

I walk into an art exhibition. . .

MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

Two years ago, I was in a bad place, mentally. Life became mundane and grey. I went to Dhaka Art Summit dragging myself from underneath the covers, hoping for an afternoon that would distract me and frankly, give me something to do.

What I got in return was more than I had expected. We're so engrossed in our own lives, in our own familiar surroundings, that sometimes we lose bearings. The art event with its displays portraying the plights of people from around the globe—from past and present—grounds you and humbles you by reminding you of the colossal scope of human existence amongst which you live a tiny life.

It gave me so much to marvel at. Fine human creation always reminds us of how much we all can achieve if we put our mind to it. Pictures of persecution of indigenous communities on the opposite side of the globe made me stop whining about my own problems and put things into perspective. Travelling across the globe to see the world may be a long-term plan at best but going to an exhibition doesn't have to be.

I came home feeling refreshed and stimulated but most of all, I felt alive. Art has the power to remind you that there is so much to see, so many places



PHOTO: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

to go, so much to do and above all, so much to live for. "I have seen, have heard, have lived/ In the depth of the

known have felt/ The truth that exceeds all knowledge/ Which fills my heart with wonder and I sing," is how Tagore

expressed himself and it seems very fitting here.

However, art can also intimidate people. "I don't really know much about art," "I never studied art," and "I never get what modern art is supposed to be" are very common sentiments among people who feel as though they may be lost or alienated among the artwork.

The truth is one does not need to be an artist to visit an exhibition. There is rarely one specific truth that is the meaning of each artwork and most of what's on offer is open to interpretation. Even if there is one specific interpretation that was the intention of the artist, who cares if that exactly is not something you figure out? The artist's job arguably ended with the last stroke of paint on the canvas and what we perceive from that painting is the starting of a perfectly different conversation.

Art, in my belief, is about eliciting a feeling or reaction among people. As long as the colours, textures, patterns or installations remind you of anything, spark a curiosity or change your mood even the slightest bit, you've lived a bit more by just walking into an art exhibition.

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Viewing art in person is different from on a screen. • Take your time with a piece. Look for patterns.

Five Stages, One Bad Haircut

SYEDA ERUM NOOR

BARGAINING

Before you could get comfortable, the hairdresser has already chopped off a good two inches—more than you had asked. Instantly, you begin having a conversation with yourself.

"Say something!"

However, your crippling need to please people and your discomfort with unpleasant social interactions stop you. So you strike up a bargain. You start offering anything to get yourself to speak up before it gets worse.

"Please say something. We'll buy the milkshake we've been craving for a week if you do!"

Hah, you're only met with a rapidly pounding heart and a counter bargain.

"Hmm, maybe it's not that bad? She is a hairdresser. She must know what she's doing."

The battle between the rational you and the introvert you rages on until suddenly, it's too late. Your hair has been destroyed.

PANIC

The following stage is always panic. With a nervous smile, you pay for something you didn't want, lie about how much you like it, and bolt out. You pull on your hoodie over your head in shame.

Upon reaching home, you stand before the mirror with



ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHAM

a look of terror on your face. You stare at yourself and bite your nails. It's even worse than you thought.

THERAPY

"Hello," you tell yourself in a trembling voice. "You can't ever go outside again."

And it begins. It starts with the rant about how your hairdresser doesn't know how to do her job and shifts to self-hatred for not saying anything.

"I'm paying for it, aren't I?" you ask your less-than-bothered reflection. "I should have said something."

Alas! From a bad haircut to self-doubt and then questioning your entire life.

ACCEPTANCE

The longer you stare at yourself in the mirror, the more you notice the great texture your hair seems to have.

"Maybe it wasn't so bad? Maybe I was overreacting?"

To answer your question—yes, you were. But that's only a very natural part of the process.

Soon, you start to experiment, putting your hair up in different ways to see which way looks most flattering.

"This might very well be okay."

GLAMOUR

By the third day, you are rocking the new haircut. You start to discover all the great things about this hairstyle that you were too upset to notice before. Your faith in hairdressers is restored. You have a new pep in your walk and a twinkle in your eye every time you go somewhere.

Syeda Erum Noor is dangerously oblivious and has no sense of time. Send help at erum.noor1998@gmail.com