

# The odyssey of a young visual artist in Bangladesh

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"Why not do it for the sake of exposure?" inquires Saadman, your classmate, when confronted with the perils of asking for your payment for the sixth logo redesign for his "groundbreaking" streetwear startup.

In between the freeloaders (guised in the veil of friendship) and the established business firm demanding your services, there is no denying that the come-up of a visual artist is arduous. It is only in the past few years that the industry has gained any real momentum locally. Nonetheless, the question remains: *how much are the skillsets really valued, if at all?*

This creates a dynamic of imbalance between the client and the creator – where the input of the artist is virtually lost. What begins as a pursuit of expressing oneself becomes a slippery slope towards compensating for commercial appeal at the expense of one's own vision. Inevitably, personal projects come to a halt, burnouts occur more frequently and art blocks are omnipresent. In addition, the guilt of feeling like a "sell-out" is a telltale to the artist's endeavour.



I can't pay you cash but you will receive credit in the final project and you'll be invited to a party I'm throwing next Tuesday

Photographer and motion graphic artist Zunayed Noor, 18, reflects on the general attitude towards experimentation. "The room for experimentation is nulled in the first place because of the standards set by everyone in the industry, which has become the norm. Clients often don't care about styles as long as you're taking pictures and meeting the criteria," he says. "Even if you take your time with personal projects and lay the groundwork for your visual style, you might not be able to use it commercially due to clients not being flexible about these things."

On the flip side, Zunayed has also had a client approach him for his distinct style of video editing and even implemented it in their content. These are, of course, exceptions. With little to no room for exploring the limits, the wide majority of creatives on the market end up with a portfolio lacking originality, riddled with bland commercial work. As a result, such portfolios will stand to represent a market clustered with low-quality technical skills.

17-year-old graphic designer Faisal Rahman laments that clients are unwilling to value what the artist has to con-

tribute in the conversation. "More often than not, they will blow over whatever my thought process for a specific design is and almost demean my input," he says.

Faisal feels that such a one-sided approach emerges because of a corporate need to implement art and design into their brand, not because they want it. This creates room for conformity.

Back in the day, one might have wandered into a print shop somewhere in Nilkhet and asked the computer guy to make a logo in minutes without sparing much thought or cash into it.

It is, however, vital that creators learn to cope with feedback and bad clients. Negotiating, setting adequate prices, having a solid grasp of the trade are just a few skills required to make it in an oversaturated industry. While artists have their own set of responsibilities, employers and clients must make sure that an upcoming generation of rising talent is not depleted and have their passion burned out.

*Abir Hossain is a failed SoundCloud Rapper. Tell him you too can't find anything to rhyme oranges with at fb/abir.hossain.19*

## A Real Guide to Surrealism

DURDANA KAMAL

Bizarre, strange, unusual, freakish – these are many of the synonyms people associate with surrealism. However, the human brain can propel itself to limitless distances, once it realises there is nothing better than challenging the ordinary. That, by extension, is the very point that surrealism tries to make.

Surrealism is an art movement that boomed in Europe after World War I and influenced literature and artistry to twist and turn into new limits that had never been crossed before.

In literature, surrealism was initiated by André Breton, a French writer and poet. He is the father of surrealism, describing the phenomenon as a "pure psychic automatism" in the first *Surrealist Manifesto*. The movement was boosted by the confusion and dread created by the subsequent two World Wars. Writers wanted to break away from the political cages that restricted artistry. One example of surrealism is Breton's poem, *Freedom of Love*.

*My wife with the hair of a wood fire  
With the thoughts of heat lightning  
With the waist of an hourglass  
With the waist of an otter in the teeth of a tiger  
My wife with the lips of a cockade and of a bunch of stars of the last magnitude  
With the teeth of tracks of white mice on the white earth  
With the tongue of rubbed amber and glass*

*My wife with the tongue of a stabbed host.*

This is an excerpt from the poem, where Breton describes a culmination of objects that have no relation to each other – his wife, a wood fire, an hourglass, the teeth of a tiger, and many other things. This paints a picture of irrationality in the reader's mind.

In art, surrealism was heavily influenced by Sigmund Freud's work on dream analysis and the unconscious. It was a method of artistry which celebrated idiosyncrasy. Artists such as Salvador Dali, Yves Tanguy, Robert Desnos and many others, combined everyday objects that wouldn't be put together in an ordinary situation, to create an extraordinary effect that would surpass all logic and most importantly, leave the viewer unsettled. However, it does not mean that surrealism should elicit fear. It is, quite simply, the imagination liberated.

*Persistence of Memory* is, without a doubt, one of Salvador Dali's most famous paintings and one of the greatest surrealist artworks ever created (google it!). As described by Dali himself, the soft watches were inspired by the surrealist perception of a melting Camembert, a form of cow's milk cheese. Dali was one of the pioneers of modern surrealism, and all of his works included symbolic meanings.

Surrealism has been reimagined and reinvented in film, fashion and art.

Modern artists who are putting a contemporary spin on surrealism include Chen Zhou, Julie Curtiss, Penny Slinger and many others. Surrealism has made its mark in animation and films such as *Mulholland Drive* (2001), *Paprika* (2006), and many others.

The great wars left a lasting impact on people. Artists and writers tried to express the bizarre reality of their times in the form of shocking imagery and puzzling objects, which was a representation of the confusion and ever-changing situation.

From the 1920s onward, surrealism has crept in to impact visual arts, literature, film and music, featuring amazing elements of surprise and strange juxtapositions. The surrealist works of that time are still influential to this day and still is an amazing tool for artists to unleash their creativity.

*Durdana Kamal mostly likes to engage in activities which mostly do not serve any purpose whatsoever. Send help at kamal.durdana@gmail.com*

