



Dilara Begum Jolly's 'Deher Akkhyan'.

PHOTO: MONON MUNTAKA

## In conversation with DILARA BEGUM JOLLY

JAHANARA TARIQ

*Dilara Begum Jolly with her brilliantly vivacious brushstrokes, incantations embedded in intricate multimedia forms to fight off patriarchy, and a mop of silvery grey hair paired with sturdy spectacles and a warm smile, is a force to be reckoned with. Her oeuvre of works hold the zest of zealous rebellion.*

Yet, her plethora of meditative sketches on tragic happenings are imbued with a certain sense of surreal sublimity. Though she started out as a traditional painter, Jolly went on to experiment with different areas, including filmmaking, photography and even the postmodernist terrains of performance art.

She compared the medium of art to the languages we speak, talking about how she tinkers around with diverse forms, until she comes across the one which seems to be perfectly juxtaposed with the essence of the art she wants to create.

"Deher Akkhyan", her project for the recently concluded "Chobi Mela Shunno", was a composition of soft sculptures, with materials such as worn out petticoats, chemises, and blouses overwrought with complex expressions of needlework. "Every execution of the stitch is reminiscent of



PHOTO: STAR

pain—a visible or invisible wound that scars our bodies as extraneous forces continue to write its dominance over the body, and the interiority that it enshrines," says Jolly.

A sinister metaphor was at play within these pieces, perfectly capturing the menacing relationship between the female body and psyche and how it is pinned down by the dominant, extraneous forces of a patriarchal society. Jolly described it as one of her pandemic projects, and highlighted how many horrific incidents relating to female discrimination, which happened recently, jolted her. Her tangled thoughts took the form of this fiercely crafted visual saga at "Chobi Mela Shunno". Some of her other works include "A Beast, a God and a Line" (Dhaka Art Summit, 2018), "Excavating Time" (Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts,

Dhaka, 2006), "Threads of Testimony" (Dhaka, 2014) and "microtears/Omorar Akkhan" (Daily Star-Bengal Arts Precinct, Dhaka, 2015).

When asked about her inspirations and the themes she visited regularly, Jolly's answers sadly held bitter and uncomfortable truths. She dove deep into the anxieties of the "male gaze" and how it has become a recurring motif in her works. "I want to capture the apprehension I feel when I am constantly scrutinised wherever I go, sometimes figuratively and at times, literally," she says. "I observe how girls were objectified and portrayed in calendars or in advertisements."

Despite this however, Jolly asserted that her works are not mirrors to the society. "My art is not a piece of slogan or propaganda. Rather, it is an outcome of my perceptions on different happenings," she says. Her works often blatantly spell out the raw truth, while at other times, provide the viewer with a more holistic lens. She also focuses on the universality of the female experience, drawing light upon the highly misogynistic aspects of our society and discussing how women ought to envision themselves as a unified whole – a tattered tale knitted with similar snippets of trauma and tragedy.

When asked about her favourite artists, Jolly exuberantly named Frida Kahlo, Judy Chicago, and Novera Ahmed. She said that currently, her main inspiration lies in Mexican, African and Pakistani art. As an ending note to the conversation, Jolly advised young artists and creators to stay true to their roots.

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## SUJATA on her storied career

SHAH ALAM SHAZLI

Noted actor Salma Begum Sujata entered the Bangladeshi film industry during the 1960s. She went on to work in many classics such as "Chutir Ghonta", "Alor Michil", "Lalon Fokir", "Alor Pipasha", "Ghazi Kalu" and "Agun Niye Khela", among many others. The "Rupban" famed actor was recently one of the recipients of the coveted Ekushay Padak, one of the most prestigious national honours bestowed by the government. In a candid chat with *The Daily Star*, the National Film Award-winning star talks about her journey and experiences.

How does it feel to be one of the recipients of the Ekushay Padak?

Since the time the names were announced, I have been excited to be honoured with such a prestigious title. I heartily thank our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, my co-stars, directors, producers, and all my crew members who have made me what I am today. Most importantly, I believe this has only been possible for my fans, who have loved me dearly and prayed for my success while praising my performances.

Do you have any regrets in your career?

I have gained a lot as an artiste, and I don't live with any regrets. However, I have never played a negative character in my entire career and this is something that I want to change. I would like to play a negative character on screen for

my audience.

You have delivered back-to-back hits during your active years. Do you still make time to watch them?

Not too often. However, they all revive an array of good memories. I believe they are treasures and my fans love watching them and that's what fills me with content.

What have you been busy with lately?

I have been spending a lot of time writing at home these days. One of my novels and two autobiographical books will be released at the Ekushay Boi Mela. Other than that, I have also been busy shooting for my tele-fictions. I had been sick for a couple of days and was on complete rest. However, I am doing much better now.

You have been a shining star in the golden era of Bangladeshi cinema and people still address you as 'Rupbaan Konna'. How has the experience been?

"Rupbaan" has been one of the record-breaking blockbusters of all times. I played the titular character and it is the greatest gain for any artiste to be remembered for your work. Being able to walk through the legacy of the golden era has been more rewarding than anything else in my life. I got to learn a lot from the trendsetters, and I take pride in saying that I had the privilege to work in the vicinity of legends.

