

‘MRITTIKA MOHEY’ The homebound call of a travelling artist

The beautiful landscapes and natural beauty of Bangladesh have served as the muse for travelling artist Karu Titas. In his tireless pursuit of capturing the country's natural and cultural heritage, he frequently embarks on journeys across the country to seek inspiration for his artistic creations.

DOWEL BISWAS

The artist's fifth solo exhibition, titled *Mrittika Mohey (The Allure of The Earth)*, is currently on display at the Shilpangan Gallery in the capital's Dhanmondi 27. This exhibition is a continuation of his artistic exploration of connecting with the essence of Bangladesh, deeply rooted in every layer of its earth.

The title of the exhibit, "Mrittika Mohey", signifies a homebound call of one's root and the mystifying allure of it. It suggests that the destination is merely an illusion of completion, while the true significance lies in the journey itself.

Landscapist Karu Titas possesses a unique talent for portraying simple yet scenically captivating characters and objects in a way that presents more questions rather than answers, more contention than beauty.

Much like his influence, S M Sultan, he too employs indistinct and hazy brush strokes to depict the bold characters of marginalised, often underestimated people.

This technique consistently prompts viewers to contemplate their own subliminal modernity and civilised inclinations.

"I have known Karu Titas for many years, and he expresses his thoughts through paintings.

The nostalgia, beauty, and life of *mophoswol* rurality bring a breath of fresh air in the absurd urbanity

we are living in," said Dr Syed Manzoorul Islam, an eminent art critic, in his introductory note of the exhibition.

Karu Titas himself articulates his creative process, stating, "I take elements from nature, and to do that, I often get off of a train and roam around all over Bangladesh. Sometimes, these spontaneous explorations lead me to mountains, rivers, encounters

kilometres. It is truly fascinating, and an artist doesn't need to look far as Bangladesh offers a distinctive colour palette," the master landscapist said.

To some keen-eyed viewers, Karu Titas—who loves to draw stations without trains, streets without mechanical vehicles, and rivers without engine boats—might seem like he is trying to escape modernity and civilised

Bangladesh, spent days living with them, engaged in conversations. When I returned to my studio, I couldn't resist painting them, for they have such great influence on me," the enchanted artist said.

"Whenever I stay at train stations, or boats, and share meals with these people, I feel more grateful to be a part of their world with each experience. This is what I strive to capture in my paintings, and it remains my greatest muse of inspiration," he continued.

Karu Titas humbly refrains from describing himself as just an artist. "I don't like to label myself as an artist because artistry is vast, and no one can truly confine themselves to it. If any of my paintings stand the test of time, I will be forever grateful as a painter."

While Karu Titas's subject matter may resonate with the legendary artist S M Sultan, his representation diverges from Sultan's bold emphasis on human strength to focus on the innate beauty of his subjects.

Responding to this comparison, Karu Titas replies with a contented smile, "As a family, we were actually close to SM Sultan. We hosted him in the city numerous times, and we visited Narail, where I watched him create his masterpieces. It was enchanting."

The exhibition showcases Karu Titas's paintings, mostly created between 2019 and 2023. Art lovers will find beautiful paintings, namely *Mrittika Mohey, Mohananday Neel, Prantic Nayokera, Janalar Drighoshwash, Kon Bhangoner Pothe Eley, Nodir Morichika, Aj Haatbar, Tolo Paal Sagorer Phool, Chandboniker Nouka* and others in this exhibition, which will run until September 30.



Karu Titas.



PHOTOS: MIZAN RAHMAN

with people I have yet to meet. They are the sources of my artistic inspiration."

"I have never returned empty-handed from these journeys. From porters, day labourers to those who live at train stations—they give me inspiration for both life and my artistry. They are my idols," he continued with a warm smile to explain his friendship with the subjects of his paintings.

Karu emphasises the uniqueness of Bangladesh. "Bangladesh is a land of wonder. You see...in my experience as a travelling artist, I found that our language, culture, dialects, and accents change in every 50

industrialisation.

In response, the painter said, "Of course! There's no doubt about it. It's high time we turn inward and reconnect with our villages and natural resources to remind ourselves of who we were and who we can be!"

Another recurring element in his painting is the representation of 'ordinary' people, from woodsmen to oarsmen, from farmers to fleeting figures, seamlessly blending with the forestry and earthen lines along the borders of his artworks.

"Take the premises of one of my paintings, namely, *Prantik Manus*. I met these individuals in North



Parineeti Chopra and Raghav Chadha tie the knot

The much-awaited wedding of Parineeti Chopra and Raghav Chadha took place at The Leela Palace in Udaipur on Sunday. The couple have posted the wedding pictures on their official social media accounts.

