

The July sun sparkled and reflected from the rows of tin-shed roofs that the almost hundred year old PK Sen building looked out upon. The little known, Prashanna Kumar Sen building was cracking at its seams; the pale yellow and green painted walls were peeling and gave the walls a snakeskin texture.

On a hot afternoon, Sadya Mizan and her team of twelve unpacked their bags, fit a fan, bought a stove and settled down in this building, located in Sadarghat area of the port city in Chittagong, for the fifth season of the Residential Art Exchange Program under Uronto.

Uronto, is an art exchange program that has successfully completed documenting little known historic sites in Bangladesh. From the Lakhutia Jamindar Bari in Jibannanda Das's Barisal to Lalor's Kushtia and finally the port city-Chittagong, Uronto is growing one art and one old building at a time.

With an aim to recreate memories, document fast disappearing relics of history and provide an alternative platform to showcase art, Mizan founded Uronto right after graduating in Fine Arts from Dhaka University.

It was the nostalgia for her grandparent's residence in the Baul capital Kushtia and her desire to do something novel that brought about Uronto, an art exchange program that collaborates with painters, sculptors, installation artists, visual artists, performance artists, photographers, musicians, sound artists, craftsmen, textile designers, writers and historians or simply anyone that connects with old architectures and can showcase their time spent there in a creative way.

URONTO, FLYING AWAY IN SEARCH OF ART

Recreating memories of PK Sen building through art

ABIDA RAHMAN CHOWDHURY



PHOTO: NAZIM



PHOTO: ARIFIN

The artists who came together for the fifth season of Uronto had a long, arduous and memory-filled journey ahead of them. First they set about digging the stories behind the PK Sen building. Although most people in the area grew up with the PK Sen building as an already a looming structure in their small town, one weather-beaten tea-seller and few other old locals could remember stories of the original owner- PK Sen. Stories and conversations with the locals and the chai-wala over tea and puffed rice revealed that PK Sen was a wealthy businessman and legend has it he hired a Muslim architect most probably from Karachi, brought him to Bangladesh who then designed PK Sen building explaining its characteristic Islamic architecture. In search of PK Sen's story the Uronto team came across the family record book from the descendants of PK Sen which turned out to be a treasure trove of details for the team.

After PK Sen went bankrupt, the forefathers of the current owners bought this building in an auction. Today little is known of the old owners and Sadya Mizan and her team of artists took it upon themselves to drown in the nostalgia, weave a story from the collected memories and showcase it for people.

What Uronto aims to do with their art programme is document these memories of little importance to many yet a significant part of history, nostalgia, culture and our glorious past.

As the team settled down each member of the exchange programme began to find inspiration for their art works to be displayed at the Open Studio Day, which was scheduled to be held on the last day of their 10-days stay.

Over hot tea, toast biscuits, mustard-yellow khichuri, fresh fish fried in mustard oil till crisp and the buzz of flies, the numbered days in PK Sen building started winding down and each member designed something unique to present at the open studio.

Reetu Sattar, a leading performance artist in Bangladesh, designed a visual performance titled 'Dhulay milaay shokoli', meaning 'everything eventually becomes

a part of the Earth'. Tingled with the mystery of PK Sen, the performance showcased how all memories eventually fade away, how all people leave, become stardust eventually.

Sze, from Hong Kong is a theatre activist who majored in Sound design, collected broken pieces of bricks, stones, mud chips lying around the PK Sen building to device an instrument that created music. She titled her first work as: Time Machine (A Sound Sculpture).

This is a machine to hear the time passing and all the falling pieces are from PK Sen Building each carries within them lost time and fading memories, which also changes the sound emanating from within as the pieces keep breaking apart in small pieces inside, Sze said.

Meanwhile, Shohrab from Chittagong, Bangladesh who keenly observed the work in Season 5, will be documenting his observations in a small publication

using words and shapes inspired from his stay in the building. He also did an installation using small props such as magnifying glasses, and minuscule texts that were hidden in plain sight all over the building.

Fiction writer and poet Shihab from Dhaka, Bangladesh showcased his work through photographs and poems to recreate PK Sen on paper. Whilst Julia from Brazil, made twelve mud sculptures inspired from the cracks of the building symbolising each day she spent in the house and in Bangladesh.

