

WHAT'S ON

Group Art Exhibition
Venue: Gallery Basilio, H-300, R-19b, New DOHS, Mohakhali
Date: January 14-29
Time: 10am-9pm



Solo Tapestry Exhibition
Artist: Tajul Islam
Venue: Shilpakala Gallery, H-26, R-3, Dharmondi
Date: Jan 3-14
Time: 12pm-8pm

Art Exhibition
Reprint of Rabindra Artworks
Organiser: Chhayanaut
Venue: Chhayanaut Sangskriti Bhaban, Dharmondi
Date: January 21-28
Time: 10am-9pm

Group Art Exhibition
Venue: Dhaka Art Centre
Date: January 1-15
Time: 11am-6pm

Seilm Al Deen Festival
Organiser: Dhaka Theatre, JU and Shilpakala Academy
Venue: Shilpakala Academy and JU
Date: January 14-16
Inauguration: 5pm

Musical Soiree
Artist: Aditi Mohin
Venue: IGCC, H-35, R-24, Gulshan-1
Date: January 14
Time: 6:30pm

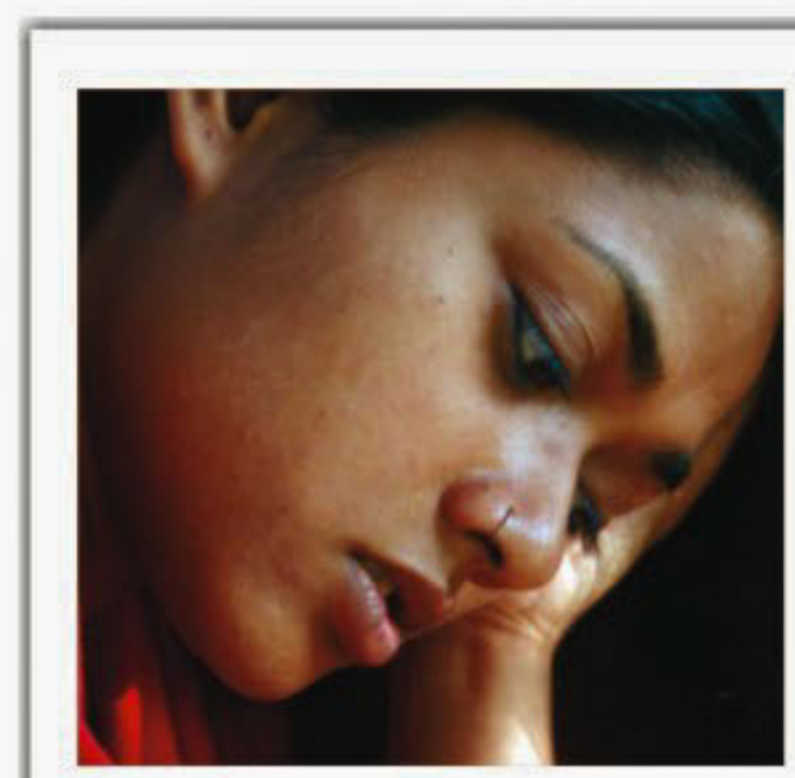
Theatre
Play: Mohajoner Nao
Troupe: Shubhachan
Venue: Sylhet Auditorium, Sylhet
Date: January 14
Time: 6:30pm

Exhibition
Title: Paintings of the Past
Venue: La Galerie, Alliance Francaise de Dhaka
Date: January 6-17
Time: 2-9pm



COMING SOON

Meherjaan LOVE IN A TIME OF WAR



Rubaiyat Hossain

KARIM WAHEED

Chances are you've already seen the trailer for "Meherjaan" on TV. Snaps of internationally celebrated actors Jaya Bachchan and Victor Banerjee alongside familiar Bangladeshi faces Humayun Faridce and Azad Abul Kalam as well as up and coming actors might have piqued your interest.

"Meherjaan", a 35mm full-length feature film (duration: 120 minutes) produced by Era Motion Pictures Ltd, will have its commercial release on January 21.

