

#PERSPECTIVE



“Pappu’s Art School for All” brings rickshaw painting to everyone

In the heart of Old Dhaka, where narrow streets carry the echoes of history and the city breathes through its rickshaw wheels, a quiet revolution in art education is taking place. It does not come from a university or a gallery. It comes from paint-stained hands, tin rooftops, and the stubborn belief that art belongs to everyone.

“Pappu’s Art School for All” is a grassroots initiative offering free and inclusive training in the traditional craft of rickshaw painting — a vibrant, uniquely Bangladeshi art form. The school operates out of 38 Hossaini Dalan Road in Chawkbazar and is already welcoming students every Friday and Saturday from 3 PM to 5 PM, turning the walls of Old Dhaka into living canvases of hope.

The goal? To preserve a fading cultural form while empowering underprivileged youth, differently-abled individuals, and anyone with the desire to learn, regardless of age, gender, or income.

More than art

Founder Mohammad Hanif Pappu knows what it means to dream without resources. A self-taught artist, he grew up watching the colours of rickshaws light up the streets of Dhaka.

“Our youth are wasting away in gossip and bad company,” Pappu shares. “I want them to fall in love with colour. To be addicted to a clean canvas instead of something destructive.”

With this mission, he started the school not for profit, but for purpose. His dream extends beyond the boundaries of Dhaka: “One day, I want to take this school to other countries — to show the world what our

people can create when given a brush and a little hope.”

The classes are open to all, but are completely free for those who cannot afford them. That includes children from low-income families, people with disabilities, and those often excluded from the formal education system.

“Some are passionate but poor. Some are disabled but dream big,” Pappu says. “If I can help even a few of them find purpose, then my life has meaning.”



Founder Mohammad Hanif Pappu and co-founder, Md Monir Hossain.

A community effort

This is not a one-man show. The initiative is powered by community artists, many of whom have long been involved in rickshaw and cinema banner painting.

Among them are veteran names like Rafiqul Islam, Solaiman, Mohammad Shipon, Md Humayun, Abdur Rob, Abdul Karim, and Md Dulal — who now serve as mentors, passing their skills down to a new generation.

Photographer Deep Loh is also documenting this journey, preserving each



moment in frame.

The school officially launched on 1 August 2025, with a small but

passionate gathering. Guests included Mahmud Hossain Khan, a Canada-based businessman, and Tanjida Mousumi, a journalist also residing in Canada.

“Their presence gave us courage,” says co-founder Md Monir Hossain, who has worked alongside Pappu since the early planning stages. “It showed us that even from abroad, people care about our heritage.”

Monir adds, “Dhaka is known as the city of rickshaws — this art was born here. We want to ensure it lives on through everyone, not just a few. That’s why this school is for all: children, the elderly, students, and professionals. Everyone.”

Looking forward

While the school currently operates on limited resources, Pappu and his team remain hopeful. “If we get help from government bodies, NGOs, or even the European Union, we could expand this,” he says. “I don’t want anything for myself. I just want to keep working with the youth. Maybe through them, I’ll live on in their brushstrokes.”

At a time when tradition is increasingly replaced by trends and machines, Pappu’s Art School for All stands as a reminder: art is not just for the privileged. It’s for anyone willing to learn, and anyone who still believes that a splash of colour can change a life.

And in a quiet corner of Chawkbazar, it already is.

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