

# PORTFOLIO

Curatorial Project and Writings (selected)

## **Kehkasha Sabah (b. 1985. Dhaka, Bangladesh)**

Biography of Kehkasha Sabah  
(b. 1985, Bangladesh)

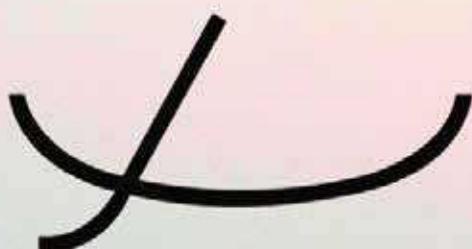
Kehkasha Sabah is an independent curator, writer, and researcher from Bangladesh, with a decade of experience working locally and internationally. Kehkasha's artistic approach lies at the intersection of art, culture, pedagogy, and technology, departing from curing the art ecosystem to producing narratives of care. Currently, she is a Curatorial fellow in the 'Art Exchange: Moving Image 2024' UK. She has curated over twenty exhibitions and her most significant contributions include - Land Water and Border (2021), DeJReal (2020), Collective Body (2020), Mercury Falling (2017), Alchemy of Losses (2017), Self/Identity (2016), and Celebrated Violence Series 1-5 (2016-2014).

As a curator, Kehkasha aims to explore new artistic languages with a social commitment and as a researcher, she engages in projects that reexamine historical and cultural narratives, and provide scopes to build digital archives. Her notable roles include: serving as an Editorial Assistant for a research anthology of MoMA (NY), as a Research fellow contributing to Translocal Solidarity Network- a South Asian initiative of Goethe Institute (BD), and being appointed as the Curator of the 3rd Majhi International Art Residency 2021 (NL) by Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation. She has also held the position of Assistant Curator for a major project in Dhaka Art Summit 2020, which showcased forty art collectives from the global south. In addition, she was the former lead program Manager at Depart Magazine (BD) and a former Curator at Kalakendra (BD). Kehkasha holds a BFA and MFA from the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Dhaka (BD) and has been present in various seminars, exhibitions, workshops, and talks. Her compelling writings have graced the pages of exhibition catalogs, artists' books, and cultural publications.

Kehkasha's contributions to national and international art projects have garnered acclaim. Her recognition in the Swedish contemporary art journal, C-Print, in 2021, underscores her expertise and success. Currently, pursuing her academic research to develop curatorial methodologies thinking decoloniality in post-pandemic, posthuman societies.

website: <http://kehkasha.name/>





**International Art Residency**

**majhi** মাঝি

**DURJOY BANGLADESH FOUNDATION**  
Invites you to

**2021 Majhi International Art Residency Open Studio Exhibition**  
**Land, Water & Border**  
Curated by Kehkasha Sabah  
21-24 October 2021

**Resident Artists:** Giulia Deval, Joydeb Roaja, Non Native Native, Moch Hasrul, Pier Alfeo, Satch Hoyt, Shohrab Jahan, Sounak Das, Yu Zhang, and Zihan Karim

#### **OPENING CEREMONY**

Inaugurated by H. E. Riaz Hamidullah,  
Ambassador of Bangladesh to the Netherlands  
Thursday, 21 October 2021, 03:00PM

**Venue:** Steentjeskerk Church, Sint Antoniusstraat 5-7,  
5616 RT Eindhoven, NL

**Event Director:** Eeshita Azad

**RSVP:** [info@durjoybangladesh.org](mailto:info@durjoybangladesh.org)



"We humans connecting in a landscape are the same as an archipelago. An archipelago, a group of islands closely scattered in a body of water. As believed these islands were formed by volcanoes erupting from the ocean floor. They share similar material, land, and culture but are separated by water as borders. With this notion of the archipelago, this project created a scope to make human connections across life experiences, across distance, and across cultures to engage with the sentient ideas of the contemporary landscapes of our life. It could be about land, or water, or border, but finding an anthology of the ideas merging or colliding with technology in a serendipitous way.

Europe, South Asia, and Southeast Asia have several historical and geographical encounters: hybrid, dynamic and have a fluid political border. As we are focusing on the relationship of the east, west, and south. We want to investigate the historical perspectives of ethnicity, identity, migration, and border. Being aware of the colonial history and past relationship of east and west, we intend to recognize Decolonial thinking and address emancipatory artistic productions - exploring vernacular or cultural wisdom as an artistic framework that is close to nature and can play a significant role in re-build the broken.

We shared histories of colonialism, dictatorship, crisis, emergencies, and recently this pandemic halted our activities and gave us time to ponder upon. How we can think about the new world order or how as cultural practitioners we can contribute to a better world? The new realities have changed our perspective of borders and challenged us to think of new discourses of art productions. Here we want to create such a space merging several borders, borders of every kind, identifying points of division while asserting potentials within the common ground of human experience. From bringing the artists across the globe to work collectively or to thinking about - how to dismantle the border of own work? Thinking about transcending mediums, or collaborating to address the collective spirit of human ecology.

During this Covid-19, borders and restrictions are real but we are connected everyday now and then through a virtual world of technology. However, we still are longing for human connection and collaboration. This project investigates the increasing debate on nature and technology to explore the new world order. Hence, it also carefully considers new restrictions, regulations, and environmental impacts of creating new work addressing the sustainability, need of social design and each artist presented in this residency have long commitments and philosophies accordingly. That is why this project is about using technology navigating through immersive mediums, especially with auditory and sensorial experiences, to create minimal material residue with positive resonance in the social milieu.

The question remains, how contemporary artistic productions can help us reinterpret all these fluxes? How we can withstand, enhance or propose different historical readings, helping the formation of new subjectivities? How we can use technology at the same time save nature? Maybe this is where we stop, listen and seek to vanguard humanity. Perhaps it is the only way to listen to the earth we live in and help others to listen what we hear."

-- Curatorial Note by Kehkasha Sabah, Curator of Land, Water & Border (3rd Majhi Residency, Eindhoven 2021)

