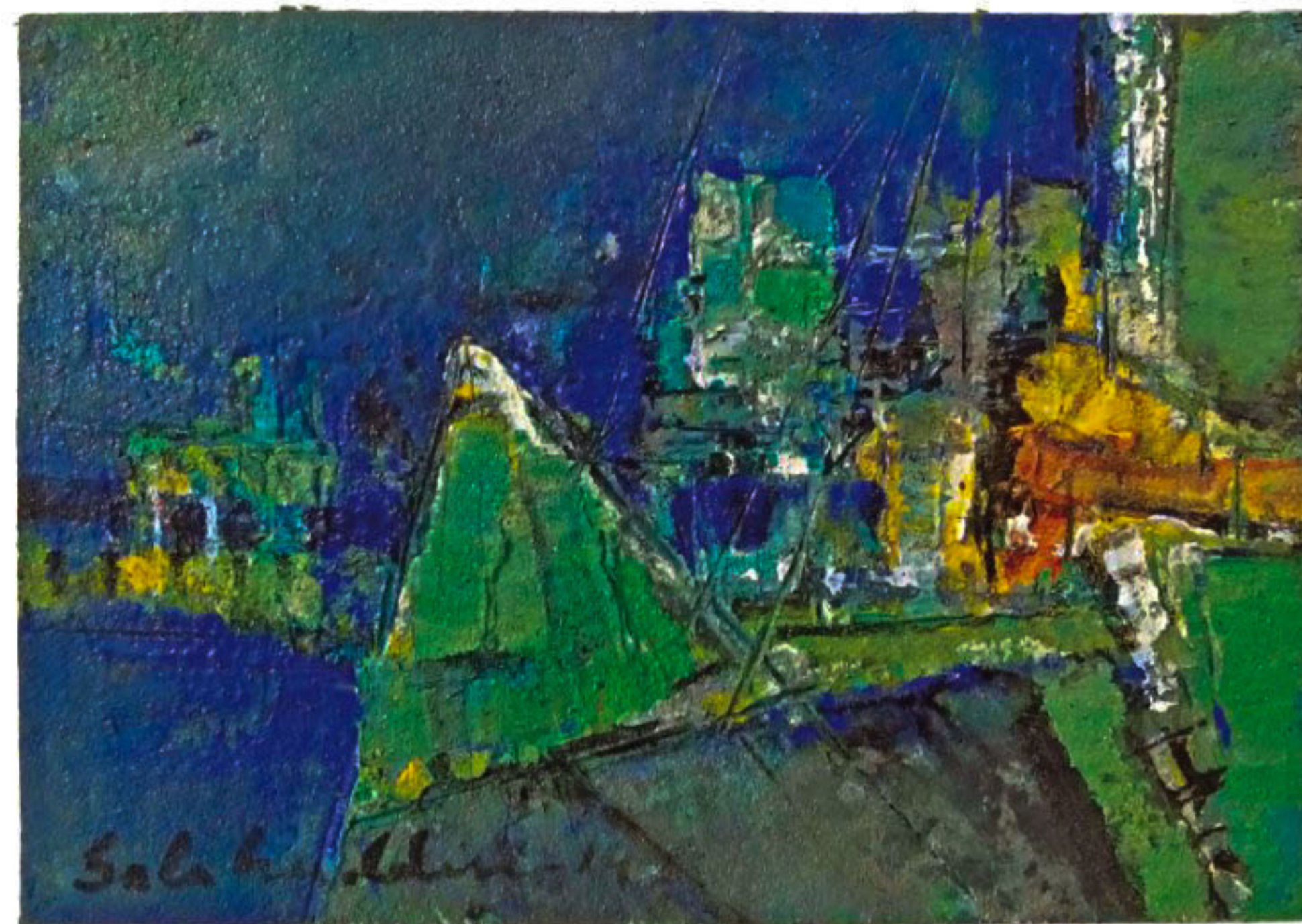
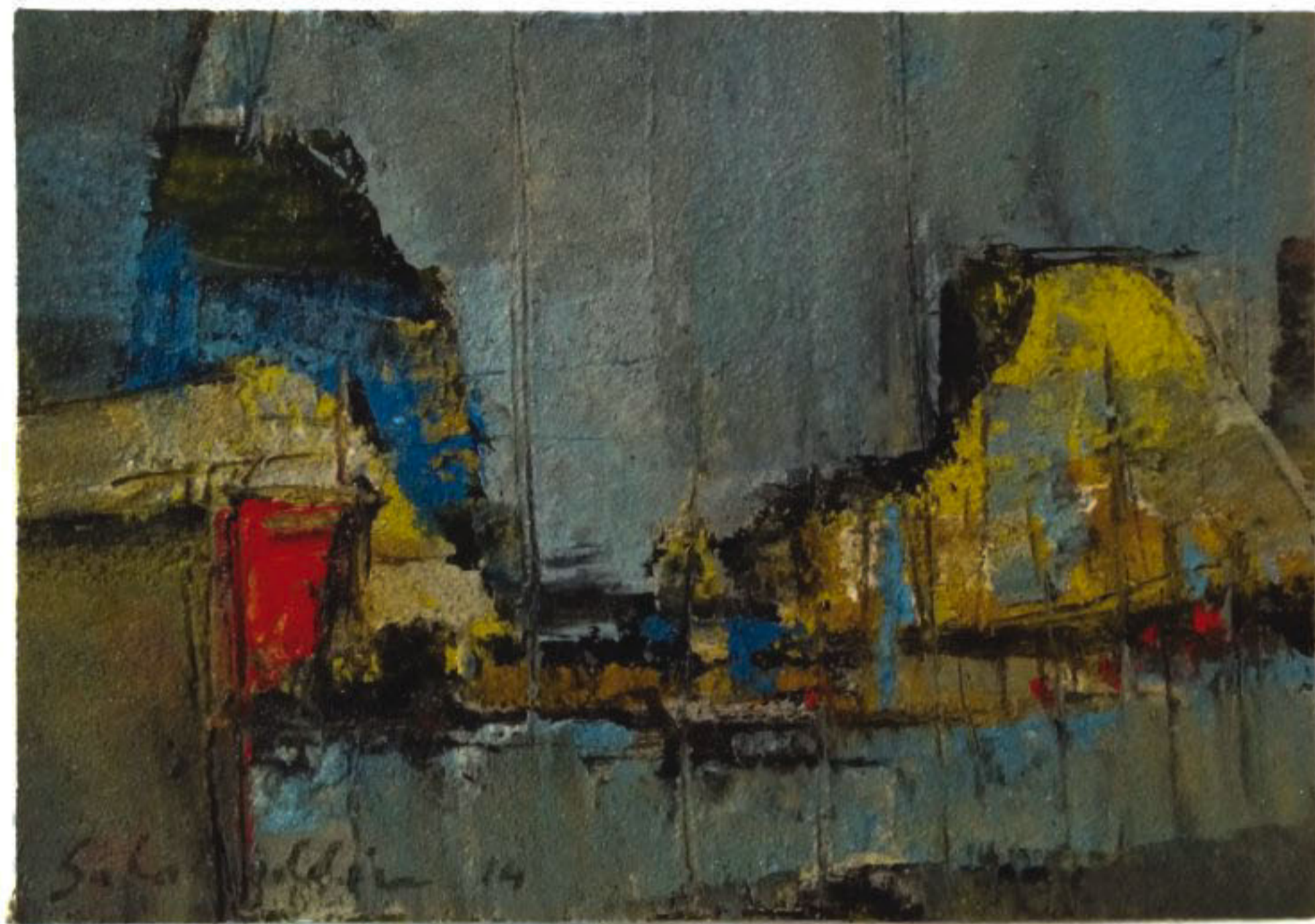