The winning and losing sides invariably have their individual take on a war, but one thing both stories will have in common: the perspective and protagonists/antagonists are always male. Women usually appear as sacrificing characters. They are often treated as part of the silent landscape -- objectified, abused and raped. The

purpose of "Meherjaan" is to break free of the typical male narrative and open up a conversation to explore other perspectives on the Liberation War, says filmmaker Rubaiyat Hossain. "Meherjaan" is Rubaiyat's debut feature film.

The film follows Meher, who falls for a soldier from the enemy side during the Liberation War. When her love is discovered, she is shamed and silenced by her family and society. Thirty-eight years after the war, Meher is approached by a visitor. Sarah -- a 'war child', Meher's cousin Neela's daughter, who was given away for adoption, is trying to put together her past. Together, these women re-tell history through their narratives.

What inspired Rubaiyat to make the film?

Rubaiyat: "I did my Masters in South Asian Studies at University of Pennsylvania and the topic of my thesis was 'rape of women,' particularly the Birangonas of 1971. I primarily looked at the nationalist representation and

marginalisation of female narratives of the war. As I learnt more about the Birangonas, I became deeply involved with the issue. I felt as a Bangladeshi woman, who has been given a chance to raise her voice, I needed to work more on bringing out women's experiences in 1971, the inception point of this nation. I attended a training session in 2002 on film direction and made a few short films that participated at national and international festivals. However, when I was contemplating my first feature film, I immediately decided on a story that would examine 1971 not only through women's eyes, but would also be a feminine narrative of love and spirituality. Even though I wanted to highlight the Birangonas, the violence of rape, and the indifference towards female experiences of war, I strongly felt that the film had to end on a positive note. I wanted my film to heal the wounds of 1971."

"Meherjaan" features a cast of Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani actors. How did the casting process work?

Rubaiyat: "I had cast Aly Zaker in the role of Nanajaan (Meher and Neela's grandfather). He was busy at the time and couldn't commit. So I decided to work with Victor Banerjee. He has worked with legendary directors like Satyajit Ray, James Ivory and Roman Polanski. He is one of my all-time favourite actors. His performances in Ray's 'Ghare Baire', and 'A Passage to India' are remarkable.

"Same with Jaya Bachchan. I had initially thought of Champa but she was in Canada at the time. I wanted a woman with an unmistakable Bengali look and a certain vulnerability, but a great deal of inner strength. As we had an Indian crew from the beginning (including the sound designer and music director), and the entire post production was going to be done in Mumbai, it was rational to consider Indian actors when I couldn't sign the Bangladeshi actors of my



Jaya Bachchan (top) and Reetu Sattar in the film.



choice. I approached both Jaya Bachchan and Victor Banerjee with a lot of paperwork, script, background, notes, character sketch, costume design and other details. I guess this is one of the reasons they initially agreed to work with a debut director."

Would you call "Meherjaan" a mainstream/commercial film?

Rubaiyat: "Meherjaan" has been shot with equipment from Bangladesh Film Development Corporation. We received great support from them. "Meherjaan" is a film for everyone. It's a combined effort to encourage audiences to go to movie theatres and new filmmakers."

Does she think portrayal of historic events on screen differ from generation to generation?

Rubaiyat: "It can. I guess I look at 1971 more analytically, but when my parents talk about the war, I don't think they can detach themselves and attempt to look at it analytically, as they had lived the war. Their wounds still haven't healed."

"Meherjaan" zooms in on three characters. Meher was rescued by a Baloch soldier in 1971. This soldier had denied the war. Meher's cousin Neela had been raped by Pakistani soldiers, but instead of staying in the shadows she decides to retaliate against social stigma and joins the freedom movement. Nanajaan is still shocked from the losses of the 1947 Partition, and doesn't want any bloodshed in his village."

Reetu Sattar, who played Neela in the film, says, "The film presents different realities of the war. Neela is the hardcore truth. She has lived through the brutality and decides to fight back. Meher, on the other hand, dwells in a dreamlike reality.

