

## 'INFRATHIN'

# Exploring existence through art



Artwork by Mohammad Eunus



Artwork by Rokeya Sultana



Artwork by Jamal Ahmed



Artwork by Azmeer Hossain



Artwork by Md Tokon

PHOTOS: COURTESY

### ZAHANGIR ALOM

Sight precedes words and even language. It is through our eyes that we encounter the world after being born, forming the bedrock of our conscious understanding. Yet, John Berger argued in his book *Ways of Seeing* that this initial encounter is far from pure. Our perception is sculpted by the invisible hand of power and the social and cultural context that filters and shapes what we see. A painting, for instance, is not merely a canvas with pigments; it's a social document, a reflection of the hierarchies and ideologies of its time.

On that note, Edge, The Foundation, united 15 previously featured artists — Tajuddin Ahmed, Jamal Ahmed, Mohammad Eunus, Anisuzzaman Anis, Mohammad Iqbal, Tejosh Halder Josh, Anukul Chandra Mojumder, Kanak Chanpa Chakma, Shambhu Acharya, Abdus Shakoor Shah, Golam Faruque Bebul, Azmeer Hossain, Rokeya Sultana, Md Tokon, and Maksuda Iqbal Nipa — to collectively create 'Infrathin' that serves as the conduit for their artistic logics, resonating with the complexities of the unseen and the societal context.

In the collaborative embrace of 'Infrathin,' these artists unite their creative energies, forming a vessel that captivates and reflects the world's significance. "The works of 15 featured artists are different in style. It was

quite challenging to bring them under the same roof with an umbrella theme," says the show curator, Mustafa Zaman, a Dhaka-based artist and critic.

Marcel Duchamp once used the term 'infrathin' to point to the minuscule, temporal and spatial difference between an object and an artwork. Art becomes an object of social aesthetic significance because of this difference. 'Sensitivity to difference' is central to the idea of Infrathin where 15 prolific artists belonging to different generations unite to advance a symphony made out of individual notes. Infrathin is therefore an attempt to look at the big picture from a specific point in time and space.

Tajuddin Ahmed's paintings over the past two decades blend visual imagery, reflecting a life bridging two metropolises: Dhaka, his birthplace, and Toronto, his adopted home. Hints of Laxmibazar's bustling streets and labyrinthine alleys emerge in his work, echoing his past. Tajuddin intertwines the present with references to both real and virtual spaces, incorporating elements from Bangladesh's abstract movement into his artistic language.

Jamal Ahmed's artworks, often portraying scenes immersed in rain or touched by the wind, diverge from naturalists' focus on socio-political narratives. His unique visual effects, achieved through rapid paint application of the final layer, add signature textures or faint

fogginess, enhancing expressiveness. This echoes the approach of expressionists, who prioritise essence over representation.

Abstraction thrived as a distinct idiom in Bangladesh and Mohammad Eunus clearly has a stake in it. What he achieved as an artist in the past four decades or so can be summed up in his effort to not appeal to taste but to create aesthetic properties that provoke aesthetic evaluation. This artist thus has refashioned abstraction to suit his purpose. As a consequence, he has become one of its most memorable exponents. For his unique language of expression, he now occupies a special place in the mantle of creativity.

Anisuzzaman Anis schemes meticulous attention to lines in his work. He skillfully composes each piece, with lines serving as a focal point. His expertise lies in achieving high quality with minimal plates, particularly in relief printing. Anis consistently showcases precision in his prints, especially when depicting changing urban environments tailored to urban tastes.

Most of Mohammad Iqbal's paintings are populated by children and women who stare at the viewers from within the enclosed space of each canvas. They represent the multitude living under the shadow of fear. Their poignant eyes and doleful faces bore the signs of conflict, pogrom, and the terror of living in a deeply polarised world.

For Tejosh Halder Josh, the body is the primary location which arouses experiences. The sculptor believes that the presence of the body can never be discounted even when working on a form to express formal rigour. The human body is not merely a form; it is part of the universe, and life is a way to come to understand the connection between the microcosm of the body and the macrocosmic reality that is the cosmos.

Anukul Chandra Mojumder recognises that his envisioned content transcends mere 'image-objects.' Utilising varied landscapes, he considers images as reflections of felt communities. His work evokes childhood memories and desires from his upbringing.

Kanak Chanpa Chakma's paintings have always rested at the intersection of art history and cultural identity; she has brought forth her community's collective ethos through her works fraught with references to life in the hills of Chattogram. She has been employing a language of expression that connects her to the development of modern painting in Bangladesh.

Shambhu Acharya is renowned for his Gazi pata, but he also depicts legends like Shree Krishna, Ramayana, and Mahabharata, as well as Manasha Mangal, Muharram, Raas Leela, and various other folklores.