**DOCUMENTARY LINK:** <https://vimeo.com/662303168/1027d4efc8>

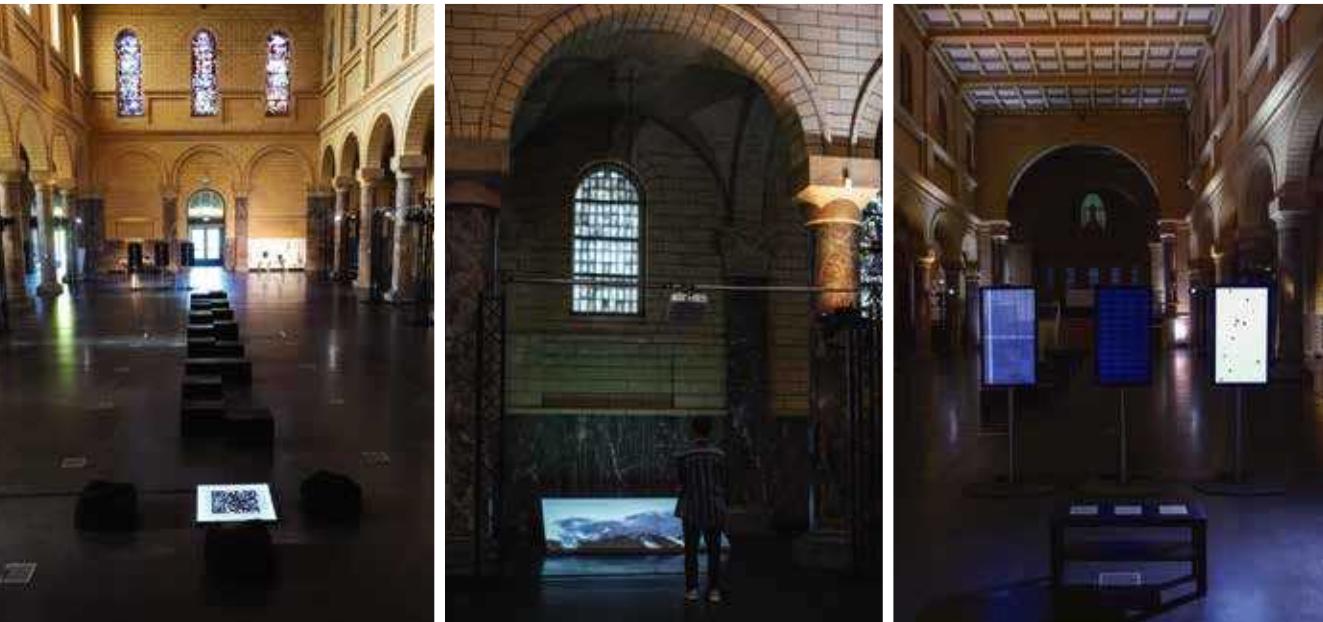
**PRESS REVIEW:** <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/423356/third-majhi-international-art-residency/>

**WEBSITE**  
<https://majhi.org/2021-eindhoven/>

**INTERNATIONAL APPOINTMENT**  
**PROJECT LEAD AND CURATOR**



RESIDENCY VENUE: STEENTJESKERK CHURCH, EINDHOVEN



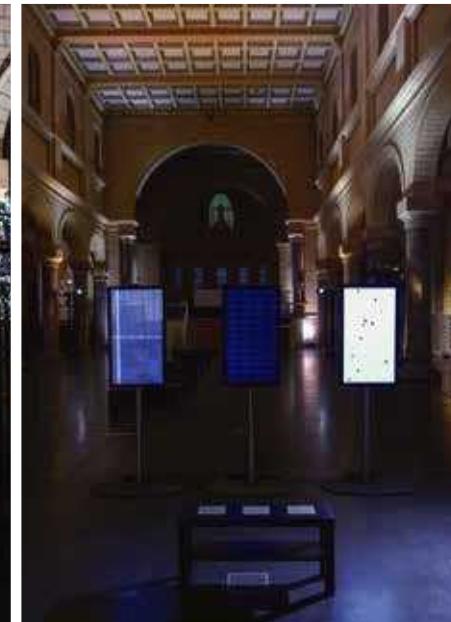
GROUP PHOTO: 2021 MAJHI ARTIST TEAM WITH CURATOR AND FOUNDER

BACK IMAGE: PAINTING BY SATCH HOYT FOR RSIDENCY



SOME ARTWORKS: PERFORMANCE & INSTALLATION VIEW

DURING RESIDENCY OPENDAY



INTERNATIONAL APPOINTMENT

PROJECT LEAD AND CURATOR

# DE | REAL

a conversation on new realities

Curatorial research  
by Kehkasha Sabah



A Collaboration between Fahema & Aklima (March - July 2020)  
Art/Living and Art Therapy



The time we spending by Yasmin Jahan Nupur  
Sound & Drawing

INDEPENDENT CURATORIAL RESEARCH  
CURATION IN CONTEXT  
PART 1: DE|REAL (MAY - JULY, 2020)

## Collaborators / Artists:

Abir Shome (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
Aklima Iqbal (Vienna, Austria)  
Emdedul Haque Tapu (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
Fouzia Mahin Chowdhury (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
Fahema Ahmed (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
Farah Naz Mooni (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
Joydeb Rojoya (Ctg, Bangladesh)  
Kamruzzaman Shashin (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
Kabir Ahmed Maumun Chisty (Narayanganj, Bangladesh)  
Latif Hossain (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
Mihir Moshirul Rahman (Poland)  
Moonin Muntasir (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
MD. Arifuzzaman (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
Nazmun Nahar Keya (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
Promotesh Das Pulek (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
Rabib Datta (CB, Bangladesh)  
Ripon Saha (Ctg, Bangladesh)  
Rajhan Ahmed Rafi (Bangladesh)  
Sounak Das (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
Sanad Biswas (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
Shohraw Jahan (Ctg, Bangladesh)  
Tilottama Bhowmick (Dhaka, Bangladesh)  
Yasmin Jahan Nupur (Narayanganj, Bangladesh)  
Yuvraj Zahid A. Chowdhury (Ctg, Bangladesh)  
Zihan Karim (Ctg, Bangladesh)  
Talk Platform: Art + Adda - Artda

## DE | REAL

Project Time: 25 June - 28 July 2020

It is a part of curatorial research by Kehkasha Sabah, created with 26 multidisciplinary Bangladeshi collaborators from different geolocations, reflecting and questioning the ethos of new realities.



Scan the QR code to  
discover more about the exhibition

Project's works will be available  
here from: 15th July 2020



This project's virtual space is  
supported by EMK Center

## SAMPLE IMAGE OF SOME ART PROJECTS OF THIS EXHIBITION

FOR MORE VISIT

<http://dereal.kehkasha.name>



Zine by Tilottama Bhowmick  
Digital Zine



"?" by Zihan Karim  
Social Experiment

Project details: De | Real - is a part of my ongoing curatorial research. This digital collaborative project is created by 26 multidisciplinary Bangladeshi collaborators from different geolocations, reflecting and questioning the ethos of new realities of a global pandemic.

Creative minds always seek escape in their creation to investigate new possibilities. As an artist/curator, we need to observe and register this time of pandemic through our work/thinking process. But how to activate artistic interaction during the global travel restriction? How do we communicate with the audience when all public spaces are compromised? Digital space has proven to be the most constant or active medium of communication during this global crisis. The tech influence in art practice is emerging worldwide and will faster more in the coming days. But what are our shortcomings to coping-up with this tech influenced new normal? If we try to adopt technology with our current practices, will it expand our horizon a little more? Is it possible to re-create human connection in this age of detachment?

This critical period is also showing us to re-check our previous footprints, wrongdoings, and why we are in the practice of overdoing everything or consuming! Being a creator, we were and are also a part of this over the producing system. It is a challenge for all of us to respond with our minimal resources but in a responsible way. With such objectives, 'De Real' is a research project using digital space with 26 creators exploring themes or practices.