"Neela knows her life will never be the same. She doesn't want to kill herself. She hasn't lost her sense of dignity. She is a complex character and Rubaiyat needed someone with a solid theatre background. I auditioned and she thought I fitted the character."

About the filmmaker, Jaya Bachchan said, "Rubaiyat has cleverly worked out the script. Through her film, she is not talking to just one nation. She is actually talking to the world. It is truly an international film. And a film like this coming from Bangladesh is fantastic." [Published in November 6, 2009 issue of Star Weekend Magazine.]

The film has been shot by Samiran Datta (of "Kittonkhola" fame). Screenplay is by Ebadur Rahman and Rubaiyat Hossain. Neil Mukherjee has done the music direction. The cast also includes Sharmili Ahmed, Khairul Alam Sabuj, Monira Mithu, Azad Abul Kalam, Shatabdi Wadud, Omar Rahim (from Pakistan) and Shayna Amin (as young Meher).

RUNWAY Now in Faridpur

A CORRESPONDENT

Tareque Masud and Catherine Masud's new film "Runway" opened in Faridpur on Thursday, launching a three-day screening session of the film at the Kobi Jasimuddin Hall. "Runway" is being shown together with the Masuds' short film "Naroshundor", a political thriller set in 1971. The Faridpur screening is the latest in a series of shows of the film in district towns throughout the country.

At the opening screening of the film on Thursday, Tareque Masud greeted the audience which consisted of college students. He said that the people of Faridpur, like those all over the country, had long been deprived of cinema entertainment due to the collapse of the film industry and the closing of cinema halls. Greeted with loud applause from audience, he said it was time that the government initiated a new policy to promote cinema in the country so that young people and families could return to the theatres to see good films.

"Runway" has already completed successful runs in Chittagong and Sylhet, and was shown as part of a retrospective session of the Masuds' films organised by the Khulna Film Society. Other upcoming screening programmes for the films are planned in Kushtia, Jessore, Khulna (exclusively "Runway" this time), as well as a special screening at Jahangirnagar University.

In addition to the ongoing release of "Runway" this month, Tareque Masud's first film "Adom Surot", a documentary on the painter S.M. Sultan, will be shown at a special programme on January 23rd in Sultan's hometown Narail.

Another special upcoming programme is an open air screening of the Masuds' documentary "Muktit Kutha" at Nagarkanda in Faridpur. The film, finished in 1999, is about the frustrated hopes and dreams of ordinary people post-Liberation War.



Residency Programme at Cosmos-Atelier 71

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cosmos-Atelier 71 has organised a 10-day artists' residency programme in printmaking at Cosmos Centre in Malibagh. This is the first time such an event is being held in Bangladesh. The programme began on January 7 and will continue till January 16. The participating painters are Biren Shome, Golam Faruque Bebul and Nagarbashi Barman.

Biren Shome is a noted freelance painter. Golam Faruque Bebul is a Rajshahi-based painter and a teacher of Drawing and Painting Department, Rajshahi University. Nagarbashi Barman is a lecturer of Printmaking Department, UODA.

At the residency programme, the artists are working with printmaking particularly colograph and etching. They are working in their individual styles.

The residency programme provides the ideal combination of quiet setting of truly inspirational beauty. Artists can work intensively and independently for days, in a supportive and congenial atmosphere.

Kalidas Karmakar a senior advisor of the Cosmos-Atelier 71 said, "This is a first residence programme in printmaking in our country. The printmakers will get an opportunity to use a common venue so that they can share their beliefs, feelings and working process through the programme. This is how we have planned

initially. The programme will be held on a regular basis."

Enayetullah Khan, chairman of Cosmos-Atelier 71, said, "Printmaking is a very delicate, prolonged and technique-oriented medium. Emotion, yearning, contemplation and liberty can be properly addressed through the medium. All participating artists have tried to express their personal hallmark and some have experimented with new ideas, colours and patterns. The programme's main aim is to popularise the medium among the painters of the country."

At the programme, Most of Biren's compositions are based on solid texture and organised forms. Many of his works feature darker shades. A number of Shome's prints demonstrate a connection between forms, compositions with diverse objects.