Abdus Shakoor Shah has developed a distinctive style variously drawing from the

tales of *Maimansingha Gitika* (the ballads of Mymensingh). He began to negotiate traditional *patachitra* or paintings on clothes on his terms as he started to appropriate the compositional scheme of the *patachitra*s, playfully bringing into alignment text and image. The portrayal of literary protagonists about folklore places Shakoor in a unique position as he continues to revisit "Mahua" and "Malua" love stories, or *Nakshi Kanthar Math* by Pallikabi Jasimuddin. These folklores are decoded and turned into motifs of 'shared aesthetics' through Shakoor's hand.

One redeeming feature in the language of the late artist Golam Faruque Bebul is his use of motifs and colours, which portray rural Bangladesh, connecting the interiority of his artwork to its exteriority.

Azmeer Hossain's abstract cityscapes evoke a sense of distance and memory, while Rokeya Sultana's paintings address femininity and cosmicity. Md Tokon aims to capture fleeting moments of reality through his expressive works, while Maksuda Iqbal Nipa's colourful paintings explore themes of emotion and struggle.

*Infrathin: Perspectives into Our Existence* group art exhibition inaugurated on February 24, is currently underway at Edge Gallery, featuring the works of 15 artists. The open for all event will run until April 6 in Gulshan from 10am to 8pm.

## NEWS

### 3 Bangladeshis held hostage in Libya

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Asked about their whereabouts, Jahirul told Salauddin's family that they landed new jobs and became busy. "In fact, Mizanur sold the four to a human trafficking gang," he alleged. Salauddin said they received calls on WhatsApp and IMO from unidentified people on Wednesday. A few Bangladeshis, who spoke in Sylheti and Noakhali dialects, demanded ransom, sending videos of

torturing the youths.

"The traffickers gave the number of a bank account at Islami Bank's Chakaria branch in Cox's Bazar and asked us to deposit ransom money in that account immediately. We contacted Jahirul but he said he didn't know anything about the hostage situation," he said.

The criminals threatened that the victims would be killed if the ransom was not paid, he alleged.

Wasim's uncle, Md Nasir Uddin, said yesterday that the youth escaped from the hostage-takers on Wednesday and took shelter in Jahirul's house.

"We received a call from Wasim on Wednesday. He told us that he was out of danger. He managed to flee from the grip of the criminals," he told The Daily Star.

All the criminals who tortured the youths are Bangladeshis, Nasir said, quoting Wasim.

### Police shoot Bangladeshi dead in his

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her son when he was shot and that the policemen did not need to use their guns, according to a New York Times report.

John Chell, the police department's chief of patrol, said at a news conference that the shooting took place after two officers answering a 911 call about a person in mental distress went to the apartment, where the situation became "quite hectic, chaotic and dangerous right away."

According to the chief, Rozario "came towards" the officers and took scissors out of a drawer when they attempted to take him into custody. Both officers fired their tasers at Rozario and appeared to have him subdued, the chief said.

He added that Rozario's mother did what mothers do and came to his aid, in the process unintentionally knocking the tasers out of his body. Rozario then picked up the scissors and attacked the officers once more, Chell said. "They [the police officials] were forced to use their firearms in self-defence."

Rozario's 17-year-old brother, Ushto Rozario, contradicted the police

account in an interview, according to the NYT report.

He said his mother had been holding his brother in her arms throughout the encounter.

"As my mother was still hugging him, they shot him with the taser ... and my brother didn't really go down. So, one of the cops pulled out a gun and shot him as my mother was still hugging him."

He said the shooting was unnecessary. "First of all, it was two police officers against him. And my mother was already holding him, so he couldn't really do anything."

He added, "I don't think a pair of scissors is threatening to two police officers."

Chief Chell did not say how many times Rozario was shot. Rozario's family said it was six times. The entire episode was captured by officers' body-worn cameras, the chief said. The footage is yet to be released, the NYT report said.

Francis Rozario, Ushto and Win's father, said the family had immigrated to New York from Bangladesh 10 years ago and that Win's dream was to join the US military. His plans had been held

up, however, by a delay in the family's obtaining their green cards, which the elder Rozario said had been approved last year.

Win Rozario had graduated from John Adams High School in Ozone Park two years ago and had been depressed recently, Ushto said.

Francis said Win had been hospitalised briefly last year with mental health problems.

Nelima Elroze owns the house where the Rozarios have been living for the last four years, and lives with her family in the apartment below the Rozarios. She said that had been good tenants who were quiet and always paid their rent on time.

Kenneth Clark, a retired fire department shop worker who lives two doors away from where the shooting occurred, said he was in his car in front of a nearby church waiting for a parking space to become available when he saw a police squad car pull up around 1:30 p.m. The officers went into the apartment building "and the next thing you knew you heard some loud arguing and then a shot, and then in a minute or two later you heard three or four more shots," Mr. Clark, 70, said.