We are living in conditions and crossing the border of reality and virtual reality every day. The title De | Real also means many things as such. It is true we are prisoners of our mind but it is also undeniable we are bounded in many borders - in the name of country, religion, culture, politics, four walls of our home, or even in perception of the physicality of our body. 'De-real' wants to explore all these contextual human conditions by presenting them in a borderless space of technology, where possibilities could be infinite.

Living in this transitional time of the pandemic and heading to some unknown living conditions compelled us to investigate our practices and choices even deeper level. 'De-real' invite creators, willing to explore Digital space associating with their critical discourse of human condition. By thinking alternative from the conventional mediums, this project is focusing on process-based or collaborative works, using any/all digital platforms, tools available to us recently. Here we are not trying to create art rather we want to create an alternative journey of this time with conversations on new realities. "

- Curatorial note by Kehkasha Sabah, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Here are some glimps of the collective art works:



Image (left): Children Performance by Girdee Bawlee art collective (BD) inside Taloi Havini's (Australia) in degeanous structure; middle: Pangrrock Sulap's (Malaysia) performative print unveiling; right: Jatiwangi Art Factory's (Indonesia) tile crafted musical installation before public performance outside gallery space



Collective Body exhibition: One Art project Installation view. ( Project by Invisible border + Pathshala South Asian Media Academy): Photo: Randhir Singh.

Assigned as an Assistant Curator to manage the 'Collective movement' project, with all duties and responsibilities of assistant curator, including research on fifteen Bangladeshi Art collectives, and produce profile texts for catalogue.

Collective movement project co-curated by Diana Campbell and Kathryn Wier in collaboration with GUDSKUL and ruangrupa (Indonesia), RAW Material Company (Dakar), Alserkal (Dubai), including forty more art collectives from the global south. The Project spanned between exhibition space and outside of the venue for dissursive programs, Workshops, Performance art and touring video project. For more information visit my website.



## DAS 2020 Collectives Platform Participants

### Akāliko

Founded 2012, Dhaka, Bangladesh



Cover Art used for Akāliko Music Compilation, 2014.  
Courtesy of Akāliko

Akāliko means 'timelessness' in Pali, the language of the Buddhist scriptures, reflecting the group's belief that musical forms have always been present in everyday life in society. The promotion of electronic and experimental music is at the heart of Akāliko's activities and they collaborate with artists and professionals who make digital and sound art. They operate as a for-profit organisation and are committed to addressing social issues through their events and projects.

Born out of Dhaka's electronica scene, the group was originally established in 2012 as an independent music production label set up to address the need for a common platform to promote the work of 'bedroom' music producers. As Dhaka does not have a vibrant club scene, the founders of the group felt compelled to address the lack of infrastructure by amplifying local efforts, voices, and resources. Since 2014 they have expanded their practice to collaborate with like-minded performance artists, writers, choreographers/dancers, communication specialists, psychologists, and, most recently, sound artists, while at the same time maintaining their label. Their compilations are streamed online and are also available for purchase through major international music platforms.

One example of their collaborative approach, the *Dhaka Noise Project* captures the essence of Dhaka through sound: both young and experienced music producers worked with non-traditional sound to compose their pieces. Akāliko will soon launch a cloud-based user-generated version of the *Dhaka Noise Project*. Recent Akāliko releases include the double EP *Psycho-geography* by UK/Bangladeshi group After Art. A new compilation is underway for release in 2021.

Email: [collaborate@akaliko.xyz](mailto:collaborate@akaliko.xyz)  
Websites: [www.akaliko.xyz](http://www.akaliko.xyz), [www.soundcloud.com/akalikorecords](http://www.soundcloud.com/akalikorecords)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/akalikorecords](https://www.facebook.com/akalikorecords)  
Key people: Fahad Hossain, Intezar Sharai, Khan Mohammad Faisal (founder and curator), Mayeesta Sharif, Sabir Azad, Shariful Islam, Shayekh Arif, Shcummo Saha, Srinin Kabir, Vru Patel (cofounder of Akāliko Records)

### Britto Arts Trust

Founded 2002, Dhaka, Bangladesh



Overlapping, 2012. A collective art project by Britto Members.  
Courtesy of Britto. Photo: Manir Miftah

**Britto Arts Trust (a non-profit artist-run collective)** is located in a converted store within a commercial arcade and is a place where artists can meet, discuss, exchange skills, and exhibit and perform their work. Talks, film screenings, and a range of other activities provide support and visibility opportunities for artists. The project space, which is owned by the Trust, was opened in 2011; but from its establishment, the collective rented spaces and supported artists' practices in a variety of ways, including participation in exchange programmes facilitated by the Triangle Network and other international partners.

Britto aims to encourage critical discourse, research, interaction, diversity, and innovation in art. As well as initiating the first Bangladesh Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011, they have hosted five international artist workshops (which typically involve ten international and ten local artists). Their media-specific workshop (which includes traditional and experimental media) has been held annually since 2003. For example, one iteration, *Pixelation*, focused on exploring new-media art.

The collective has organised 31 residency programmes in Dhaka, hosting international artists, students, researchers, and curators. Other projects include *1sq Mile* (2009 and 2014), an initiative involving public art interventions across a square mile of the old city of Dhaka; *New Media Art Festival* (2009); and *Shohornama* (2018). Outside of Dhaka, *No Man's Land* (2014), a project exploring critical geopolitical issues, took place on the India-Bangladesh border near Bhotaganj, Sylhet. 'Prantiker Prakritajan' (which means 'people living on the margins') is a community art project involving different indigenous and ethnic groups living in border and coastal areas of Bangladesh and India.

Email: [brittoarts@yahoo.com](mailto:brittoarts@yahoo.com)  
Website: [www.brittoartstrust.org](http://www.brittoartstrust.org)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/BrittoArtsTrust](https://www.facebook.com/BrittoArtsTrust)  
Key people: Tapeta Begum Lisl, Matlobur Rahman, Molia Tajul



Collective Body' Exhibition space: Small hand painted children stories stool installed by Back Art Foundation (BD); Back: 100 feet historical research on the global south by Savvy Contemporary (Germany) transferred into 100 feet panel (in baner painting style) by JhotaShilpo (BD)

Collective Body' Exhibition space:  
Front: VR by Uronto Artist Residency (BD); Back: Ice-Stupa photo Installation by SECMOL (Laddakh)



'Alchemy of losses' – an art exhibition by Asma Sultana, reflects the emotional tale of her 40 years' life journey. Asma, a Bangladeshi-born woman, completed her graduation from Faculty of Fine arts, University of Dhaka and now is living and working as an artist in UK and Canada. Since the last couple of decades, her experiences as a member of the Diaspora community made a drift in her thoughts pushing her to search for her own root. She started to embody the issues of identity, cultural and traumatic journey of womanhood. Asma starts to work as a cross-disciplinary artist since 2010. She decides to use her own body elements, like hair and fingerprints, to create her artworks. Her works become a mixture of drawing, painting, and installations, using conventional materials but unconventional techniques and presentation. She paints dipping her thumb in paints and tapping them on the canvas spontaneously over and over. Forensic science and anthropology, both assume that heredity, ethnicity and perhaps even personality are encoded within the whorls of the fingertip.