Golam Faruque Bebul is an abstract painter cum-printmaker and his works delve deep into varied fragmented imagery with forms and compositions.

Nagarbashi has depicted the anguish and joy of life in his prints. He brings in subjects like fish, fishing nets, fishing tools, tortoise heads, hookahs, lamps, lanterns and boats. Born and reared on the banks of the Buriganga River, he has attempted to create an ambience that mix up the lives of Bangladeshi fishermen. The use of shadowy and darker, tedious tones depicts the unchanging lives of fishermen.



(From left): artists Golam Faruque Bebul, Biren Shome and Nagarbashi Barman at Cosmos-Atelier 71.



Price of Fame: Mosharraf Karim

A CORRESPONDENT

I prefer to look at the positive side of fame. Though there are times when I get a bit tired of it all, I tell myself that it is natural for an artist to have a fan following.

Of course there are many facets of fame. Most troublesome is my mobile phone. Many people, whether known or strangers, call me every now and then. I cannot possibly talk to all my fans throughout the day. I have to work. Sometimes, I just switch off the phone.

In the past I used to spend time with my friends. Now I cannot even do that because people swarm around me, request autographs or photographs. I do enjoy it sometimes, but it riddles that I really don't have a personal life

any more. I can't just go and sit at a roadside fuchka stand and enjoy a snack. A mob appears out of nowhere. Roaming around on rickshaws is also impossible, though I often wish to. I also wish to walk on footpaths. But is it possible? There will be a stream of people following me.

To illustrate my point: My wife and I had gone to Cox's Bazar in the hope of some peace and tranquillity. Well, whenever the two of us went out, we were encircled by fans. Needless to say, our holiday turned sour.

Often when I go shopping I get charged extra and have no other option but to buy products at a higher price.

However, the bottom line is that one has to look at the positive side of fame. The recognition and love of the people outweigh the hassles.

Rice Cakes for All National Pitha Festival from today

A CORRESPONDENT

Jatiyo Pitha Utshab Udjapan Parishad (JPUUP) announced at a press conference on January 11 that it will hold an eight-day Jatiyo Pitha Utshab 2011 from January 14 to January 21 at the Coffee House premises in Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. The Pitha Utshab, which has been a major event in previous years, will feature 30 stalls offering various kinds of exotic traditional rice cakes that are made in winter across the country.

Everyday the festival will be open from 3 to 9pm. The festival will also hold a competition, where six best entries will be awarded. Amongst the six, the jury will select three, while fair-goers will select the rest.

Apart from the 'pitha' exhibition, cultural programmes featuring music, dance, recitation, performances by children and narratives will be held everyday at the venue.

At the press conference JPUUP talked about the role the festival will play in introducing the young generation to the

traditional pitha (rice cakes) that are a legacy of hundreds of years. Many of our eminent cultural personalities, celebrated artists, poets, writers and journalists are members of JPUUP.

The conference was moderated by member secretary Khandakar Shah Alam. Pijush Bandopadhyay, convener of the festival committee and theatre personality Jhuna Chowdhury, actor Abdul Aziz, Mijanur Rahman, Manzar A Islam Sweet spoke at the event.

The festival has been held since 2008 at the Coffee Shop premises inside BSA.



Advertisement for 'Closeup' magazine featuring a couple and text about the magazine's content and subscription details.

Table of TV programmes including ATN Bangla, Diganta TV, and CHANNEL i.

Table of radio programmes including abcradio FM 89.2, Darun Duppury, and RADIO TODAY FM 89.6.

Advertisement for 'Haat-er Rekha' drama serial on ATN Bangla.

Advertisement for 'Rush Hour 2' on HBO at 9pm.

Advertisement for 'The Portrait On Desh TV' at 9:45pm.

Table of TV programmes including Rtv, Star Movies, and Discovery Channel.

Table of drama serials including Haat-er Rekha, Katha Boley, and Ochena.

Table of news bulletins from RTV and BANGLAVISION.

Table of talk show programmes including ATN Bangla, ntv, and UTV.