

# Shahidul Alam's exhibition opens at Rubin Museum in New York

Internationally acclaimed Bangladeshi photographer, writer, activist and Time's Person of the Year 2018, Shahidul Alam's first comprehensive US museum survey starts following its public opening at the Rubin Museum of Art, New York, today at 6 pm (USA time).

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The exhibition will cover the works from Alam's four-decade career. He has developed a broad range of work in both education and promotion of ethics and commitment, towards the issues that affect different societies, through his activism and photography. It will run till May 4, 2020.

The exhibition features over 40 photographs and ephemera including portraits, landscapes, and scenes of daily life, strife, and resistance in the "majority world" — a phrase Alam has used since the 1990s to reframe the notion of the "third world" or "global south".

The show highlights some of Alam's most important works, including *A Struggle for Democracy*, his earliest series as a professional photojournalist, which sheds light on Bangladesh's political struggles against an autocratic leader in the 1980s. It also showcases photographs from the *Brahmaputra Diary* series, which explore life across three regions (India, the Tibetan Plateau in China, and Bangladesh) and religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam) along the majestic Brahmaputra River. A sculptural installation of portraits on straw mats from *Kalpana's Warriors*, which attempts to break the silence on the disappearance of feminist activist Kalpana Chakma, is also on exhibit at the event.

While shining an unflinching light on major Bangladeshi tragedies as well as daily life, Alam's images reveal a country and her cultures that are often misunderstood and misrepresented. The exhibition also feature his new works, including a 3D model of the prison, where he spent more than 100 days behind bars in

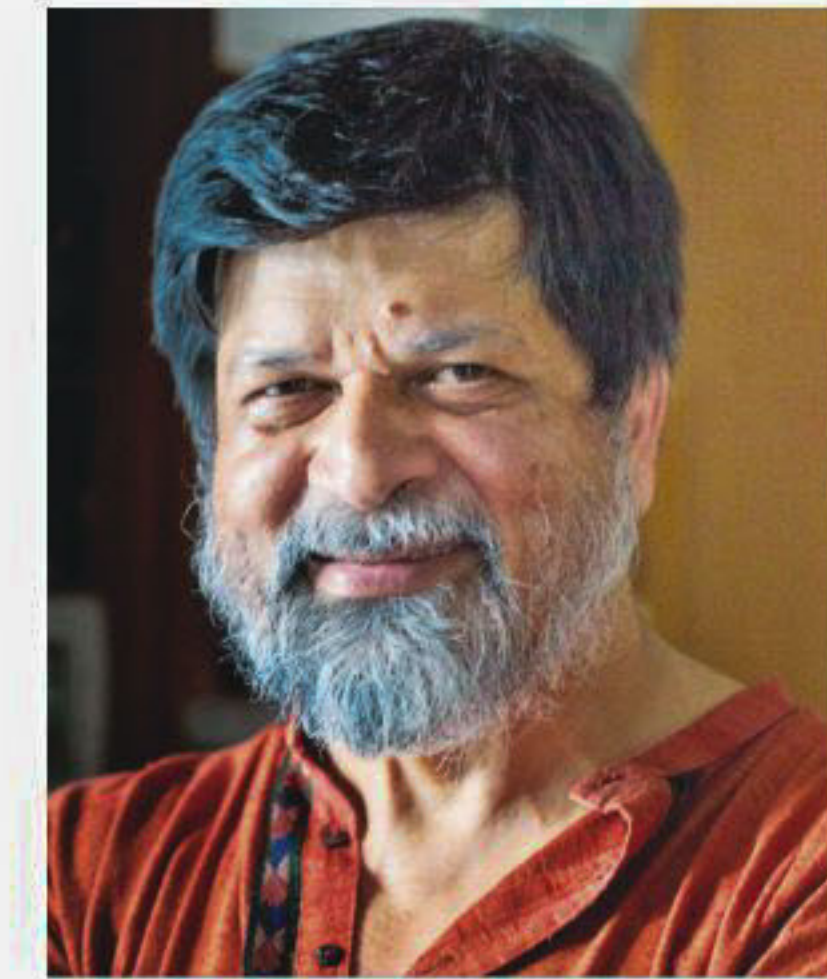


PHOTO: RAHNUMA AHMED

2018, for speaking out against the Bangladeshi government, as well as recent images taken after his release. "I heard of the possibility to show my work at the Rubin through three layers of bars with noise levels of over 100 decibels. I was in jail, but the choice was clear: this was an opportunity not to be missed," says Shahidul Alam. "Truth to Power" is a tribute to the numerous acts of resistance all across

the globe and gives hope to those who continue to believe that a better world is possible. I'm thrilled to have the support of the Rubin Museum."