She sews child and women attires with her own strings hairs, she uses white delicate fabrics, and traditional sewing frames, but her artworks twist to a peculiar visual journey when she applies on them drawings and texts from her living experiences or native folklore. Her works echo an important connection with our cultural identity, namely with the Bangladeshi traditional fabric sewing techniques like - 'Nakshi Kantha' or 'Fulkari', which may reflect her nostalgia of Bangladeshi womanhood, as well as self-commitment to reviving cultural ethnicity. Maybe her stitching symbolizes the process of healing women's 'wounds'. Asma's produced works could be seen as a metaphor of the magical process of transformation, when we realize the hair she uses are a growing and fallen part of her body. Like an invaluable experience of ours – losses through living, continuous growing, departing and exile yet rebirth of self as a new form.

Since the last two decades, the reduction of distances, both physical and virtual, allowed young artists to be more and more engaged in local and global cultural dialogues and activities. Their fields of interest are wider, their art production processes and use of mediums and technologies more complex. It is a new and endless journey to navigate between local and global, collective and individual, ethnic and multicultural identities, 'infoxication' and cultural censorship.

Many young artists, specially young women artist's of Bangladesh are consciously or unconsciously caught in this thought process. We are presenting a series of curated art exhibitions in this regard and Asma's 'Alchemy of losses' is our fourth presentation.

-Wakilur Rahman and Kehkasha Sabah

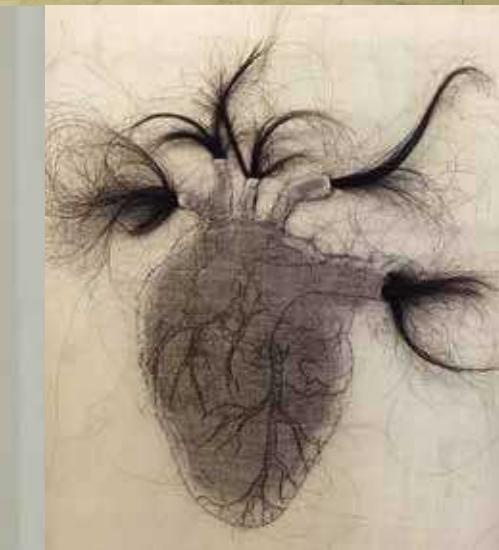
## 'ALCHEMY OF LOSSES'

An art exhibition by Asma Sultana

Co-curated by Kehkasha Sabah and Wakilur Rahman

Date: 3 - 28 FEBRUARY 2017

VENUE: KALAKENDRA



Art work by Asma Sultana,  
Material: Own hair stitched on fabric  
Dimension: Appox:12 x 8 inch

EXCERPTED CATALOGUE PAGES



Exhibition Installation Image, Artworks by Mustafa Zaman



Art work details

The curatorial project 'Mercury Failling' was a process based curatorial approach with prolific artist and notable art critic of Bangladesh Mustafa Zaman. We gave him the whole gallery space to intervene with his recent socio-political thoughts and critical discourses in contemporary space.



Catalogue Cover

# 'MERCURY FAILLING' - A SOLO EXHIBITION BY MUSTAFA ZAMAN

CURATED BY KEHKASHA SABAH AND WAKILUR RAHMAN

6 Dec 2016 - 25 Jan 2017

VENUE: KALAKENDRA

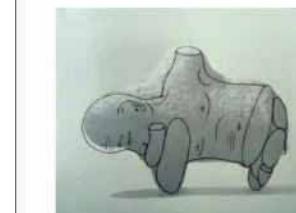
"Mustafa Zaman is apparently obsessed with image and he continually acts to short-circuit established meanings to arrive at new meanings through new contexts. His artworks can be interpreted in many ways from various positions of individual experiences and philosophical frameworks. They are multi-layered and use various media; sometimes they seemingly draw references from other art forms or engage in a direct conversation with art history, which opens doors to new paradigmatic or linguistic possibilities.

In 'Mercury Falling' his works evolve from photographic (his own or collected) images layered with drawings, texts, objects, and formal techniques. As we know, in a sense 'Photography' transgresses the idea of a painted or hand-drawn image, replacing it with something which is closest to the real. Mustafa elongates the process of arrival (at the real) to render his presentation surreal. He manipulates an image to an extent where it loses its own meaning to convey the meaning that he envisages – one that stems from his own visual experiences. His photographs and interlayered drawings/objects/artworks become disembodied, fragmentary within the exhibition space, which, one assume, could easily reside in another space in different forms or exist without the body itself, as we too live in our virtual worlds in the era of mass consumption of images. Mustafa's image making process fascinates us; we invited him to show recent works as we were familiar with his works for many years. His intellect obviously leaves an impression on his artworks, but what is interesting is that he is spontaneous, informal yet delicate to the very core of every piece. His inquisitiveness about his own surroundings, about ordinary/found objects, or images helps him reform some forms as well as create forms that speak of his intentionality.

Also, he is very instinctive and at the same time respectful when he reacts to a space. He is not interested in changing an exhibition space's physical constitution; neither has he tried to exhibit his artworks as a product of our time. Rather, he acknowledges the very matrix as well as temperament of the place and takes into account the totality of the architectural space (from the wall to the floor to the roof), and distributes his artworks in a playful way covering every corner, which helps create a grand visual narration. We see Mustafa's work as a personalized vocabulary, as an uncertain situation of our stagnant time and as a state of mind, when we are being inundated by a reality, which is out-of-control and is replete with mass images, which, in turn, leaves us bewildered as there are no signs of progress in sight.

Mustafa Zaman is an artist, curator, and notable art critic working in the art scene since last couple of decades. He is now working as editor of Depart, an art magazine focused on "contextual reading" and continually seeking to provide "critical reinforcement to the burgeoning art scene of Bangladesh".

Curatorial Note by Kehkasha Sabah and Wakilur Rahman



Ulricke Rehfeld, Images with drawing, 25x45 cm each

EXCERPTED CATALOGUE PAGES



Curatorial Note: "An individual has so many different identities – personal, linguistic, religious, state, gender, geographical... and so much more! These identities can be conduits of communication, bonds and unity. They can also be cause for differences, discrimination, oppression and hatred. These can lead to isolation, self-obsession and conceit. Arrogance linked with self-interest, power and authority lead to dire consequences. Politics of identity can have an ugly face.

The 21st century has seen an information and communication revolution that has connected people, ideas and cultures in an unprecedented manner. Globalization has given rise to a new concept of the individual. Our psyche and politics has been caught up in an endless vortex. An individual today is smart, bright, conscious and self-reliant. An individual is divided, intolerant, self-centered and envious. On one hand there is an explosion of a multitude of identities. On the other, the versatility of identities is being Desperately erased.

