of

Daniélou's adaptations of Rabindra Sangeet at Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, Dhanmondi, in Dhaka on December 24.

Cassio is a lecturer of Indian Music at the Conservatory of Vicenza, Italy. She is extensively trained in Western and Indian music and has studied Rabindra Sangeet, Dhrupad (under Padmabushan Usad Rahim Fahimuddin Dagar) and Thumri (under Padmabushan Girija Devi).

The songstress and the pianist started with a rendition of "When the Gentle Bride Appears"; smatterings of the original, "Ogo Bodhu Shundori" were thrown in to the delight of the audience. Educationist and music connoisseur Professor Anisuzzaman, artiste-folk music researcher Mustafa Zaman Abbasi, music exponent Karunamaya Goswami and Abul Khair (chairman of Bengal Foundation) were seen sitting in the front row.

The artistes' repertoire also included English versions of the ever-familiar "Gram Chhara Oi Rangamatir Poth" (to which everyone in the audience sang along); "Khoru Bayu Boy Begey" and

"Shomukhey Shanti Parabar".

The highlight was a poignant cover of "Will You Remember Me?" ("Tobu Mon-e Rekho"), considered to be one of Tagore's masterpieces. About the song, Cassio said, "This is a very complex composition. It has no 'taal' and it's more of a monologue, than a song. We'd never understand why Tagore chose to have this song translated."

A few hardcore Tagore aficionados at the programme felt that transposing Rabindra Sangeet into the western idiom results in a clumsy production. Another complaint was that due to the singer's native (Italian) accent, much of the words sounded incomprehensible -- a downer, considering the genre puts focus on lyrics.

However, the fact that CDs -- featuring these songs covered by Cassio and Bonessi -- offered at Bengal Gallery were sold out within minutes, upsetting those who could not get copies, is a clear indication that the recital was a smashing success.

PHOTOS AND TEXT BY KARIM WAHEED



Ugo Bonessi (left) and Francesca Cassio perform at Bengal Gallery.

Celebrating International Year of Forests

Group exhibition at Bengal Gallery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The year 2011 has been declared the 'International Year of Forests'. To mark the occasion, Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts is going to hold a group art exhibition, titled "A Return to the Forest". The exhibition opens tomorrow at Bengal Gallery, Dhanmondi, in Dhaka, and will continue till December 30.

The exhibit will feature works of twelve celebrated painters -- Qayyum Chowdhury, Syed Jahangir, Hashem Khan, Rafiqun Nabi, Mahmudul Haque, Kalidas Karmakar, Shahid Kabir, Monsur Ul Karim, Farida Zaman, Nasreen Begum, Dilara Begum Jolly and Kanak Champa Chakma.

The exhibition is being organised in collaboration with British American Tobacco Bangladesh. Finance minister Abul Maal Abul Muhit will be present as chief guest on the occasion.

Qayyum Chowdhury and Syed Jahangir are the senior-most painters at the exhibition.

Chowdhury is recognised for his folk themed paintings. In Syed Jahangir's works one finds an abundance of gold and cobalt blue, which represent the land and rivers of Bangladesh.

Hashem Khan and Rafiqun Nabi both work on themes like the Liberation War, lush green, and riverine villages of Bangladesh. Mahmudul Haque is a pure abstract painter and his works are mostly form and composition based.

Monsur Ul Karim and Shahid Kabir both came to prominence in the early '70s. For a while, Karim has been working particularly on the Padma River and its many aspects. As a semi-realistic painter, Kabir symbolically portrays varied objects, women in their many moods and working class people.

Farida Zaman has been focusing on riverine life in Bangladesh and she emblematically portrays cats, nets and little girls in her paintings. Kanak Champa Chakma's works consistently feature indigenous people and life in the Hill Tracts.



A painting by Qayyum Chowdhury.

Chhayanaut's grand classical music fest wraps up



Clockwise (from top-left) Pandit Ram Kanai Das, Khairul Anam Shakil, Pratyush Banerjee (of Kolkata) and Swarup Hossain at Chhayanaut's Classical Music Festival.

JONATHAN RICHMOND

Tabla player Swarup Hossain cannot fail to stun. It is not only a matter of the astonishing agility of his fingers. Nor only is it his ability to conceive an orchestral range of sonorities when striking what seems to be nothing more than a stretched skin. There is grandeur in the architecture of his sound creations, and an intense spirituality to a performance that concentrates attention and refreshes the soul.

Gentle pitter-patter playing relaxes the audience. But then, the power of Swarup's playing grows with subtlety until there seem to be the most artistically endowed fireworks imaginable exploding everywhere.

At Chhayanaut last Thursday night, Swarup was a master of rhythm, his beat changing into ever more new and extraordinary patterns of sound. But, odd though it may seem, the most striking aspect of his performance came from the silences. Percussive sound is not continuous -- a drumbeat dies off quickly and, at the hands of a skilled player, leaves a brief silence before the next strike sounds out. I'm not sure how Swarup achieves the seemingly impossible -- his playing is at times incredibly fast. And yet, no matter how many times per second his fingers strike the drum, every note is somehow cleanly heard, a silence separating it from the next one. And

it is those discrete silences that make the sounds surrounding them so unbelievably profound.

I also heard two performances of Khayal singing at Chhayanaut, but frankly could not enjoy them due to the harsh amplification. In fact, amplification is generally overused in Dhaka. Traditional music was written before electronic manipulation of sound was invented and Khayal, in particular, depends for its power on the direct penetration of the solo human voice. The singer alone can project intense moods through the performance of extraordinary songs without words. But focus is lost when the sound is relayed to two high-powered loudspeakers, and a recital that might well be of the highest quality is made to sound crude.

While the damage amplification does to solo singing is particularly in evidence, all traditional music would benefit from being done naturally in the way its composers intended. Western classical music concerts are rarely amplified -- even the largest of European opera houses require performers to project their art unassisted by electronics. Let us hope that Dhaka's enormously talented musicians can be prepared to take the risk of taking to a stage unequipped with microphones. Their art can only grow as a result.

The writer is a Public Transport Advisor, Ministry of Communications.

