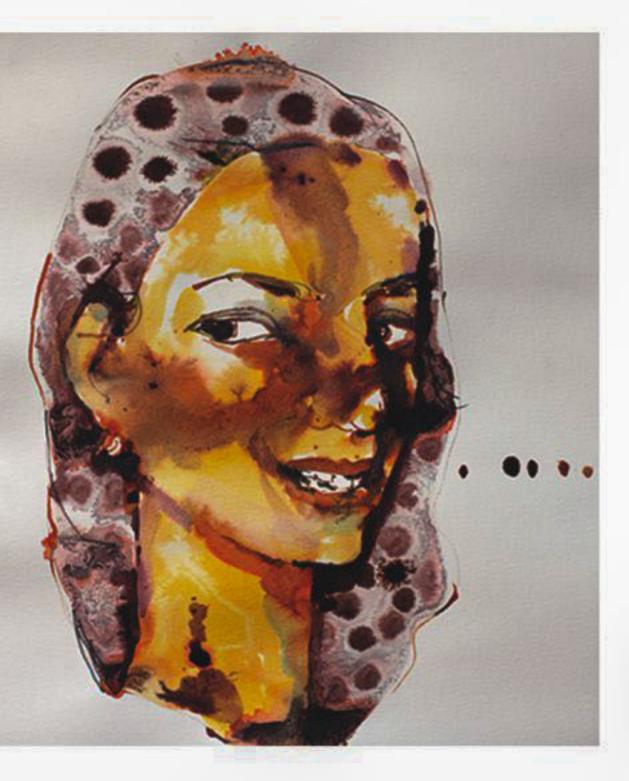
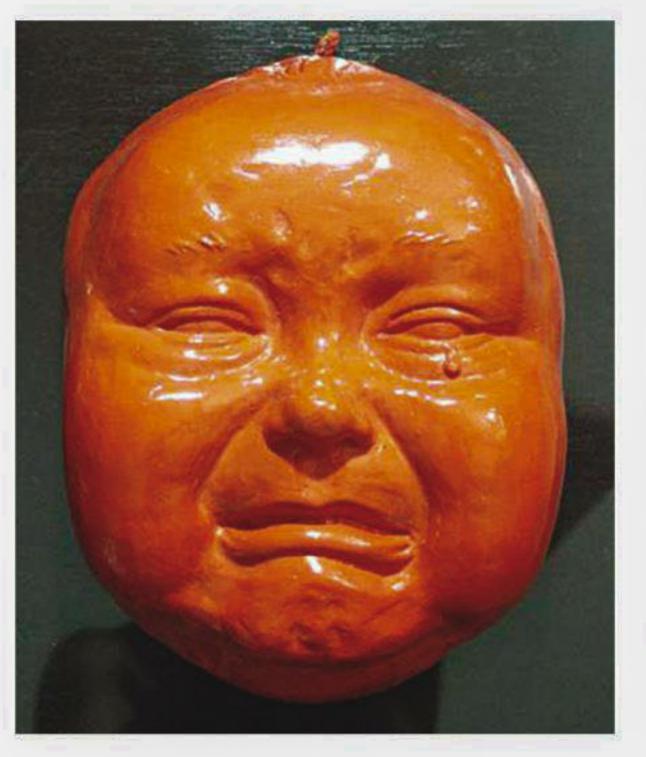
12 LIFESTYLE









PERSPECTIVE

No more masquerade...

"Take a bow, the night is over
This masquerade is getting older
Light are low, the curtains down
There's no one here...

Say your lines but do you feel them
Do you mean what you say when there's no
one around

Watching you, watching me, one lonely star..."

A mask is more than an objet d'art made by the able hands of an artisan, hung on the walls of an atelier or an uptown art shop for the connoisseurs to rave, the critic to piece passionate reviews about, sending kudos to the artist, appreciating creative exuberance at its finest!

If every book is an autobiography, every artwork is a reflection of the artists' inner being, and for masks perhaps, this is even truer. But they are more than just works of passion - a form taking the shape from the pulp of papier-mâché into a tigress head, or a wooden block chiselled and polished with lacquer giving it the final appearance of a Greek demigod.

Masks are an everyday reality because the life we lead sees us wearing them in one form or the other, everyday.