In addition to his powerful photographs, Alam is the founder of institutions and initiatives such as Drik Picture Library, Pathshala South Asian Media Institute, Chobi Mela Photography Festival and Majority World. The regional solidarity he has been able to catalyse cannot be overstated and is illustrated through the photographic narrative.

"Photographic imagery in South Asia has become an effective means for the underrepresented to claim their voice and political presence. Alam is masterful at using images to tell stories and shine a light on injustices and inequities," says Beth Citron, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Rubin and organiser of the exhibition. "In a time when free speech and expression is challenged in Bangladesh and across the world, Shahidul Alam's lifelong work reveals the power of truth and voice in effecting change. As shown by the global support for Alam across the art world, literary sphere, scholarly community, and humanitarian organisations during his recent period of incarceration in Dhaka, Shahidul Alam's eminence cuts across fields." As part of the exhibition, Shahidul Alam gave a talk yesterday at 6 pm (USA time) at the Rubin Museum of Art.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

## WHAT'S ON

**Comedy Show**  
 Title: Jomjomat Comedy Night  
 Date: November 23  
 Venue: Jomjomat Cafe Gulshan  
 Time: 5:30 pm onwards

**Solo Art Exhibition**  
 Title: Self Depiction  
 Artist: Afrida Tanzim Mahi  
 Venue: Kalakendra, Mohammadpur  
 Date: October 21 – November 12  
 Time: 4 pm – 8 pm

**Architectural Exhibition**  
 Title: Noogram: The Future of Our Habits  
 Venue: Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi 27  
 Date: November 2 – 30  
 Time: 12 noon – 8 pm

**Group Art Exhibition**  
 Title: Pracher Prachin Dhara / The Ancient Lineage of The East  
 Venue: Gallery Cosmos, New DOHS, Mohakhali  
 Date: October 25 – November 10  
 Time: 12 noon – 8 pm

**Festival**  
 Title: Dhaka Lit Fest  
 Venue: Bangla Academy  
 Date: November 7-9  
 Time: 9 am – 7:30 pm

**Musical Workshop**  
 Title: RAGA: Theory and practice with Nishit Dey  
 Date: November 9  
 Venue: Studio 6/6, Mohammadpur  
 Time: 5 pm onwards

# Syed Iqbal's 'My Broken Mind' in Toronto

ZIAUL KARIM

Astute brushstrokes, applied with verve and panache, mingle together in a multitude of vibrant colours as an imposing dream-stricken visage stare from the canvas. Simple grid pattern of primary colours interspersed with a submersed face, slowly and gradually emerging into this world from a dream. The surging passion of the execution of the painting *Dream Face-2* reverberates in tincture and tone of the exhibits of Syed Iqbal's 18th solo, *My Broken Mind*.

Iqbal has developed a forceful and dynamic style, that seeks to comprehend the meaning of life through fragmented, fractured, broken, elliptical images. Conceived poetically, his paintings spring from the intersection of reality and dream and carry the viewers along, as though on a gently flowing stream.