With wall paintings, sketches, photographs, write-ups, music, sculptures and the love and support of Ghosh family (current owners of the PK Sen building) the ten days in PK Sen building came to an end. And the memories of a Hindu businessman who travelled to faraway lands, gathered inspiration for his house and one day lost it all, was brought alive through art. ■

ART



PHOTO: NAZIM

STRIKING A CHORD

RESOLUTION FOR 2017: COMPREHENDING THE 'DIFFERENT'

ELITA KARIM

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

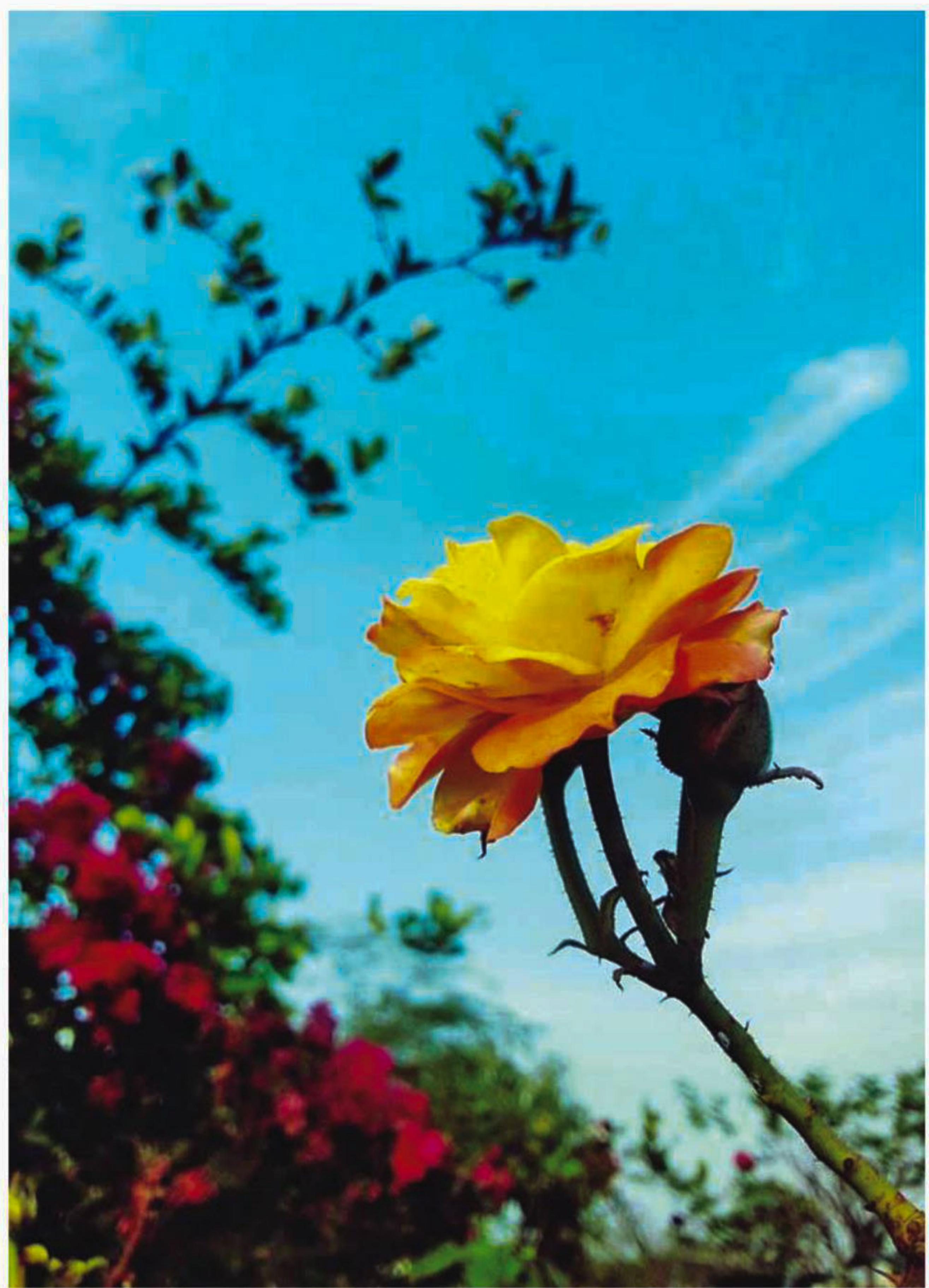
As we sign off with 2016, we look forward to 2017, hoping to amend our ways, letting go of bad habits and develop new ones. I bet many of you are still working on your resolutions – lose weight, read more, save more money etc etc! It doesn't matter if half of these resolutions get lost by the 10th day of January – at least making that list, imagining oneself of achieving all those goals and looking forward to starting afresh – keeps you happy!

I, too, am making my own set of resolutions. In fact, I am doing so while I type. And I have different note books where I write a variety of resolutions according to the categories I had created earlier. For instance, in the little black book, I am writing a list of things to do in office - cleaning my desk, giving away books, throwing 15 or so plastic water bottles stashed under the table – and so on. In the blue coloured notebook, I plan to list stories and assignments for myself and the team (never too late to work on a Pahela Baishakh story for April 2017!). And of course, within the pages of the yellow spiral, I plan to list down habits that I plan to develop – meditation, exercising, swimming every day, reading more, staying clam – and all the other impossible feats I plan to accomplish, every single year.

