



# Meditative and Engrossing: The ever-evolving work of Hashem Khan

ZIAUL KARIM

A discarded corrugated paper box torn inside out and pasted on a flat field of blue; a colour tube drawn in bold black brush stroke shimmering, shining under shafts of light morning hues – it is against this backdrop that a swirl of blue lines originates from the tube, intensifying the pictorial balance of a distinctively new work by Hashem Khan.

In another work of this new series, the image of a colour tube sits on yellow splotches of paint. With the thick red splattered on the tube on the top, the brown corrugated papers underneath lend the painting a bottom note as if they are emanating from a perfume.

In still another work of the same series, on a colour field of light and deep blue, torn pieces of corrugated boards nestle in a cozy composition, as if playfully forming arrangements on their own.

In painting, colour is generally used to serve either as decorative embellishment of the form or as something evoking strong emotion. But Hashem Khan takes neither option on this occasion. He employs colours in a manner analogous to playing a stringed instrument by striking the right chord to produce music. The effect is a composition almost like a lullaby.

A flurry of primary colours dominates his acrylic collage series on wood. The entire surface is harmonized into a vibrant field of pure colour that combines into a structural composition. He uses colour as a means of expression, rather than for description. His endeavor is to uplift and carry the forms in fluid motion on the surface of the canvas.

His predilection for colour as a means to achieve harmony and convey calm beauty is a carryover from his work of the past twenty years. In his 1999 painting "Landscape", he had performed a delicate balance of thick



Collage, wood, corrugated board, paper and acrylic.

paint of light green applied with broad brush strokes on the deep field of green, reveling in the interplay and control of powerful hues of exquisite colours.

His canvas has over the years have seamlessly moved back and forth from abstract to representational imagery and orchestrated continuous

interplay between them.

In his artistic career, the new collage series with colour tube is especially significant since it marks the culmination of his lifelong quest for understanding colour musically. The series is a symbolic expression of the intimate relation he has been enjoying with colour. For

him the freedom of colour is a moment of epiphany.

Among the current exhibits of the collage series are works that are reminiscent of his old styles where representative elements interplay with abstraction. This is indicative of his enduring affinity for semi-abstraction. It will linger on for a while but he is now apparently wholeheartedly moving forward because of his new-found liberation through colour.

What is most striking in the current show—now being held at Nalini Kanta Bhattasali Gallery of National Museum -- is that at 76 the grand old man of art has taken a fancy to wood sculpture, a medium he had hardly any experience of working with previously. With a chisel and a hammer as his chief implements, he seems to have approached wood like a scissors-happy child would have taken to origami.

His newfound medium may be termed as wood cut-outs: each one with their simplicity in execution and arrangement a tableau of joyous celebration of the inner power of the form. His bird sculpture is an arrangement of four blocks of wood. About to fly, the majestic gait and gaiety of the bird has been brought to life with minimum of expression. The delineation of his wood sculpture and efforts to liberate form from all its decorative elements is reminiscent of what Spanish poet Juan Ramón Jiménez tried to achieve in naked poetry, devoid of all external adornment.

Henri Matisse once told his friend that he wanted 'anyone tried, worn down, driven to the limits of endurance, to find calm and repose' in his art. If one is looking for such calm and serenity in art, one would surely find the late style of Hashem Khan meditative and engrossing.

Ziaul Karim is an art critic.

## WHAT'S ON

**National Instrumental Music Fest**  
Venue: Nandanmancha, BSA  
Date: Jan 1-10  
Time: 4pm-9pm

**Contemporary Indian Print Exhibit**  
Venue: Gallery No. 6, National Art Gallery, BSA  
Date: Dec 25-Jan 6  
Time: 11am-8pm

**Solo Art Exhibition**  
Beyond the Insignificant  
Artist: Tasadduk Hossain Dulu  
Venue: Kala Kendra  
Date: Dec 15-Jan 6  
Time: 5-8pm

**Tenth Anniversary of Sporsho**  
Venue: Abdul Karim Sahitya Bisharad Auditorium, Bangla Academy  
Date: Jan 6  
Time: 3:30pm

**Poetry Session**  
Kobi O Kobita  
Organiser: Batighar  
Venue: Batighar Dhaka  
Date: January 6  
Time: 5pm-7pm

**Classical Concert**  
Raaga & Rhythm  
Organiser: Peshkar  
Venue: Chhayanaut Auditorium  
Date: January 5  
Time: 6:30pm



## THE WEEKENDER

# "I've been fishing for more than 20 years" ...Riaz

ROBINA RASHID BHUIYAN

Although Riaz is rarely seen on the big screen these days, the actor remains one of the industry's iconic heroes. The actor took Dhallywood by storm and appeared in over a 100 films, and has won three National Film Awards. In addition to his acting prowess, the star is also noted for his business acumen and has led a number of ventures in different industries, and is also a trained pilot. In a recent conversation with *The Daily Star*, he reveals yet another surprising passion, and more.