These waves of contradictions capture the minds and imaginations of today's young artists. This is manifest in their works of art. Their work speaks of the times, in form and creative content. Social and cultural exchanges through rapid communication technology have given their artistic expression components of innovative media, a fusion of media, technology and experimentation. The ebb and flow from home and abroad, from the individual to the community, from singular to versatile culture has been woven into their creativity. They traverse in the expanding world of art within the country and in the outside world. Consciously or subconsciously, all this has left a mark, an impact and a reflection of the work of the young artists. The attack on Holey Artisan Café has given impetus to a closer scrutiny of the times. This group of young artists wants to observe and assess the surrounding a bit differently through a variety of artistic expression. And this is our visual art exhibition 'Self/Identity.'

## **Self / Identity** | Co-curated by Kehkasha Sabah and Wakilur Rahman

A Multidisciplinary art exhibition with 44 young Bangladeshi artists.

Date: 6 -15 November, 2016

Venue: Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka



## EXCERPTED CATALOGUE PAGES



**Celebrated Violence 5**  
Curated by Wakilur Rahman & Kehkasha Sabah

**Wound**

Drawing (without color) exhibition

**Dilara Begum Jolly**

26 December 2015 - 20 January, 2016

Everyday 5 - 9 pm.



**KALA KENDRA**  
non-profit space for art  
1/11, Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur  
Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh  
01712220283, 01816533267

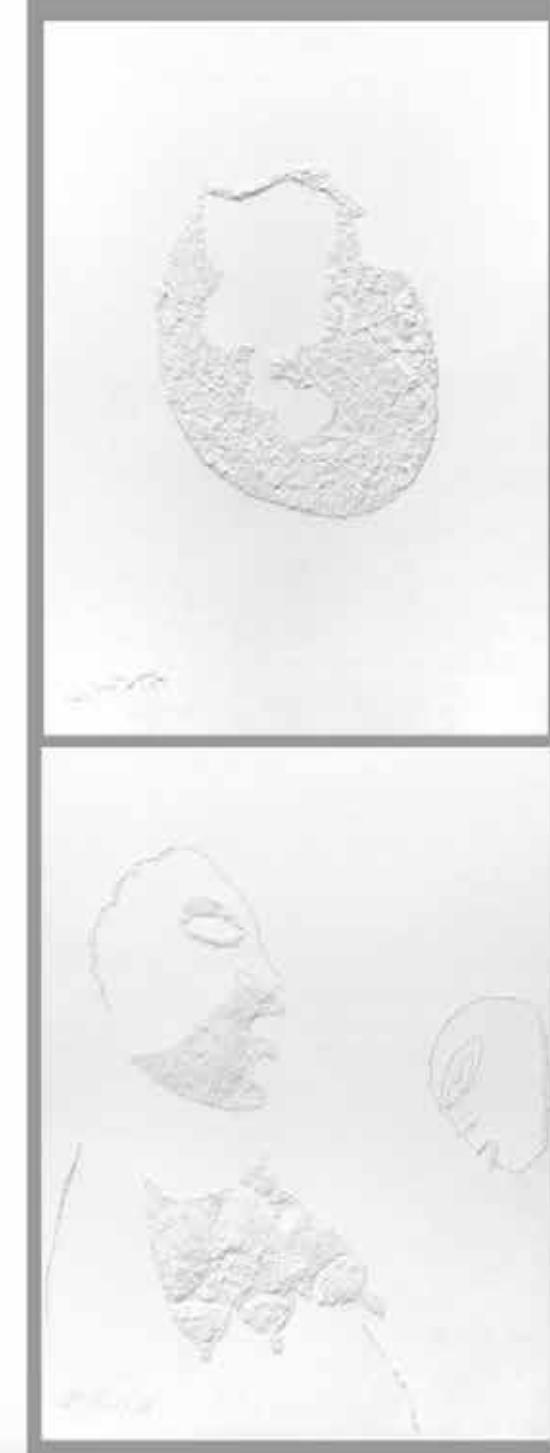
"We experience violence on a daily basis which embeds paranoia inside us. This paranoia stops us from helping others, stops us even from reacting. This collective inactivity is making the social structure insecure and also diminishing our feelings towards victims. Today we can see violence being accepted in every strata of our social milieu. Communication media, social community, entertainment and information, from the global arena to domestic life, are all accepting violence silently through the choice of language, sounds, images, gestures, even gossips and so on. It is as if we are conditioned by such a restrictive reality that it is turning us into active and passive observers. Visual artists are not excluded from this milieu. Some artists, who are constantly living through and observing these situations, have worked and built a position on this. 'Celebrated violence!' is an exhibition showing some Bangladeshi artists' works and their visual position concerning this issue. In 'Celebrated Violence -5' we are going to present 18 drawings (on paper, without color) by Dilara Begum Jolly titled 'Wound'.

In this series of her works, she chooses paper - a thick surface without texture, and with a sharp needle she opens the surface to express extreme painfulness but shows no blood or color. Here she uses the paper's delicacy to denote the human skin. Our skin is soft, extremely sensitive and very easy to hurt while simultaneously, it is the protector of our internal organs from external elements. Environmental harshness and unpleasant experiences of the body or violent incidents leave a mark on our skin, which mark is identified as 'Wound'. The violence Jolly experiences are visible and invisible, and as an artist she has no way to avoid the marks of the multifaceted violence of our society. 'Wound' is a marking of her internal, external, mental, and physical experiences and traumas. In this series, she highlights the inner journey as well as the harsh realities of violence with a precise, insightful mastery. In our understanding the 'Wounds' created by Jolly are a song of departure and mourning. This is why we selected her new series of works as the 5th edition for our curatorial series 'Celebrated violence!'."

Curatorial note by Wakilur Rahman & Kehkasha Sabah



Art & Bangladesh





**Celebrating Violence 4**  
Curated by Wakilur Rahman & Kehkasha Sabah



**'Fuzzy Fear'**  
Painting, Print Exhibition by  
**Moon Rahman**  
28 May - 20 June, 2015  
Everyday 5 - 9 pm

**KALA KENDRA**  
INSTITUTE FOR ART & CULTURE  
111, Ilobai Road, Mohammadpur  
Dhaka 1205, Bangladesh  
0171330263, 01615353267

Catalogue Cover

CURATED RESEARCH SERIES EXHIBITION 4  
CELEBRATED VIOLENCE



Exhibition opening



Artist works

Violence we experience each day embeds paranoia inside us. This paranoia stopped us to helping others, even to react. This collective inactivity is making the social structure insecure and also demising our feelings towards victim. Today we can see the acceptance of violence in everywhere of our social milieu. Communication, media, social community, entertainment and Information of global to domestic life, all are considering violence silently through our choice of language, sounds, images, gestures, even gossips and so on. It is not enough to say that these are anti-authority violence; they are becoming 'Transversal' violence, that is they are not limited to one society or culture, or they are not confined to a particular political party or government, they are becoming collective. Is this only because of the continuing dangers of political upheaval in our biosphere, which is being radically destabilizing the modes of economy, social and cultural life? Is it the reason for which violence has started to being legitimize and celebrated? We don't have any answers and sadly true, we hardly wish to know! As if we are conditioned such a restrictive reality that is turning us an active and passive observer. An observer who is defined as a silent participant in remorseless entertainment of violence. All these reasoning's are infusing numbness and heaving up a frustrated tolerance in us. This collective lenience of seeing crimes has started to nurture violence in every layer of society and also in our aesthetical choices in a sense. Consequently, visual artists are not excluded from this milieu. Some artists, who are constantly living and observing these situations, have work and make a position on this. So, the necessity for critiques remains compelling for us. As a curator, we search these artists and present their works under the name of a curatorial project 'Celebrated Violence' (part 1 & part 2). We had presented these two exhibitions in 2014 and after one year we still feel, the violence celebration mindsets have not compromise yet, rather they have been fabricated in every layer of society. So we have decided to continue our search and present the project 'Celebrated violence' as a series of exhibitions showing continuously Bangladeshi artist's works as solo or group exhibition format.

