



#ARTS

HOW RASHID CHOUDHURY wove his way to art fame

“I did not feel satisfied with the usual oils and watercolours. As piano and organ are excellent musical instruments but not much effective for solo performances, there are typical mediums in the field of art which have their limitations... I was, therefore, looking for a medium through which, I can fittingly depict men and nature of my motherland. My search has borne fruit at last, I found my destination in tapestry.”

Star **LIFE** Style



One of the oldest forms of textile art, it has been used to create objects we see in our everyday lives, from dresses to purses and table covers, as well as some of the most beautiful artworks. Tapestry as an art form flourished in medieval Europe, and was introduced here at the hands of artist Rashid Choudhury in the 1960s.

One of the most renowned

exponents of modern art, Rashid Choudhury took it upon himself to venture into uncharted territory. It demanded time, technique, and tremendous dedication — particularly in a place where the form was virtually unknown. He committed himself fully, pioneering a genre and creating monumental works that today stand as cultural landmarks. And he did so with



style and finesse, creating signature pieces that undeniably cry out “Rashid Choudhury.”

Traditionally, large tapestries added vibrant colours to any space; they were both functional and provided food for thought through their dramatic depiction of Biblical stories, mythology, and the classics, or just mere portrayals

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of people’s lives. They were, and still are, costly and time-consuming to produce, and perfect for showing off the owner’s opulence and fine taste!

Born into an aristocratic family in rural Bengal, it is hardly a surprise that Choudhury was influenced by the various religions and cultures of the land. He enrolled in the Government Art Institute of Dhaka, where he started as a painter, honing his skills in more traditional forms like watercolours and oils. However, Choudhury would soon immerse himself in the avant-garde art



movements of the time.

Like most of his peers, he developed a keen appreciation for abstract art.

And, rather than simply following the Western styles, he sought to merge the spirit of indigenous forms of Bengal with European techniques. Under the guidance of French artist Jean Lurçat — “the father of modern tapestry” — Choudhury settled on the medium he is most known for today.

Some of his creations are visual narratives while others are far more abstract, evoking emotion and rhythm through form and texture. His tapestries often carry figurative elements like stylised human forms recalling folk or mythological figures.

His use of colours is a reference to the strong, earthy palettes that evoke the landscapes and moods of this region. Rashid Choudhury made abundant use of themes drawing from Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic traditions — expressing ethos true to our pluralistic heritage.

His tapestries are large, mural-like pieces, and some of his best-known works adorn government buildings, universities, and cultural centres in Dhaka and beyond. These were not just decorative but deeply symbolic, and meant to inspire reflection on our identity, nature, and spirituality.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Choudhury’s tapestries helped redefine the boundaries of Bangladeshi art. His influence continues to be felt in the contemporary art scene. As Choudhury himself once said, “Life finds its autonomy through expression. And death, in silence. That is why, it is through the expression of joy and sorrow that we are truly alive. And we attain immortality through our actions.”

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif
Photo: Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation (DBF)
Tapestry by Rashid Choudhury