Vasily Kandinsky once said, "Art

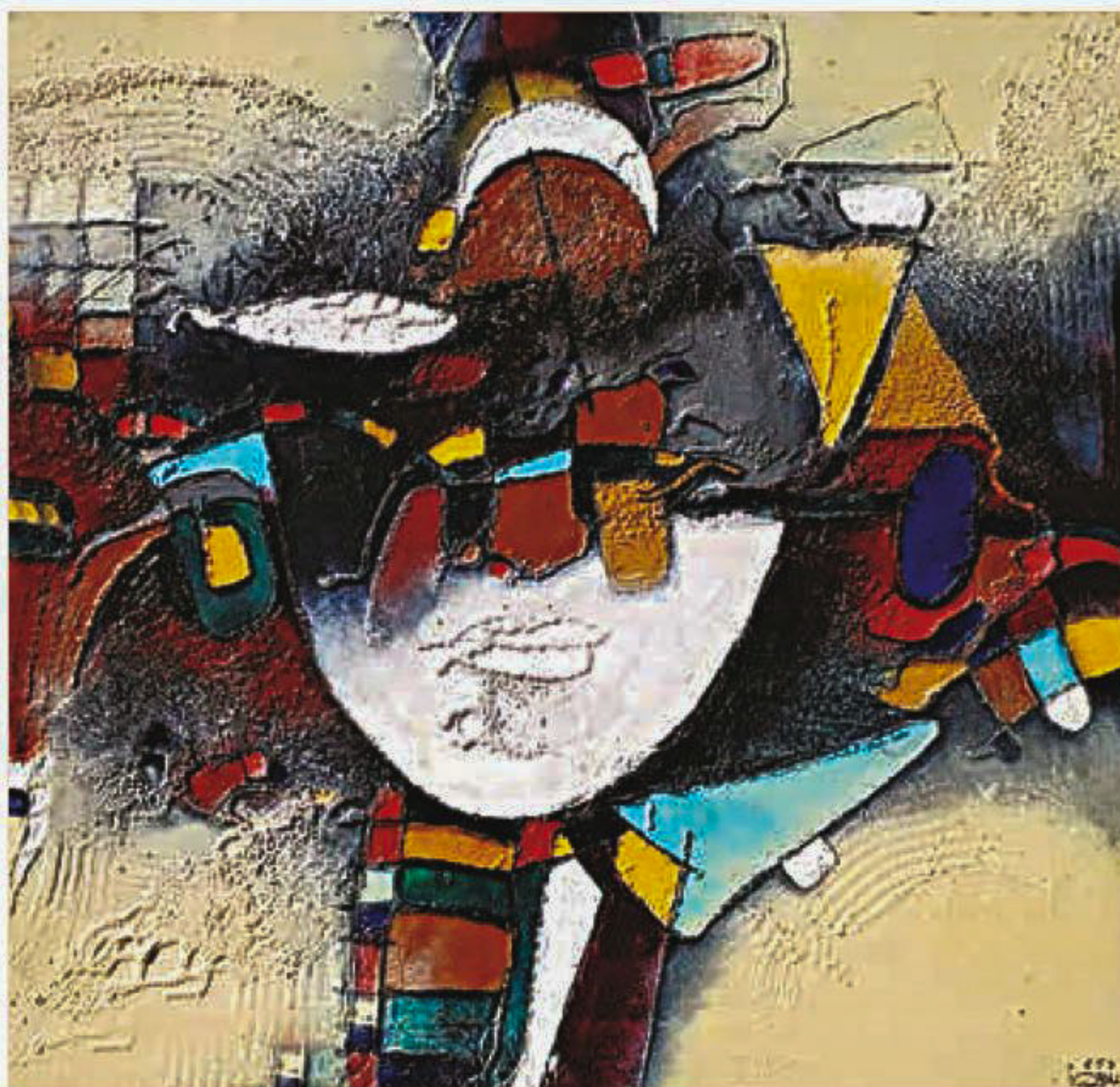
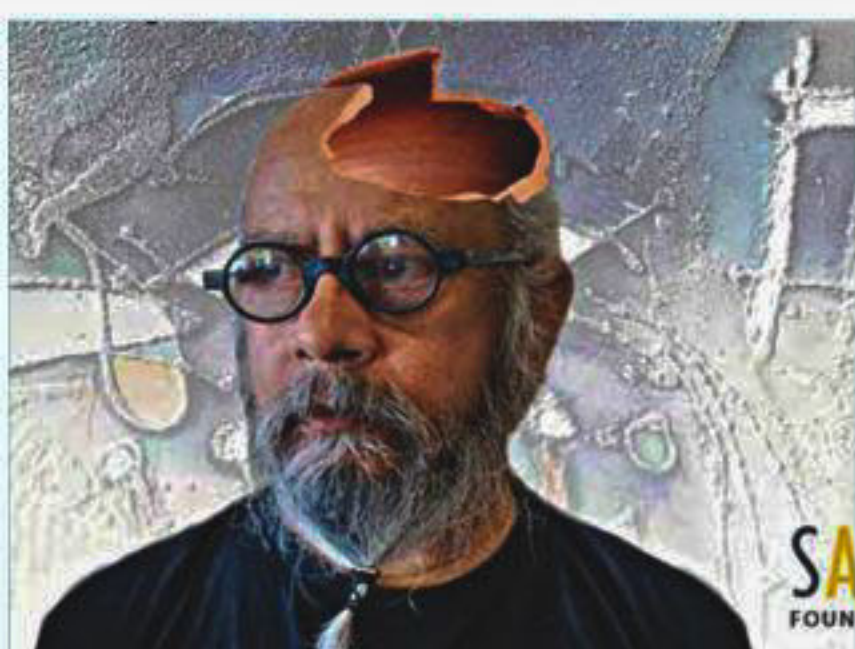