Curatorial note by Wakilur Rahman & Kehkasha Sabah



Catalogue Back Page



Celebrating Violence-3  
Curated by  
Wakilur Rahman & Kehkasha Sabah



'A Calculated Game'

Painting Exhibition by  
Ripon Saha  
30 April - 23 May 2015  
Everyday 5-9 pm

KALA KENDRA  
Dhaka, 1200, Bangladesh  
02 962 2023, 02 962 2024



CATALOGUE PAGES



'An ironic journey of contemporary violence'

To find out what our society means by sanity, perhaps we should investigate what is happening in the field of insanity - these words from Michel Foucault reminds us if we feel to search the state of violence of our society then we certainly have to go through a well rationalization of society or culture. May be this is why as a visual artist Ripon Saha found it wise to scrutinize the societies violence through every little symbols, fragments and the contextual sources of those fragments for his own artistic research. His works shows the changing, metamorphosing modern technology enforcing his perception of reality in a utter of unease. Through his journey he tried to show us, being in continuous violence how our perception of violence has started shifting in a obvious self ridicule senses.

Ripon starts his work as an academic surface maker but finish it with multi layered drawings, stenciled texts and objects like anti academic artist. In most of the works, he chooses Images with self body or other body interacting with kitsch images from a road side signboard to meaning full tyranny objects. Sometimes we see tense composing figure parts juxtapose with renowned renais-sance's sculpture or painting figures, sometimes child eating chillies, playing with traditional razor blades, smoking cigarettes, or sometimes dissected intestine with bodily desired sex in a hidden source of equation or we can see satirical images from dentists signboards and newspaper texts put in a contrast. It is very agreeable that all these images can be identify as direct and indirect source of violence. These fragmented image and sourced symbols he chooses from reality and assumption of his imagination, assemble in a whimsical humor to establish a new meaning generation institution of senses. After these assemblage every frame of his paintings suggested an ironic yet aggressive aesthetics where the question of authorship remains deemphasized, which also tell us he is well informed about Pop art. We can see these exploration in his works, like- 'The Game', 'Calculation', 'You and Me', 'Bite' and 'Red Hit' entitled series.



Even though Ripon's works ebb and flow from subcontinents linear figuration to western academic style, simultaneously he have a native flavor may be for his long connection to a vibrant locality like Chittagong. Chittagong is the second capital and largest sea-port city of Bangladesh, where multi type of culture, ethnicity, religious values, several forms of business, politics, corruption all are being well merged, Ripon was born in there at 1982. And still now he is living and working as a freelance artist from there. Moreover being the elder son of his father, Ripon has to look after his all legal documents and have to visit Judiciaries, Magistrates office regularly, where he sees court, police, criminals, struggling families of them and also different business and corruption around it. May be this is why he chooses to create his own aesthetical images challenged by everyday's social violence/irony. Therefore we can conclude here, this experiencing life challenges with multicultural value negotiation immerse a strong wittiness in him, so that, he is able to transform his obsession of social anger and frustrations to some satirical images. An images, which can claim his own aesthetics and submerged with crude irony yet refracting violence.

— Kehkasha Sabah, Visual Artist & Curator

The Game- 3, 4; Acrylic on Canvas, 60 x 60 cm; 2012

## CURATED RESEARCH SERIES EXHIBITION 3 : CELEBRATED VIOLENCE

Executed in Kalakendra (a non-profit artist run space) Dhaka

Duration: 30 April - 23 May, 2015

This research series was Co-Curated by Wakilur Rahman and Kehkasha Sabah



CELEBRATED VIOLENCE 1: INSTALLATION VIEW; DHAKA ART CENTER



CELEBRATED VIOLENCE 2 : INSTALLATION VIEW; DHAKA ART SUMMIT 2014 - GALLERY PARTICIPATION BY DHAKA ART CENTER

DHAKA ART CENTRE  
PRESENTS  
AN ART EXHIBITION

# CELEBRATED VIOLENCE!

part 1  
6-14 February 2014

Participating artists

Shishir Bhattachrajee  
Nisar hossain  
Abdul Halim Chanchal  
Mustafa Zaman  
Javed Jalil  
Farzana Ahmed Urmii  
Sharad Das  
Ripon Saha  
Jihan Karim  
Moon Rahman

Curated By  
**Wakilur Rahman  
Kehkasha Sabah**

At Dhaka Art centre  
House 60, Road 7/A Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1205, Bangladesh

part 2  
7- 9 February 2014

Participating artist  
**Anisuzzaman Sohel**

At Dhaka Art summit, Booth - H3 -12  
Bangladesh Shilpakala academy

An Interactive art event by  
**Nisar Hossain**  
Opening at 6pm, 6 February, 2014 at Dhaka Art Center.

**dhakaartcenter**  
a non-profit organization  
for promotion of art and artist

[www.dhakaartcenter.org](http://www.dhakaartcenter.org) | [dhaka.art.center@gmail.com](mailto:dhaka.art.center@gmail.com) | House 60, Road 7/A, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1205, Bangladesh



The violence we experience on a daily basis embeds a paranoia inside us. This paranoia stops us from helping others, even to react. This collective inactivity is making the social structure insecure and also diminishing our feelings towards the victims. Now we can't really feel anything at all...to claim to 'Feel' is a great thing. Because 'feel' does not stand only as a personal sentiment! It's also a personified verb; A verb that could be used, for or against, humanity!

Today we can see the acceptance of violence everywhere in our social milieu. Communication, Media, Social Community, Entertainment and Information of global to domestic life all are considering violence silently through our choice of language, sounds, images, gestures, even gossips and so on. As if we are conditioned in such a restrictive reality that it is turning us into an active and passive observer. An observer who is defined as a silent participant in remorseless entertainment of celebrated violence.

The Visual Artist is not excluded from this milieu. Some artists, who are constantly living and observing these situations, have worked and took a stand on this. Celebrated violence is an exhibition showing some Bangladeshi artists' works and their visual position concerning this issue.



