



Artsy milkshake refilled for the season

NAFIS IMTIAZ ONISH

In the melancholic humdrums of a hectic city, we are like rusty old machines gruellingly running from one job to the next. And in this dogged pursuit of all things insignificantly material, art comes in like whiffs of fresh air to take over all our senses. The Milkshake Collective is such an "underground art movement" by a group of effervescent young artists. After a successful event last year, Milkshake Collective decided to "refill" the eccentric art exhibition yet again this year.

Needless to say, its effect was very similar to that of an icy cold cup of milkshake in a tediously hot day - super refreshing!

The Milkshake Collective is, in their words, an "eclectic, odd mix of local artists that we know and love". The event also showcases talented newcomers to form a pleasant marriage of creativity and celebration. "Milkshake Collective-The refill" was the second edition of this rather unconventional art exhibition. The three-day event began on August 10 in Gulshan's North End Cityscape Tower and drew the curtains on August 12 after three bustling days of art galore.

Unlike usual art summits where international artists orchestrate the galleries, the Milkshake Collective is a platform for young local artists. "No big sponsors, no big agenda - just the little guys shaking things up!" With this motto, the latest edition featured a familiar lineup to the last one, along with several exceedingly promising talents. It had the usual suspects like Liza Hasan (Liza's Brushes), Farah Khandker, Wasi Ahmed, Kabir Ava (Kavayra), Sayeef Mahmud (Inksmith), Saria Saguaro (Pretty Shitty Art), Nuhash Humayun (#esh), SheviVee (Veevinci), Istela Imam (Istela Illustrated), Manik N' Ratan et al. alongside new inclusions for the season like Deory, Dhaka Yeah, Ladies in Punk and Bloom City.

Before I even walked into the gallery, I was pretty convinced that the event would not disappoint me, and it certainly did not. A gust of invigorating aura ushered the guests inside. The mundane was pushed aside by a burst of joyous colours. The 20 artists sprawled along the entire room with their work of art. The artwork ranged from traditional canvas paintings to modern installations, from

contemporary paintings to pop-cultural illustrations, from the trendy to the bizarre. Furthermore, it even offered quality merchandise varying from stall to stall. There were unique t-shirts, fun postcards and badges, beautiful posters, Salvador Dali coasters etc.

The place was packed with visitors the entire time, marvelling at the skilful representations of various aspects of our rather mediocre life. The best part was how clearly one could distinguish between the techniques used by one artist in comparison to the other. It was not galleries after galleries dedicated to different styles, rather a sweet symphony of contrasting themes. For instance, while Triory's illustrations depicted the gloomier side of human emotions, Arts by Rats chose to portray them using

satirical cartoons and caricatures. Nuzart presented a psychedelic perspective on everyday objects while Mxnsterr had a "deshi" take on her paintings.

Tanmoy had one of the wittiest ideas with his "cartoon mural" (well, sort of). He had the visitors pick a note that contained the description of a character hidden somewhere in his massive cartoon piece densely packed with bizarre Dhakaite characters we spectate every day. The visitors had to find the described character and pin the note on it. It was surprising how the frantic search helped notice all the amusing details.

The praxinoscope was a cool, nifty addition by Art of Murphy as well. The revival of the antediluvian animation device was a testament to how timeless art can be. Gazi Nafi and T-Pot made

unbelievably lifelike wearable props which became the favourite photo-booth for visitors.

There were moderately large crowds gathered around some of the stalls. As I barged my way in, I realized the crowds surrounded live painters. It really was astounding to watch how every seemingly careless stroke brought beautiful paintings to life right in front of our eyes. Some even got sketches and caricatures made as presents and memorabilia. The entire place was abuzz with life.

Wasi Ahmed recollected how it all started last year, "After the successful completion of The InvisiBellas, a street art project on Women's day, we realized how all of us missed each other. Then Liza Hasan calls up to her house to her house to start off something that we can all work together on. And that was the beginning." He further elucidated how the Milkshake Collective was even bigger this year, "The venue was fun, vibrant, and full of energy. It had a surprisingly a great turn over. It was great to see a lot art-enthusiasts having a good time."

During the closing ceremony, there were several heartwarming live musical performances. It was indeed the perfect end to the perfect event.

The Milkshake Collective felt very close to the heart. The people, the ambience, the art — all of it felt so familiar. The art did not feel like a faceless representation of outlandish emotions; one could easily relate to them either through inner yearnings or through sheer nostalgia. It was a magnificent experience for art enthusiasts and casual visitors alike. It was not just another art exhibition, it was a creative hub for young artists and art enthusiasts. We need a lot more of this scrumptious milkshake in our lives. The country needs more of these underground art movements to hone out the aspiring artists and upcoming talent.

In a nutshell, Milkshake Collective was the best art-event of the year, hands down. I probably speak for everyone when I say I am eagerly looking forward to the next refill.

Nafis Imtiaz Onish believes grinning is the answer to everything and avidly loves art, astronomy & all things nerdy. Send him Carl Sagan fan art at nafisimtiaz17@gmail.com