PHOTO: COURTESY

is like religion. Its evolution is not a question of new discoveries that sweep away ancient truths, but of sudden revelations, like bolts of lightning, and

explosions that burst in the sky like fireworks, spreading a bouquet of stars in multiple flashes." For Iqbal, images and symbols are revelations.

They appear in our dreams in multiple flashes.

The artist is sometimes rueful, whimsically philosophical. He teases the viewer with provocations and paradoxes. For example, the painting, *God has No Religion*, depicts symbols of all major faiths around a one-eyed face (perhaps of the God almighty) in arresting blue. The face at the centre of the composition appears perplexed and confused.

He is restless and exudes a kind of raw energy. Vibrant colours in their dramatic intensity help channelise this energy in the *Mindscape* series.

This exhibition might as well be named *Dear Life* instead of *My Broken Mind*, because it is Syed Iqbal's lust for life that still gets him going strong at mid-sixties. He is still teeming with energy and excitement, eager to give expression to the fragments of images and symbols jostling and hustling in his subconscious.

The show, held at the Cedar Ridge Creative Centre in Toronto, Canada, has been curated by Ali Adil Khan, who is the founder and director of the SAGA Foundation and the South Asian Gallery of Art in Toronto. SAGA Foundation is the lead sponsor and presenter of the show as well.

Ziaul Karim is an editor and art critic. He lives and works in Bangladesh.



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

# Jaya's captivating KONTTHO

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

National Award and Jio Filmfare Award (2018) winner Jaya Ahsan's new film *Konttho* is releasing in Bangladesh today. The film was recently released in Kolkata and has been well acclaimed by the audience. The diva talks to *The Daily Star* about her expectations from the film and more.

*Your film 'Konttho' has been well received by the Indian audience. The film is releasing in your home ground today. How do you feel about it?*

For the first time, an Indian film featuring me is being released in the country. This film, directed by Shiboprosad Mukherjee and Nandita Roy, has a lot of surprises in store for my fans.

*Tell us something about the plot of the film.* *Konttho* is a tale of struggle. It is the story of life and the willingness to be alive. I play the role of Romilla who is a speech therapist. This is the first time I took up this type of a role in my career. I believe, the film can work as an inspiration, especially for the ones who are suffering from depression. I hope, the audience likes their 'new' Jaya.

*You have recently been busy shooting for the film 'Robibar' in Kolkata. When is it hitting the theatres?* I am working with Prosenjit for the first time in Atanu Ghosh's directorial film *Robibar*. We have already finished shooting for the film and it is undergoing the process of editing. It will be released soon.

*When can we expect your film 'Bhoot Pori'?* We finished shooting for the film recently. I am playing the character of Bhoot Pori in the film. The thriller, directed by Soukary Ghosal, has a mysterious plot, full of supernatural twists and turns, for the audience.

*You are giving back-to-back hits in the Tollywood. What are your upcoming ventures?* I recently sang the film *Ordhangini*. We are planning to start the shoot this month.