## A Reminder of Old Dhaka's Heritage

FAYZA HAQ



**K**azi Salahuddin Ahmed is very passionate about the old part of the city where he has lived for many years. "It is essential that one should preserve the relics of Old Dhaka," says Kazi Salahuddin Ahmed. "This is for the sake of the generation to come, to know the beauty of Rankin Street, and places like Tipu Sultan Road, Gopi Bagh, Sadar Ghat and Armenian Church. For the cultural need of the country the rich past of Dhaka, which has a colonial past plus a Mughal one, certain monuments should be preserved. This is also good for our tourist industry. I stay in Old Dhaka myself near the River Buriganga, in Sambazar, and have been doing painting on this place for nearly 25 years."

His exhibition opened on the 29th of November at Shilpangan Gallery, Dhanmondi, was inaugurated by Professor Abul Barq Alvi and Rubana Haq. The show continues till December 10th and will be on hopefully for some more days after that. Titled "City of Dreams", the collection of paintings are on a miniature size, and priced within the range of the average art lover.

There is an entry with grey, gold and black. There appear to be geometrical lines to depict the older part of Dhaka. A rickshaw is parked against a slum. There is also an auto-rickshaw or CNG as we call them. The face of a man hovering about can be conjectured. The paintings are part of his recollection or

dream about the place he has grown up in. Sand, pigment and acrylic have gone into the making. Again, Salahuddin has used the spatula and fingers for a special effect.

In another painting there is an old structure, coming down, crumbling into bits and pieces, symbolising the dying heritage of Old Dhaka. Again we spot an old, decaying structure. New buildings are cropping up. People continue to live in the older parts, renovating the halls and staircases, adding minarets, and adding rooms wherever possible. Semi slum areas are developing willy-nilly. All this is depicted in Salahuddin's images.

artist creates a tension between the old structure and the onslaught of unplanned urbanisation. The old buildings are to be broken down and new ones come in their place.

Another painting contains the same door and it introduces a dream. It has a pole. There are bricks, a sandy impression and poles. Broken images of rooftops have been included. Salahuddin's purpose is to leave an indelible mark on the minds of the people of the rich past of Old Dhaka.

Another bird's eye view presents an area where people are shopping. This painting has been done based on an old market place. The blue dark colours



There are the broken images of Dholaikhal, famous for its market of spare parts for old cars and machinery.

The painting of a circle which stands for an old dried up pond can be spotted in another painting. At the back are old buildings. This is a part of Salahuddin's imagination. It is in turquoise green, and thick white paint. Through a broken window an image in scarlet can be seen. This again is from the artist's memory. The walls appear faded and grey. This is an impression of the place and a lot of the images have their origin in the artist's imagination.

On the black background is the contrast and one can find a mosque. There are images of boats. The

are to denote a dark alley. The silver is to denote light pouring in. There are intersecting wires plus a boat. As the wall was moss covered, green has been used to denote this. Visible are the old red bricks. Gold is there to brighten the picture.

Yet another old structure is falling apart in the next miniature entrée. Poor people are putting their banners. This is from the artist's memory. The green is used for hope that in future this area will be developed. The white is for relief. It is apparent that some trees are still alive and are struggling to live. There is the water from the Buriganga. The water today is not blue but the artist, from his memory keeps it as such. ■