**What do you like doing on your day off?**

**Riaz:** Usually I spend it with my family and kids, but if I have extra time I go angling with friends. My favourite fishing spots are Pubail and Gazipur, where they have a big pond, but sometimes I go out of the country, such as Bangkok or USA. I've been fishing more than 20 years, and there is nothing more relaxing in the world.

**What was your last fishing trip like, and what do you enjoy most about it?**

**Riaz:** Last time was in December, when I went to fish at a lake in Pubail with my friends. We had plenty of catch, around 20-25 fishes, some weighing up to 5kg which made us all quite happy. When you wait for the fish to bite the bait, there is a moment of tranquility and quietude, and an acceptance for things to happen when they do. The most exciting moment is the tug of war once the fish is hooked, and you don't know whether you'll win the struggle. The fish may break the line and escape, or you may triumph and catch it in your net. On these trips we don't like the fuss of barbecues; we are just too busy fishing. But I do have plans to take my family along soon, during which we'll have a cook out.

**What is your favourite place to retreat to?**

**Riaz:** That would be my home.

**What are you currently working on?**

**Riaz:** I am not taking film offers as the moment -- I don't feel the market is quite right yet. I am quite busy with my firm, which is a 360 degree communications agency called Pink Creative, where we offer business solutions to banks and other corporate offices.

**And finally - what resolutions do you have for the New Year?**

**Riaz:** I'm not really one to set any resolutions, because there is no way of knowing what happens next in life. I like to take each day as it comes.

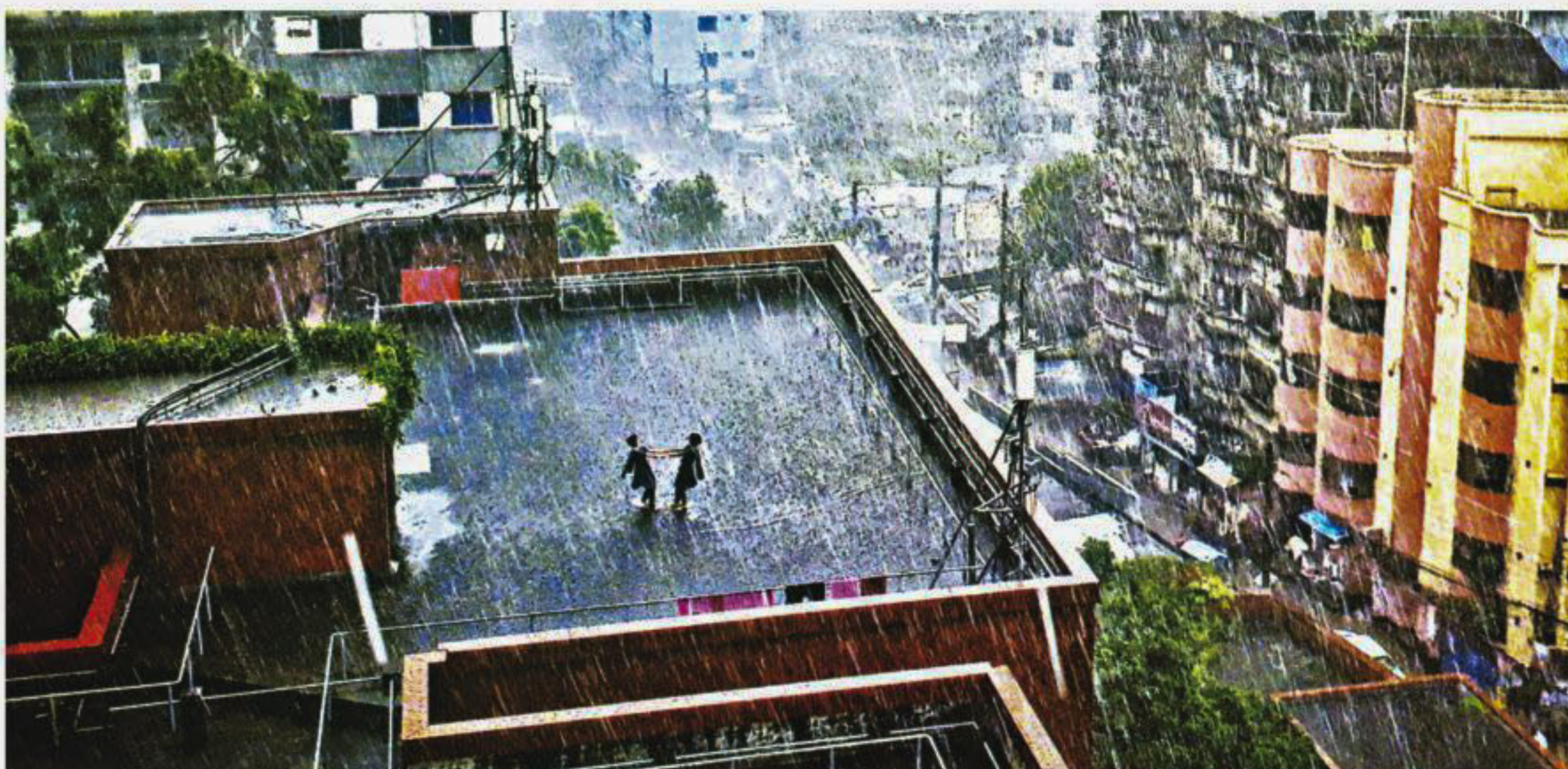
# Celebrating Life winning photos adorn SCB Calendar