No matter what our personal lists may be – the one thing that we must accomplish in the year 2017, is to practice tolerance and to be more accepting. Clearly, the year 2016 was in some ways moving a step back, rather than moving forward. People have lost their homes and are now struggling to build new homes in foreign lands; racism is out there in the open and the world will now deal with Donald Trump – a world leader of sorts.

However, moving closer to home, one cannot ignore the atrocities that have occurred and occur on a regular basis every year. Starting from rapes, murders, sexual harassments to burning homes of the Hindu and Santal communities – Bangladesh was in the news for all the wrong reasons.

As we look forward to the year 2017, let's make a promise to work harder to try and comprehend issues that are different, accepting ideas that were never ours and destroying the notion of the 'other'. Only then can we ever dream of becoming global citizens and move forward in the most positive way. ■



ABOUT TOWN



FUND RAISING LIVE CONCERT FOR LUCKY AKHAND

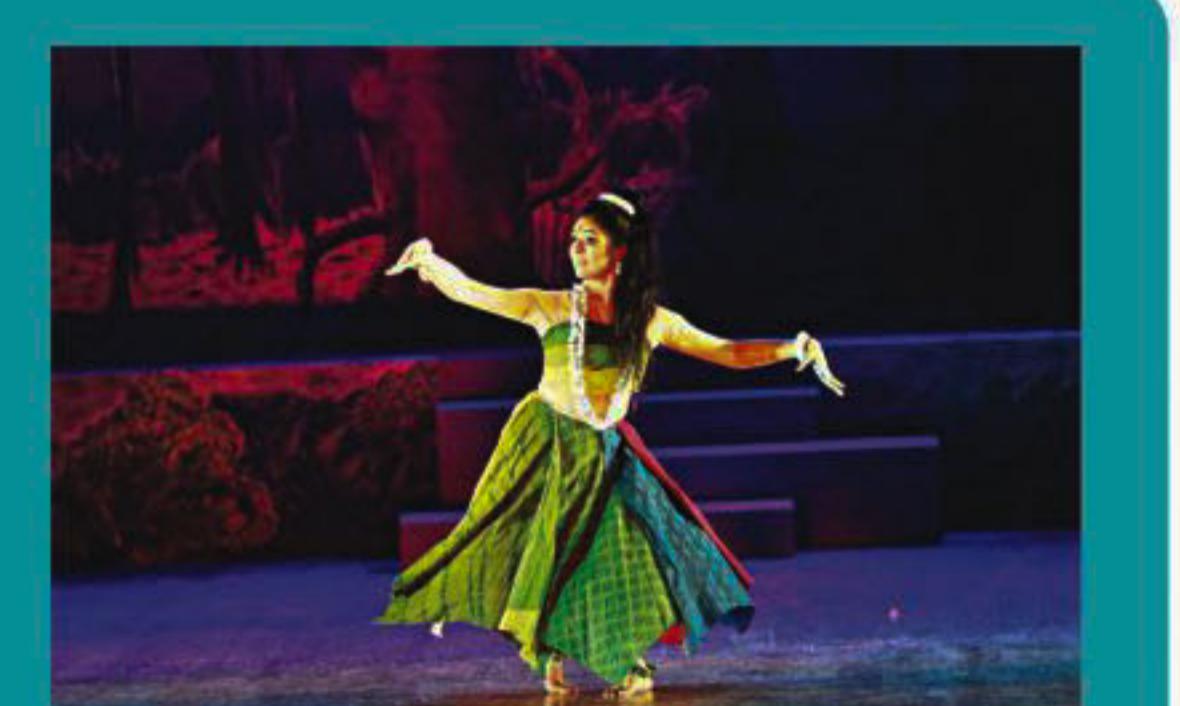
January 02, 3 - 11 pm
Bashundhara Convention Center
Hosted by: Ahmed Ferdous and Maruf Ahmed

For query, visit:
<https://www.facebook.com/events/177976992285923/>



EXOTIC BIRD SHOW 2017

January 5-6, 10 am - 10 pm
National Press Club
Hosted By: R H Khan Antu
For queries, visit:
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1343920288951649/>



SHAKUNTALA BHABNA'S DANCE DRAMA

December 31, 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Jatiyo Natyashala, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy

Hosted by: Samina Husain Prema
Ticket can be found at: Ticketchai.com
For more information, visit:
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1235535173152528/>