weapons. On the Shalda River we fought against the invading Pakistan forces. We were in the Laksham area in Comilla. In September we went to Raibazaar with my platoon. I was familiar with this place as in my childhood we did outdoor water colour in this area. We went to the villages of Kloida, where there was only one Hindu village. We had to go in slowly, as Dhaka was in the hands of the enemies."

His parents had seen to it that he drew with skill and there was a weekend class for children at the art college, which he attended with glee. "When I copied, I got the cuff from my father, but this did not deter me. Today my paintings are in the national museum of Barcelona and Valencia. I went to Barcelona during the 1988 Olympics, there were 50 master contemporary artists—this included painters form Holland, the US, France etc.



16 December '71, oil on canvas.



Two Horses, oil on canvas.

What took him to France, where he is now a permanent resident? He got a French government scholarship in 1974, it was for four years—but it was extended for two more years. "Now I have a studio."

What were the things that influenced him there? Lots of things, says the artist. All impressionist painters played an important role in his work. "I fell in love with the work of Francis Bacon. I consider myself an expressionist painter," he says, "It is my own style – and not something I picked along the way in France or Germany."

The master painter says that the city that has fascinated him the most is Paris, which contains the best gallery in the world along with architectural beauties like the Louvre, Versailles, the Eiffel tower the Pigal, and the churches which included the sculptures and paintings of high renaissance artists like Leonardo de Vinci and Michelangelo. He admires Boticelli , Raphael and Titan too.

He does not want to move from Paris as it has so much to offer. He left Bangladesh in 1974. Today in 2013, France is like the artist's second home. From the age of 24, his philosophical space and freedom to work at will has guided his artistic endeavours.

"I also enjoy the high Renaissance period, that is why I do not leave the place," says the maestro, "I'm lucky to find a place here." There are 40,000 official painters in Paris. The competition is difficult; there are 200 professional galleries in Paris.

With so many galleries mushrooming in Dhaka, does he feel that the gallery owners control the output of the artist? The master painter says that in Europe, the gallery owners are more in control. There are a lot of artists in Paris. Here the major artists are all like family members, says Shahabuddin.

Asked about the teachers who influenced him the most, he says that it was Zainul Abedin – with great pride. "For the outdoor painting lessons", he says, they were obliged to go to the railway station, meat markets and the Buriganga. For us it was a must. "At our time the rivers were not polluted as they are today. With the influx of workers from the villages, and each family owning three cars each, the pollution of every type is enormous."

Shahabuddin can boast of eight coveted awards—both national and international.

His exhibition at Chitrak opened on September 28.