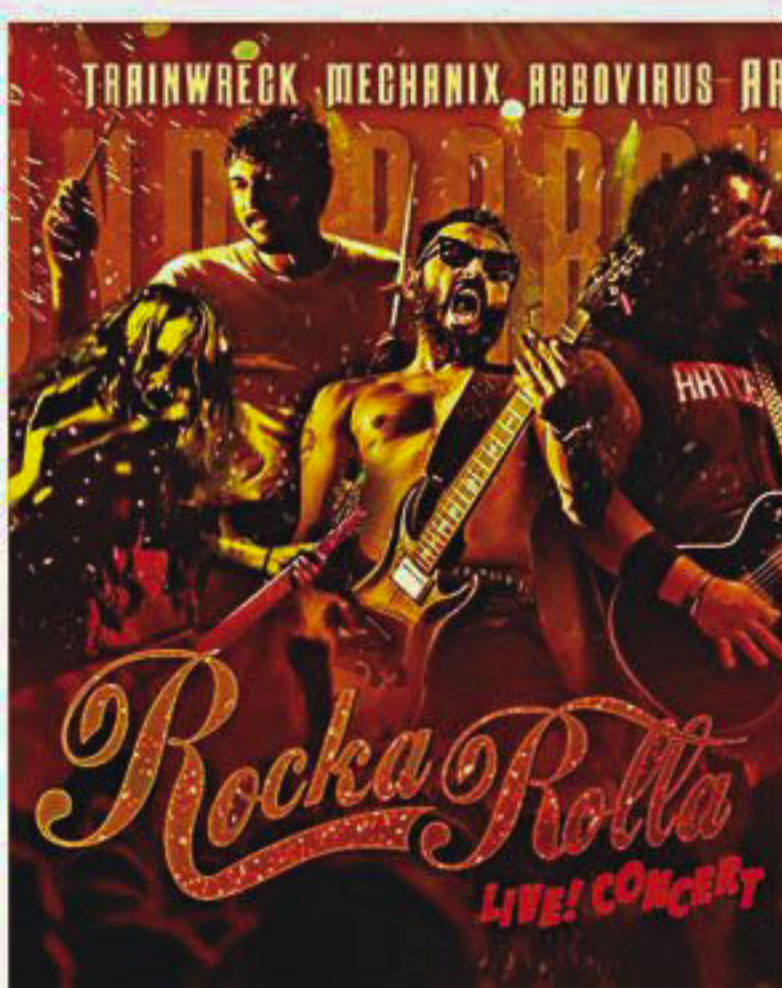
*After 'Debi', are you planning on any new productions?* I am planning to produce my film *Phurut*. The script is ready and we hope to start the production this winter.

*Tell us a bit about your upcoming Bangladeshi films.* I have worked in the films *Beauty Circus*, directed by Mahmud Didar, and *Peyarar Shubash*, directed by Nurul Alam Atique. Both the films are going to be released very soon.

# Rockarolla to rock JFP today

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Organised by Maximum Entertainment, Rockarolla looks to be one of the most star-studded concert of recent times -- with heavy hitters like Artcell, Arbovirus, Powersurge and Mechanix in the fold. The show will take place at Jamuna Future Park from 5 pm onwards. Being marketed as an "Underground Reboot", Rockarolla looks to capture the nostalgic feel of the golden days of underground rock music in Bangladesh. Tickets will be available at the venue.



# Remembering Syed Jahangir and Kalidas Karmakar

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Bengal Foundation recently arranged a memorial programme, paying homage to eminent artists Syed Jahangir and Kalidas Karmakar at Bengal Shilpalaya in Dhanmondi. Renowned artist Rafiqun Nabi and prominent architect Shamsul Wares spoke at the event.

On the other hand, artists and art enthusiasts, with a heavy heart, attended a remembrance talk on internationally acclaimed artist Kalidas Karmakar, at Gallery Cosmos at Cosmos Atelier71 of Cosmos Centre in Malibagh.

The speakers at both the programmes recollected their memories with the artists, and discussed their lives and contributions to contemporary art of Bangladesh.



PHOTO: COURTESY