Parineeti shared the pictures with the caption, "From the very first chat at the breakfast table, our hearts knew. Been waiting for this day for a long time. So blessed to finally be Mr and Mrs! Couldn't have lived without each other. Our forever begins now."

The groom, along with his family members, boarded boats from The Taj Lake Palace to reach the venue for the main wedding ceremony following Mewar tradition.

Striking Hollywood writers reach tentative deal with studios

On Sunday, Hollywood's writers' union announced a preliminary labour agreement with major studios. The deal is anticipated to end one of two strikes that have halted most film and television productions, costing the California economy billions of dollars.

Before it can go into effect, the three-year contract must be approved by the Writers Guild of America (WGA) leadership as well as union members.

The WGA, which represents 11,500 film and television writers, called the agreement "exceptional" and said it provided "meaningful gains and protections for writers." The WGA settlement, while a milestone, will not return Hollywood to work. The SAG-AFTRA actors' union remains on strike.



NEWS

Adilur, Elan move HC

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told The Daily Star they have filed the appeal as the prosecution has completely failed to prove the charges brought against his clients.

The trial court has convicted and sentenced the two on the basis of the statement from the second investigation officer (IO) without sufficient documents and evidence, which is absolutely illegal, he added.

"The second IO has stated that he procured the evidence against them on June 6 this year. But all the laptops and devices of Odhikar office were seized after the case was filed on August 10, 2013."

Ruhul Amin also said a bail petition will be moved before the HC during the hearing on the appeal. The

hearing would be held at a convenient time, he added.

A Dhaka court on September 14 this year delivered the verdict against Adilur and Elan, cancelled their bail and issued an order for them to be sent to jail with conviction warrants.

It also fined each of them Tk 10,000 in default of which they would have to serve one more month in jail.

On June 10, 2013, the Detective Branch of police filed a general diary with Gulshan Police Station in this connection, which was later converted into a case.

Detectives arrested Adilur from Gulshan on August 10, 2013, shortly after filing the GD, which said the rights body on its website ran a false report titled "Assembly of Hefajat-e

Islam Bangladesh and Human Rights Violation".

"The report tarnished the images of the country, the government, and the law enforcement agencies," read the GD.

Odhikar's report claimed that 61 people died in the wee hours of May 6 when the law enforcers flushed several thousand Hefajat activists out of the Shapla Chattar in the capital's Motijheel.

The government put the number of deaths at 13.

On August 11, 2013, police raided Odhikar's Gulshan office and seized three laptops and two desktop computers.

After probing the case, the DB on September 4, 2013, pressed charges against Adilur and Elan.

You have 36 days to quit

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movement for 36 minutes." Speaking at "Peace and Development" rallies in the capital's Jatrabari and Uttara, top AL leaders said they would keep the streets under control until the next general election is held, which is slated for January 2024.

"The streets will remain under the control of the Awami League. We will not allow them to take to the streets. The daydream of BNP leaders to block streets and carry out violent activities will not be fulfilled; they will not be given that scope," Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister,

told the Uttara rally.

Speaking at the Jatrabari rally, organised by Dhaka city (south) unit AL, Matia Chowdhury, party presidium member and deputy leader of the House, asked the party activists to remain united and on the streets until the next polls.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbulul Alam Hanif said, "I want to tell our leaders and activists to be alert and on the streets. We will be on the streets to fight against the national and international conspiracies that are being hatched to foil the election.

"The BNP has said they would

unseat this government by October; we will be on the streets at that time and foil their anti-government plots," said AL Organising Secretary Mirza Azam.

Quader, at the Uttara rally, said the final "game" will be played in January next year.

Saying the AL is not bothered about the US visa policy, the AL leader alleged that the BNP now becomes dependent on the visa restrictions after failing in its movement.

"But we rely on the people of Bangladesh as they are the base of our power. We will come to power again taking the people with us."

Cops, AL activists 'vandalise' rally stage

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rescheduled for September 28, said Abu Ashfaq, convener of Dhaka district BNP.

"We went to the office of the superintendent of police in the morning. The SP told us that Awami League also wanted to hold a rally at the same venue and that's why they [police] won't let us organise the programme," he told The Daily Star.

Ashfaq claimed that they had secured permission for the rally four days ago, but the stage was vandalised.

"We are yet to decide on the venue for the September 28 rally. Initially, we have selected three possible venues. We will inform everyone about the venue after finalising the decision," he added.

Golam Mostafa, general secretary of Savar Thana BNP, alleged that AL activists and police personnel

vandalised the stage early yesterday.

Some locals, who run shops near the rally venue, told this newspaper that police pulled down the stage with an excavator and took away the materials.