Does that equate to the world being full



of guile and deceit? It probably does not, yet logic dictates that if the world is a stage, we are just actors performing, absorbed in our stint often revealing our identity, but mostly taking up avatars as need be. The masks we wear, figuratively speaking, make us presentable for we lead a life not as an expression of



our inner being but a image that we project

lip colour can not only add a shade to those

luscious, well maintained lips, it can also grab

the attention of the opposite sex, and as one

pouts, rule over his senses. And then there is

impression on the starched white shirt of the

The man in question is not free from such

which the damsel with pouty lips is bound to

take notice, while the life-changing 'bump'

accessorise...masks, you say? Perhaps not.

But our consumer driven world promises

that giving the right look – or donning the

right mask – one can win over the Chair of

the board meeting and the woman in ques-

Irrespective of what we feel inside, our

the famed endorsement that shows how

gentleman one accidentally bumps into.

notions either. The toothpaste bought a

week earlier guarantees fresher breath,

The dress we wear, the way we

tion with equal prowess.

takes place.

those very lips 'accidentally' stamp an

Popular culture spreads the notion that a

for the sake of universal acceptance.





outer self must shout a perceived notion of sheer perfection. There is no place for weakness or frail, human emotions. We must rise with every occasion, out do ourselves in everything we do; our stellar performance should be like a rock, hard enough to read out the news of the passing of one's spouse

in front of millions glued to their seats waiting for the next big infotainment.

The everyday roles that we play see us take up masks. At one go we are a caring father, a callous husband, an office executive and maybe a companion with a funny bone whom everyone loves to share their Thursday evening Mojito with.

Masks, you ask? Possibly yes.

Masks we wear in life give us the ability to immerse in a false belief, to project an image of ourselves, which more often than not, is in reality, non-existing. It helps to feed our ego, necessary to continue life as we know it. It helps us fulfil the various roles expected from us. If not to guile, the figurative masks that we don at least help us be who we aspire to become, sometimes at the price of

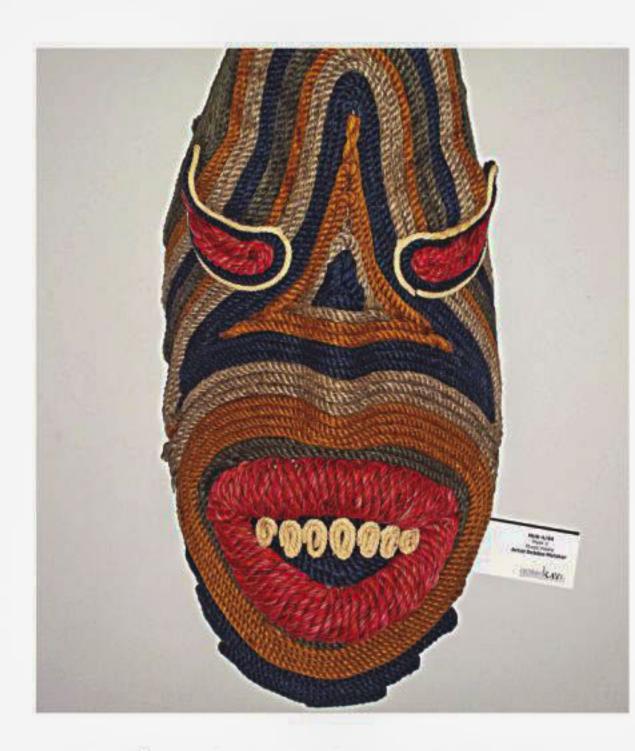
losing our very identity.

In primitive times, cavemen of Almeria drew images of the animals they hunted, their belief that once capable of having a two-dimensional depiction of the three dimensional four-legged walking beasts, they shall have the super-human strength to overpower the animals. Once hunted, they fashioned masks from the animal skulls, a flashy display of their power, and their humble homage to the gods.

As culture progressed, masks were used in performances and for impersonations, which could not be done unless concealed and veiled behind a mask, as an open mimicry was perceived to have deadly consequences.

Traditions have it, that honey gatherers of the Sunderbans wear masks at the back of their heads in a hope to deceive a pouncing tiger, which according to legend, attacks only from the rear.

May be all of us are like that. The duality of our existence is possibly to deter the pouncing tiger which is life leaping on us. At the back of our plastic smiles, we often hide a solemn sigh; behind our jovial laughter we shield ominous darkness. And then there are times when the mask we wear



personifies what is within us. Sometimes, the mask we wear is no mask at all.

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif
Photo courtesy: Galleri Kaya, Uttara.
Thanks to Shamim Reza, Lecturer, Institute
of Fine Arts, Jahangirnagar University.