

ARTS EXTRAVAGANZA

Nadia Samdani on Dhaka Art Summit

ZAHANGIR ALOM

The fourth edition of Dhaka Art Summit (DAS) begins at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on February 2. The grand art fiesta proved hugely popular in the past, which has led to an exciting modification in this year's installation. After the overwhelming responses received last year, DAS will be extended to 9 days. Director of DAS Nadia Samdani, who is also the President and co-founder of the prestigious Samdani Art Foundation, shared some insights into the significance of the multifarious expressions of contemporary art of South and South-East Asia and beyond, as well the role played by international curators and participating artists. Excerpts:

"This time, the summit has been extended for nine days (February 2-10). Last year we had 138,000 local visitors and 800 international guests in a four-day programme. This time we have over 300 artists and 120 international speakers including Indian scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and 10 curators to participate in lots of symposiums, talks and art shows. It's going to be held under one roof where 10 separate shows will go on under the hold of different curators, who have conducted extensive research, supported by us for the last two years."

"What is different this time is that DAS previously focused on the South-Asian region; but this time we have included South-East Asia emphasising Bangladesh's trade-link with other countries. So, whether it is fabrics, designs or silks, the curators have done extensive research on how Bangladesh can benefit from the connection through the art initiative."

"Apart from the Samdani Art Award, we'll have an education pavilion for which we had an open call for the third and fourth year students of Architecture to submit their designs and models. An international jury selected the winner from a huge number of submissions, whose project will be displayed at the venue."

"The summit will shed light on a broad spectrum

related to art. We have lots of speakers from Harvard, Columbia, Cambridge and all over. We have directors of MoMA, Tate Modern, -- all speaking on the same panel. Along with the chief curator Diana Campbell Betancourt, who will represent Samdani Art Foundation, there will be nine other curators working on a particular theme. Large scale installations and performances by well-known artists will be displayed at the entrance of the venue."

"Among many interesting projects, artist Zuleikha Chaudhuri, whose family owns the Bhawal Estate, will arrange a court room where she will display the original photographs, documents and everything to resume the famous Bhawal Court Case. So it will be an interactive performance where real lawyers and judges will deal with the longest running historical case. Another Indian artist, Neha Choksi, along with her team, will also perform another interactive live project."

"As weaving plays an important role in shaping modern civilisation, there will be a huge display of textiles with the presence of weavers from indigenous groups. Weavers from the Australian indigenous groups will take part in finding links and trade routes of Bangladeshi indigenous groups. Bangladeshi artists' works will be prominently displayed at the Summit. Diana's show will display noted Bangladeshi

n archives of the Biennale are pre-serve d in Fukuo ka Asian Art Museu m in Japan, where Diana has spent



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

artist Kanak Champa Chakma's works shedding light on how she established her journey. Her mother's weavings, fabrics and flags will also be showcased."

"A researched based project on Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh (AABB) will be exhibited at the Summit. The artworks of the first 10 years (first five editions) will be displayed at a special show. The mai



THE WEEKENDER

"I used to sing when I was young"

...Moushumi Barua

ROBINA RASHID BHUIYAN

In the entertainment industry, actors and singers often bag the limelight, creating bigger challenges for other artistes seeking to pave their way in other avenues. But that has not been so for Moushumi Barua, who has created a household name for herself years ago as a television programme host. Her most notable contribution lies in her 18 years of service for Channel i, where she tactfully covered programmes surrounding a myriad of issues. The Daily Star recently had the opportunity to get to know the TV personality a little better, including her life off camera.

How do you like spending weekends?

MB: I love spending time with my family, especially with my dear mother and the famous singer Shaheen Samad who is like my elder sister. We both enjoy shopping together and going to the movies. And since she's a singer, I get to visit a lot of cultural programmes with her.

What was the last film you've enjoyed?

MB: That would be "Gohin Baluchor", directed by Badrul Anam Saad.

What are you currently working on now?

MB: Well I've been a programme producer and host for Channel i for the past 18 years, and currently I am hosting 8 or 9 shows. There are special, shorter programmes which I host as well, such as "Taray Taray Deepshikha", which is coming up soon.

Coming from a well known musical background, how did you venture into hosting?

MB: I used to sing when I was young, as my entire family is deeply immersed in music. I joined Channel i upon the encouragement of my parents when I was quite young. The scenario was quite different back then; as there were not many TV stations, the field was more demanding and extremely competitive. I underwent a month-long training process before I was even allowed to be in front of the camera. All the hard work made great pay-offs; over the years I have enjoyed hosting programmes spanning many different issues. In 2015, I was bestowed with an honour in Los Angeles for representing my country for many years.