Abdullah Kafi, additional superintendent of police (crime and operation) in Dhaka district, denied the allegation of police vandalising the stage.

He said they didn't grant BNP permission to hold the rally.

'STEP DOWN AT ONCE'

Speaking at the Dholaihal rally as the chief guest, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir demanded Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina step down immediately.

"Don't make any excuses. The people of this country don't want to see you [Hasina] in power anymore. Just one US visa policy is causing headaches for them [government],"

he said.

The rally, organised by Dhaka city south BNP, began around 2:30pm.

BNP standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan said ministers, MPs, and government and police officials would face US visa restrictions.

"They are afraid as they won't be able to use their assetsearned through corruption, and even their family members won't be able to enjoy any facilities," he said.

Demanding the government immediately allow BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to go abroad for treatment, he said, "If proper arrangements are not made for Khaleda Zia's treatment abroad and anything bad happens to her, the government and its officials will not be able to escape."

Our Savar correspondent contributed to this report.

Country seeing rise of oligarchs

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of disadvantaged groups and citizens," said Debapriya, also a distinguished fellow of CPD.

This stemmed from a lack of resources in prioritised sectors and areas, poor implementation of policies and projects, and inconsistency between policy formulation and development planning, he added.

The country is going through a political crisis and it will not go away if it is not resolved politically, said Mamunur Rashid, an actor, director and scriptwriter.

He said they have been trying to make Bangladesh liveable for the last 50 years whereas some people are laundering money out of the country

to make other nations liveable.

Mustafizur Rahman, a core group member of the citizen's platform, said there is macroeconomic development in the country but when the micro-level data is looked into, the progress seems to be average.

He cited the deepening inequality as an example.

"It is not acceptable that I am leading a comfortable life whereas my neighbour's condition is not good. This type of development is risky, not sustainable, and not a matter of comfort politically," said Rahman, also a distinguished fellow of CPD.

Political will is needed to ride out the present crisis, said Sultana Kamal, a human rights activist. "But where does this political will come from?"

This comes from the politicians but I don't see it," she added.

Changes have to be made to the education system or else decent jobs will not be created, said Syed Nasim Manzur, managing director of Apex Footwear.

He emphasised technical and vocational education and called for eradicating the stigma associated with the two.

"There is no dearth of policies in the country. We need to implement policies, eradicate corruption, and ensure governance," said Manzur, also a director of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Average developmental gains would not be helpful, said Mohammad Abdul Matin, a former justice of the appellate division.

Now Fitch has negative

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exchange rate mechanism from multiple rates will stem the decline in reserves due to implementation challenges, while high inflation might prevent greater exchange rate flexibility."

Increased external vulnerability because of a lack of a coherent exchange rate policy or a sustained widening of the current account deficit that leads to further falls in foreign exchange reserves or other liquidity buffers could lead to a rating downgrade.

Higher deficits or financing needs that are driven by a further increase in the interest/revenue ratio or an inability to increase the government's revenue intake could also lead to a negative rating action or downgrade as well.

Bangladesh's gross general government revenue/GDP is far below the 'BB' median, it said.

This fiscal year's budget targets a deficit of 5.2 percent of GDP and a tax-GDP ratio of 10 percent, and Fitch forecasts these to be unmet.

"We expect a deficit of 5.3 percent, given our lower growth forecast of 6.5 percent, against the budget's 7.5 percent, and little revenue reform progress," it added.

Fitch also said major reform progress before the election is low.

"The rating outlook downgrade is reasonable in a sense but optimistic—it is a softer validation of what we have been saying," said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

However, this would have no significant impact. "Moody's ratings downgrade

has already done this and that was more rational. Fitch is going in the same direction but it is going slow in adjusting the ratings," said Mansur, a former economist of the International Monetary Fund.

Fitch's outlook downgrade will impact confidence, said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

"A downgrade, be it small or big, does affect confidence and confidence matters."

Both Hussain and Mansur do not foresee the situation improving anytime soon, so a ratings downgrade from Fitch too is not out of the question.

"The government is doing the opposite of what is needed. There was a commitment in the monetary policy of moving towards a market-based rate."

But Sunday's announcement from the central bank of fixing the future exchange rate of the dollar is antithetical to that commitment, Hussain said, adding that confirmation fee for letters of credit will remain high and outside interest in investing in Bangladesh will remain low.

"Going ahead, uncertainty is too high. The political situation can turn bad at any time. And the government does not have the wherewithal or will to improve the situation before the election," said Mansur, a former chairman of Brac Bank.

If the situation stays the same, the exchange rate will depreciate further, reserves will fall and inflation will go up.

"We are in a much more difficult situation than six months ago," Mansur added.