## CELEBRATED VIOLENCE CURATORIAL SERIES

THIS RESEARCH CONCEPTUALIZED AND CO-CURATED  
BY KEHKASHA SABAH AND WAKILUR RAHMAN

STARTED FROM 2014 AND PRODUCED UNTIL 2016  
TOTAL FIVE EDITIONS OF SOLO AND GROUP ARTISTS EXHIBITIONS  
HELD UNDER THIS SERIES OR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

# ক্ষতিচি | Phonetic Image

ওয়াকিলুর রহমান  
(অঙ্গো, ধৰণি ও শব্দ চাকেপন)

ঢাকা আর্টসেন্টার আয়োজিত প্রদর্শনী  
ধ্বনিচিত্র  
ওয়াকিলুর রহমানের ছাপনা শিল্প প্রদর্শনী  
(অঙ্গো, ধৰণি ও শব্দ চাকেপন)  
বিড়িত্রাটিউ কেন্দ্ৰস্থ স্থান  
২১-০২-২০১৪, সোমা ৬ টা-থেকে রাত ১০টা  
বাড়ি ৬০, মোহ ষ/এ, ধানমন্ডি, ঢাকা  
Dhaka Art Center Presents  
**Phonetic Image**  
Installation by **Wakilur Rahman**  
(Light, Sound and Text Projection)  
Curator: **Kehkasha Sabah**  
21-02-2014, 6 to 10 pm  
House 60 Road 7/A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka  
[www.dhakaartcenter.org](http://www.dhakaartcenter.org)  
Ph.0172079377, 01191778511



ART LAB DHAKA Presents  
a curatorial art exhibition-  
**Phonetic Image-2**  
A video art Installation by  
**Wakilur Rahman**

20-22 November, 2014, Everyday 5.30 - 8.00 pm.  
Hay festival Dhaka 2014, Bangla Academy Dhaka.

What we see first - a word or its images? Words and images are correlating, searching for each other continuously, despite of all differences. Perhaps it is art's achievement to design a system of complete depiction through the medium of script and to find the appropriate means to write something down. For a long time Artist: Wakilur Rahman has been involved with words, texts and numbers and their conveyed contextual anthropological or historical meaning and their images for creating his artworks. Phonetic Image-2 has a continuity of his art practice.

- Kehkasha Sabah



INDEPENDENT CURATED SHOW, AN IMMERSIVE MEDIA ART SHOW - TWO EDITION

WATCH VIDEO DOCUMENTATION: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aW4IQNjZNo>

EXPERIMENTING WITH MOVING IMAGE, VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF TEXT  
AND THE CONNECTION OF MASS PEOPLE WITH PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE



Exhibition view: CAMP-A Photogenetic Line, Experimenter, Kolkata (13 April-15 July, 2019). @ Experimenter Kolkata

## A new document of Nationalism

By Kehkasha Sabah

A hundred years ago Rabindranath Tagore was very clear on building a natural human society, which is more humane in essence than the so-called artificially created nationhood in his book Nationalism, 1917. Where he further proposed 'Nationalism is a cruel epidemic of evil that is sweeping over the human world of the present age, eating into its moral vitality'. These lines were echoing in my mind while visiting an exhibition entitled 'Camp - A Photogenetic line' - hosted by one of the Experimenter's galleries situated in Hindustan Road, Kolkata, India.

After entering the exhibition, a 100-foot long branching sequence of cardboard cutouts with photos (blown-up images from actual size), staged on a contentious wooden plinth holding on the irregular wall across the full venue will amaze anyone. The photographs, in both color and monochrome, have been reproduced for the exhibition. They were collected from the photojournalist archive of the Hindu, a leading national newspaper, by the film and media collective - CAMP. To a close inspection, the images installed here dated from 1937 to 2018. And stepping far back from the installation the whole art piece stand together in layers like a 3D montage - dashing front and back, cuts in the edge or punched in inside, juxtaposed in content or referral side by side with figures, peoples, places, objects, landscapes, and architecture colliding verses of multiple (political/apolitical) histories of India. This tableau-like setting is anything but the outcome of an archive simply revisited.

The word Photogenetic refers to 'the genealogy that leads to on being Photogenic'. That suggests there is an actual subject lineage behind its appeared nature of the line referred to in the title. It's difficult in photography to overcome the superficial power or subject; the concept and statement must be quite convincing in themselves to win over a dramatic and compelling subject situation. Let's look at the conceptual formation of the work.

First, through this work Camp questioned an old archive with its stagnant quality which got altered in total newness, became interactive and more contextual to the contemporary time. Second, the whole process of the work, plywood cutouts of people/public figures as propaganda materials, is very referential to the people of India from their

everyday visual culture. Because political leaders from India using similar forms during elections or events for more than eighty years. Sometimes these cutouts' enormous sizes presented as a modern myth of demi-gods and the quantities inside a city, do block the horizon. Signifying to this - horizon blocking, Camp preferred to pick both political and apolitical images, and layered them in three special ways considering a sequence of peoples (in the photos) growing in age/reverting, things in the background come to the foreground and two Captions (of photos) refer to each other. These instructions on the exhibition handout, create several narratives of the photos- by dismantling every people, things, and places equally important and force them to appear as a de-constructed political horizon line to its viewers.

The installed images start with - Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan aka Frontier Gandhi, who was a political and spiritual leader known for his nonviolent movement and opposed the partition of India. The images chosen here, are from his 1937's active movements, where we see his meetings with a group of full-turbaned Sikhs or the army of Khudai Khidmatgars, and sequentially his images end with his elderly wheel chaired version with a delegation including Rajiv Gandhi. Between this line of narration, in some images, you can identify the important presence of the minority leaders as well. Especially, Mehbooba Mufti, an Indian politician of the Jammu and Kashmir (Peoples Democratic Party) and Dalit Panthers of India, Periyar E. V. Ramasamy - a Father of Dravidian Movement, who was critical of any form of nationalism and promoted the principles of rationalism, self-respect, women's rights, and eradication of caste. This sequel of a political narrative, from nationalism to critique of nationalism, intervenes with the symbolic interpretation of Things, Events, and Persons in many more layers, far-reaching and impossible to conclude in any finite line. Also, in putting together cutouts of major mass protests or gatherings, such as the protests in favor of the film 'Fire' or the investigation into Rajiv Gandhi's killing, it might be noticed a clear trajectory of history is established. And this is where the title of the show comes in - 'A Photogenetic Line'. The line could be anything, from representing a forward movement to some borders or barriers. The line is also a flexible tool to mold a form voluntarily-which is what the exhibition attempts to do as it allows one exhibit to speak to its neighbor and leaving the audience for wide guessing.



Image (Left): Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan with his army of Khudai Khidmatgars. @ Experimenter Kolkata

Image (Right): Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's Idol; one during its establishment and another with a large procession around@ Experimenter Kolkata



Image: Head-less cutout of MGR and poster of Famine in Rayalseema (in the background), cutout of Panalismwami and Jayalalitha (in the foreground).@ Experimenter Kolkata.