Beyond the camera, what other passions do you have?

MB: My hobby has always been getting to know people, their experiences and stories, and what makes them the way they are.

Nandita Das chronicles the life of Manto

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

The vivisection of the Indian subcontinent has torn asunder the life of millions including some of the finest writers from the region. Among them is critically-acclaimed Urdu writer Saadat Hasan Manto. But Nandita Das's coming feature film 'Manto', says the actor-director, is not a biopic in its conventional sense as it chronicles just four turbulent years of the author's life before and after Partition.

"A feature film is not a documentary so 'Manto', featuring Nawazuddin Siddiqui in the title role, contains nuances which some may notice, some may not. I tried to weave a story set in the period between 1946 and 1950, a tumultuous phase for the two countries as well as Manto," Das said on Wednesday during a session of Tata Steel Kolkata Literary Meet here. The film is about people and the way they look at humanity in the worst of



Nawazuddin Siddiqui to don the central role in the film.

the situations, she added.

"I tried to be very intimate about the way I showed the events in the film. But not all Partition stories are about big events," she said about her film.

Asked about the reasons behind casting Nawaz in the role of Manto, Das said "I wanted someone who can be very arrogant and selfish at one point of time and extremely vulnerable at another, someone who can portray a range of emotions through eyes," she said.

"We had worked together in 'Firaq' 10 years ago and he has this amazing ability to get into the skin of a character," she said.

Nawaz said essaying the role of Manto was one of the most challenging tasks in his acting career. He said he delved into the thought process of Manto through his works and tried to imbibe his mannerisms. "I stayed away from modern gadgets and spent time looking for things that was in one way or the other associated with the writer. Since there is no video available of Manto, I could take some liberty. A lot went into the preparation of the film but it was well-planned by the director," he added.

Jayati's love for music under the spotlight

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Though virtuoso Indian singer Jayati Chakravorty's forte is Rabindra Sangeet, she is equally expert in rendering Nazrul Sangeet, folk songs, adhunik numbers and more. Following her performance at the Bengal Sangskriti Utshab, the singer shared her views on music in an interview with The Daily Star. What sets her apart is that she sings for love and peace. Excerpts:

"Alongside talent, proper training and blessings from Gurus and practice are important to sing well. Specialisation is equally important. Music is meant to touch hearts as melody has that power. If I am satisfied with my rendition, I can then satisfy the audience."

"I have learnt and lived on music from my childhood days. With precision of melody and focusing on the depth of lyrics, I try to perform Tagore songs. I learnt Tagore songs from Subhash Chowdhury who would interpret the song and suggest that I read the songs several times to comprehend the inner meaning, to visualise the song. Doing so, a singer can feel the song of his own. An emotional aspect of a song comes from there."

"The aesthetic elements of Tagore songs involve the game of melody. The playing of instruments makes a song alive. Say for example, I would sing the song 'Sakhi Bhabona Kaharey Boley' in my childhood with khol, because we were habituated in that

ent melodies every time. Literary quality is another thing with which melody has little affiliation. Yet, we cannot think of composing or arranging music for a song without thinking of aesthetic elements or literary contents of a song."



way; later, when I recorded the song for the film 'Ekti Tarar KhoNje', I found a complete different interpretation. Again, when I perform the song on stage, I discover new things as different instrumentalists play differ-

"Tagore songs contain classical aspects like dhrupad, khayal, tarana and more. An influence of Bishnupur Gharana is noticeable in Tagore songs. In our 2015 album 'Raag-er Aaloye Rabi', Pratyush Banerjee arranged

music and played classical sarod for the album while I recorded several Tagore songs themed on diverse classical ragas. We cannot include any Tagore song on a specific raga, if I think those on a classical note. But, the bard internalised the essence of classical music and created songs of his own. That's why; we don't find the pure form of Behag, Yaman, Bageshree, Natmalhar and others in his songs. It has rather become the Behag or Yaman of Tagore. So, we cannot mention Tagore songs based on melody. These are rather based on bani (lyrics)."

"Any sort of songs entail a particular rendition style and message. Prior to performing any number, I seek the specific artistic traits of the song. Open-mindedness to any sort of music is prerequisite to become an artiste. I can mention just two names -- Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle, who performed all types of song. They are our great inspiration."

The artiste's latest album "Ekantey", featuring modern poems and adhunik songs, is now available. Jayati, who greatly appreciated Bangladeshi audiences' tastes and love for music, has already started working on opulent Bangladeshi folk music."