A CORRESPONDENT

The Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) on Wednesday announced the arrival of its yearly calendars featuring the top 12 photographs from The Daily Star-SCB Celebrating Life 2017 contest. The photographs have been included on each page of the 2018 calendar.

Celebrating Life has been one of the most promising initiatives to recognise the power of art, culture and diversity of Bangladesh. Within the theme of 'Celebrating Diversity in Bangladesh' participants were able to capture the aesthetics of life from every nook and cranny of the country last year.

"It is with that purpose in mind, Standard Chartered Bank and The Daily Star have come together to honour our talented photographers, filmmakers and songwriters through annual competition under the programme of Celebrating Life,"



said Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

For the competitors, the best part of the contest was they were allowed absolute freedom to explore any

subject matter of their choice within the theme. "Winning the first position of Celebrating Life Photography Contest was one of the biggest achievements of my life,"

said Hasan Mahmud Prottoy, the winner of the photography contest.

The top 12 participants are requested to come to The Daily Star Centre and collect their gifts.

# "Classical music should be accessible to every child"

## In conversation with Saskia Rao de-Haas

FAHMIM FERDOUS

The cello, a bowed string instrument of the violin family, has been one of the major components of Western classical music, be it in chamber or orchestral music. Dutch cellist Saskia Rao-de Haas brought her signature Indian classical cello to the Bengal Classical Music Festival this year, giving the Dhaka audience a new sound to cherish.

Saskia first came to contact with Indian classical music during her Masters in ethnomusic at the Rotterdam Conservatory of Music where she studied under Indian classical flute legend Pt. Hariprasad Chaurasia. She came to India and studied Indian classical further, redesigned the cello to play Indian classical ragas on it, and has been performing in India and worldwide.

After her fascinating debut performance at the festival, Saskia spoke briefly to The Daily Star about her inspiration, instrument and more.

**What are your first impressions of Dhaka and the festival?**

**Saskia:** I am so happy to be a part of this; it's such an amazing experience to be here. The audience is so very warm, kind and welcoming. From the moment I landed here, it has been a

really good experience.

**What inspired you to play the cello in the Indian classical form?**

**Saskia:** (laughs) The original plan was I wanted to know a little more about Indian music. So since I was already a cellist, this was the easiest way ... not knowing it would really change the

whole course of my artistic expression. If you know a little, you want to know more and more. I gradually got drawn into it.

**It's said that the sarangi is the instrument that sounds the closest to the human voice. In your performance today, one of the first notes you hit really resembled a human voice.**

**Saskia:** Absolutely. It is exactly like the male voice. It is the same family as the violin, but the depth gives it that sound. You mentioned the sarangi; the pathos it has in its tone, the cello has it as well. In any Indian film when

there is a very sad scene we'll hear the sarangi. Similarly when there is a sad or dark scene, you'll hear the cello as well. So the sarangi and the cello are interestingly related in this way.

**You are the only musician of your kind playing this instrument. How do you plan to pass it on?**

**Saskia:** Musicianship is not about



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

ownership. I am very passionate about music education. I teach cello both in India and abroad. But even more than cello, I am passionate that classical music is accessible to every child.

Every child should have a foundation in classical music; let me provide that to them and they will automatically choose more instruments. Now we see the children only choose the guitar or keyboard. When we open up the musical knowledge -- in a fun, age appropriate way... we can't teach in the same way as a hundred years ago happened. We need to adapt it to this time. So yes, I want to continue that.

Along with her husband and frequent musical collaborator noted sitarist Pt. Shubhendra Rao, Saskia has established a music education programme titled Sangeet4all (based in New Delhi), which serves schools and families throughout India by providing music curriculum grounded in Indian classical music with a global outlook. The curriculum includes original songs, stories and activities for introducing beginner to advanced musical concepts of Indian music in a way that is appropriate for early childhood education. The curriculum is in line with the guidelines of Indian CBSE board for primary performing arts education.