Translated by

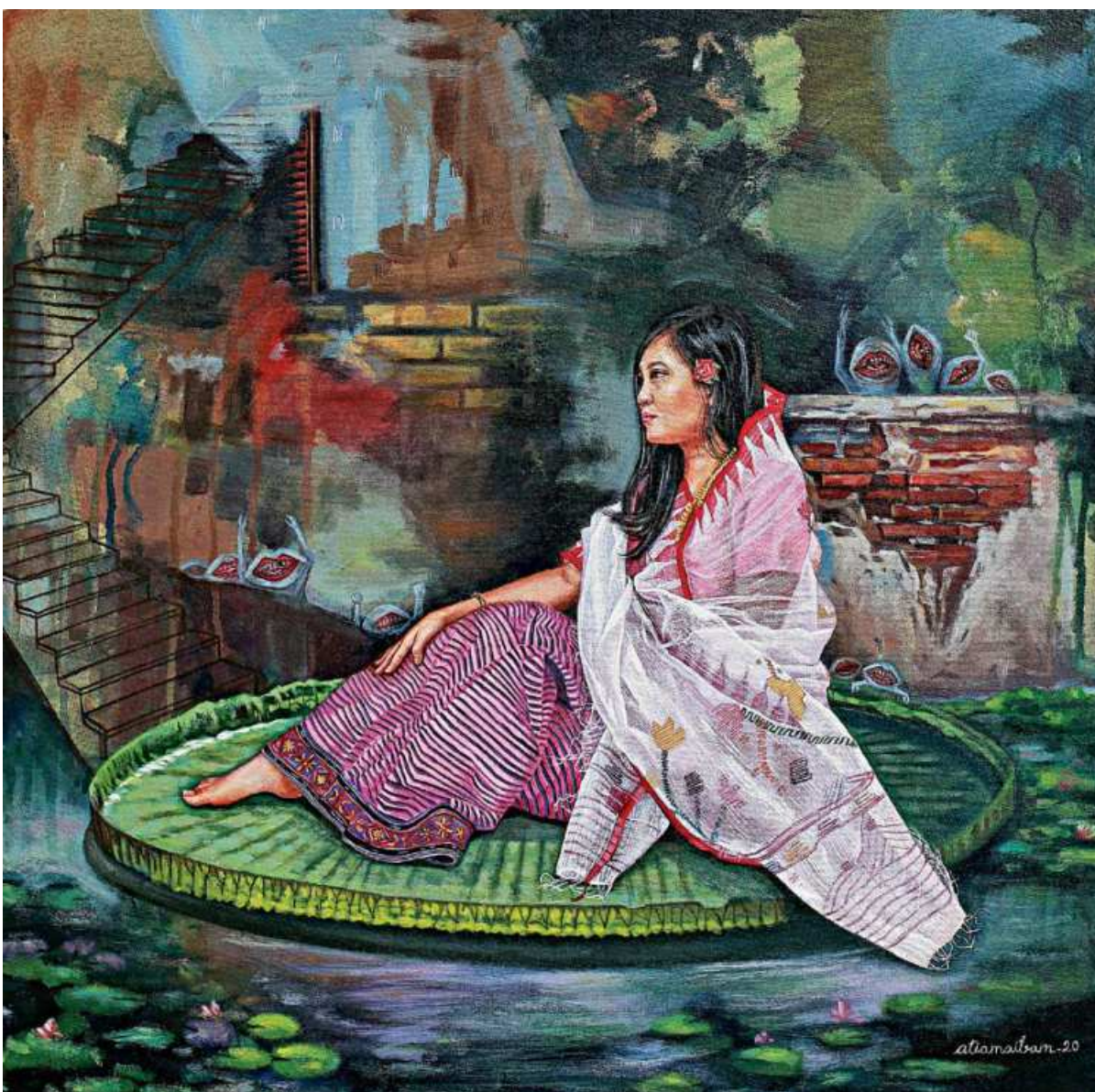
Ashley Shoptorshi Samaddar



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDIMORSHED

## EMK Center's 'Us Women 2021' celebrates female voices

EMK Center organised their recurring group exhibition, "Us Women 2021" virtually, commemorating International Women's Day and Women's History Month. With the theme "Inspire and Empower", the exhibition features 80 artworks by 62 female artists from 10 countries across the globe.



MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

"Through this initiative, we provide a platform for women to inspire and empower each other. Screening for this particular exhibition's open-call is never conducted based on artistic skills, as we focus more on the theme interpretations," shared Aisha Siddiqua, Program Assistant, EMK Center.

The artworks on display include digital art, caricatures, comics as well as watercolour and oil paintings. While some of the works challenge societal norms that lead to patriarchy and discrimination, others glorify the various roles and strengths of women.

Artist Mashiat Lamisa Kangkhita's "Possibilities" is a digital illustration that reflects on the various forms of restraint experienced by women.



Artworks from the exhibition.



"Different unspoken constraints have weighed me down, reminding me that breaking certain rules would cause me to be shunned from the people I know," she explained. "As I grew older, I realised that our society is not very fond of women who are self-sufficient, assertive and outspoken." Her artwork portrays how women always overcome certain obstacles, with their sheer willpower and determination.

Atia Maibam's artworks are influenced by her experiences as a Bangladeshi woman. In her acrylic painting, a woman sits on a lotus leaf, while some lips gossip in the background. The lotus symbolises a woman's confidence and femininity

by focusing on the beauty and softness associated with it.

Artist Nuha's digital illustration, "Soul of a Bird", revolves around the abstract idea of the freedom of birds inhabiting the open sky. "For birds, life in captivity is often a death sentence. Similarly, women are meant to break free from the shackles holding them down," she said. While talking about the opportunities for emerging female artists, she noted that there is a lack of platforms that promote creativity.

"Us Women 2021" will be available for viewers on EMK Center's website till March 31, 2021.

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