### Bhutanese king visits SEZ site in Kurigram

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State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, and local MP Hamidul Haque Khandaker, among others, were present at the time of visit.

Later, King Jigme left for Bhutan through Sonahat Land Port in Bhurungumari upazila around 3:00pm.

Bhutan has already conveyed its appreciation to Bangladesh for offering the Special Economic Zone in Kurigram, which is 190 km from the

southern city of Gelephu, Bhutan.

An MoU has been signed in this regard by the authorities of Bhutan and Bangladesh.

The district administration has already handed over 133.92 acres of Khas land under Madhabaram to BEZA.

In a bilateral meeting with the King and Queen of Bhutan in London in May 2023, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina proposed the establishment of a Special Economic Zone in Kurigram. Later, the district administration

and Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA) started proceedings to set up the SEZ.

The Economic Zone will add a "new horizon" in the area of bilateral trade and investment between the two countries and also achieve greater prosperity in the South Asia region, the two South Asian countries hope.

The King arrived on Monday on a four-day state visit to Bangladesh to attend a series of programmes including Independence Day celebrations.

### MoUs on defence, energy to be inked

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additional 1.5 million tonnes of LNG annually for the next 15 years.

The two countries also inked an agreement for deployment of 1,129 members of Bangladesh Armed Forces in Qatar. In September that year, the deputy chief of staff of Qatar Armed Forces toured Bangladesh for enhancing the mutual cooperation in training and professional relations between the navies.

The trade and economic relations between the two nations have also been stronger. Import from Qatar to Bangladesh was \$2.74 billion in 2022, which was only \$4.5 million in 2000. On the other hand,

Bangladesh's export to Qatar rose to \$89.43 million in 2022 from \$2.37 million in 2000.

Contacted, Prof Delwar Hossain, of Dhaka University's International Relations Department, said Qatar is a very important country for Bangladesh, especially for the country's energy security. Also, it has proved itself an important country in mediating regional conflicts.

As Bangladesh's economy has grown, Qatar looks at it as a potential investment destination. "So, there will be a win-win situation if we can bolster our relations," Prof Delwar told The Daily Star yesterday.

There is a huge Bangladesh labour

force in the Gulf countries, but the political relationships are not as strong as those with India or Pakistan, he said, adding, "Bangladesh now needs to diversify its relationship with other countries. The Gulf can definitely be a good choice."

On the defence and maritime cooperation, Prof Delwar said there is competition among the global powers in the Indo-Pacific region. China and the US may have certain issues when Bangladesh engages in any of them.

He added that as Qatar has the experience in the maritime sector, it can be seen as an opportunity to strengthen the maritime cooperation.

### Bangabandhu flown to Karachi

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"Because all the experts were saying that 30,000 people can't get control of 75 million. Well, this may still turn out to be true but as of this moment it seems to be quiet," added Kissinger.

Nixon replied, "When you look over the history of nations 30,000

well-disciplined people can take 75 million at any time. Look what the Spanish did when they came in and took the Incas and all the rest. Look what the British did when they took India."

They also discussed the long-term impact of Pakistan's separation. Kissinger said, "People now say that

the fellow Mujib in the East is really quite moderate, and for a Bengali that's right. But that's an extremely unstable situation there and the radical groups are likely to gain increasing strength." The President commented, "This will be only one blip in the battle and then it will go on and on and on..."

### World court orders more aid to Gaza

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ceasefire" and hostage release in Gaza by abstaining from the vote.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu charged that the step by the United States, which had vetoed previous similar demands, served to embolden Israel's enemy Hamas.

The MSF medical charity yesterday said there was no change on the ground since the Security Council resolution.

What was needed was an immediate and lasting ceasefire, a halt to all attacks on medical installations and personnel, and "unhindered humanitarian aid in Gaza," MSF's international president Christos Christou told AFP.

While the war has turned much of the territory into a devastated wasteland of collapsed buildings and tank tracks, Israel has also imposed a siege on its 2.4 million people, eased only by occasional aid deliveries.

The UN has warned that famine "is ever closer to becoming a reality in northern Gaza" and said Gaza's health system is collapsing "due to ongoing

hostilities and access constraints".

The ICJ was set up to rule on disputes between states and while its judgements are legally binding, it has little means to enforce them.

For example, the court has ordered Russia to halt its invasion of Ukraine, to no avail.

### Four killed in US stabbing spree

AFP, Washington

Four people, including a teenage girl, were killed and at least five injured after a man went on a stabbing spree at multiple addresses in the US state of Illinois, police have said.

The stabbings took place on Wednesday afternoon, Rockford city police said in a statement, adding that a 22-year-old suspect was taken into custody.

The statement did not say anything about a possible motive.