Among the such open-ended proximities, Camp showed some special interest by choosing actual cutout figures (propaganda) of important persons/events stated in their captions. Showing an empty structure that will hold a cutout of leaders before the assembly election 1991; another cutout with Rajiv Gandhi wearing traditional clothes, which captioned: a cutout fell on a person seriously injuring him 1992.

A head-less cutout of MGR, a matinee idol-turned-chief minister of Tamil Nadu, standing in Namaskar style juxtaposed with a poster of Famine in Rayalseema. Another example of juxtaposing is Jayalalitha's, a Tamil Chief Minister (1991-2016), cutout blows in the wind while Panalismwami's, a current Tamil Chief Minister (from 2016), cutout still Namaskars from the one that was taken down by court order; Aren't these examples referring to the anarchic ambiguity of using cutouts in the political landscape? Instantaneously, the last real cutout's image is a life-size cardboard Cop (policeman) smiling and standing middle of the traffics. On March 16, 2013, The Hindu published "Indian city rolls out cutout policemen in bizarre bid to slow down traffic on its deadly roads" – appeared as a novel act of the same tool, which served political agendas before.

Skipping many in the middle, if we arrive at the last part of the installation, images of the people like- Kalari expert Shaji K. John, social activist, singer and two time Women Billiard title winner Kamala Devi, and Mr. Duke of Kashmir (Khuda Bux- Man with the X-ray Eyes, known for blindfold playing) staged sequentially with their active images. The relation of these three talents could be seen as a symbolic reference to the wide range of talents India has and should utilize, with a focus that needs determination, and discipline like a yogi is essential for the progress of India. Or, they completely mean something else? There are many examples as such, creating countless narratives that could encounter by a viewer at the exhibition. Among these storylines, Camp's exhibition contentiously confines our eye to the nation's existing political practices question its anachronistic side and suggest some change and reform.

The total exhibition has presented as an idea of a single art piece, contains many images with serious events creating a discourse with some simple events or activity as well, such as - farming landscape to banal images, or bride inside an auto-rickshaw to cricketer playing in the field. Camp successfully have done it through either with the image content or cutting their borders differently or with the captions written on the wooden plinth. But all narratives at the end will navigate you to think of any of the burning socio-political issues, including human/gender rights, equality, caste oppression, religious intolerance, national progress, and limited freedom of speech that all are important for contemporary sovereignty.

Finally, another major point that needs to address, the art piece exclusively contains images of the people/places from- Pashtun, Karachi, Kashmir, Sri-Lanka, Tamilnadu, Bangalore, Mysore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Delhi, Guwahati, and many more regions of India or its peripheral states, except Bangladesh and Nepal. Now some questions might remain, why these two countries are not included in any of the narratives created by CAMP? Specially Bangladesh was a part of India exactly when (1937) the narrative started. Why Camp included a person from Pashtun (recently Afghanistan) or events from Sri-Lanka when both of these countries are independent countries too! The reasonable conclusion could be defined as - CAMP wanted to do the territorial investigation of an inclusive India in terms of the origin of its name , shared language, multiple believes systems and culture, where the so far practiced nationalism needs to be re-examined. Intriguing enough the exhibition is going on alongside the Indian national general election



Image: Protest in favor of the film 'Fire' (front image) and several incidents of historical burnt buildings (back images) are juxtaposed @ Experimenter Kolkata



Image: Shaji K. John at his Kalari movement, Kamala Devi and Mr. Duke of Kashmir playing Billiard composed as attempting to hit on the same point. Courtesy Experimenter.

2019 when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was already in the power for the last five years and many of their political activities are highly critiqued for using Hinduism as a political device. Pondering upon the political discourse on 'India' as a nation, divided on religion, or it's practiced nationalism was hugely opposed by Mahatma Gandhi or many other Gandhian activists later on. Like Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, with whose image Camp started the installation. And over the course, the installation magnificently branched out showing political or apolitical images to inflame our thoughts to a new beginning of nationalism by addressing the multi-layered peoples of India who are profound in many religious believes, knowledge, spirituality, heritage and inherently Pan-Asian in nature.

This exhibition waits for more exploration from different visitors. It is on view from 13 April to 15 July 2019, at Kolkata Experimenter, Hindustan Road, Kolkata, India.

#### Footnotes:

Rabindranath Tagore (7 May 1861 – 7 August 1941) was a Bengali poet, writer, composer, philosopher and painter from Bengal. He became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature (1913).

Tagore Rabindranath, Nationalism, Macmillan, New York, 1917

Rajiv Ratna Gandhi (1944-1991) was the youngest Indian Prime Minister at the age of 40, the president of Indian National Congress party. He served as the 6th Prime Minister of India from 1984 to 1989. He was assassinated in 1991 while in his election campaign.

Namaskar- A body gesture, uniting two hands in front with bowing head, of offering greeting to the people. It is popular in S/Se-Asia, originated from Hindu and Buddhist religion. Kalari: Is a form of Indian martial arts, as a mix of yoga and sword fight movements.

'India' as a name derived from the river Indus dated back 2500BC in the Indus-Valley civilization (consisting some regions from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir, North and West-side of India).

BJP is a right-wing party, and its policy has historically reflected Hindu nationalist positions.

(This essay comprises 1670 words, including the captions of the images but without citation/footnotes.)

[This essay was developed by the author during her participation in 'ELP Module X: New art criticism' – a critical writing workshop about developing critic's subjectivity and anecdotal detail in art writing; by Experimenter Kolkata, and Sharjah Foundation; India, May 2019. ]



## *The turning of the tide: Bengal's Performance Art Week at a glance*

by Kehkasha Sabah

Two centuries ago Kant raised a question: who are we now? The answer led us to the meditation on 'historical presence', as Michel Foucault later observed. In the artistic realm, similar interrogation perhaps led to the investigation of 'presence' in relation to the corporeal body, which was recently given a free rein in the Performance Art Week under the Visual Arts Programme of Bengal Foundation. Seeking to take a comprehensive look at the role of performance art in the contemporary scene in Bangladesh, the event signaled an attitudinal change in mainstream art circles vis-à-vis contemporary praxes. The organizers claimed to have set an appreciative eye on the multiple complexities of this ephemeral medium through staging of performances, discussions and exhibitions in a sequence.

The Performance Art Week can thus be seen as Bengal's first attempt at an ethnographic study – one that lasted from 27 to 30 December 2016, featuring 20 performance artists from various parts of the country. The primary concerns were centered on '[h]ow do artists materialize this non-material art,' and 'how does this medium contributes to the evolution of new languages?'

The participants, selected from responses to an open call, explored a range of contemporary paradigms to bring to the fore perspectives on social-political-cultural issues as well as issues of identity, urbanity and femininity seen from collective and personal positions.

Palash Bhattacharjee's *Marked* and Jewel A Rob's *Eternal Moments: Numbness* were reflections on urbanity. The theme appeared in Joydeb Roaja's work *Prajanma Kalpadrup O*

Anudrum to satirically expose the dark sides of ongoing urban developments. In a different vein, Sumana Akter's work *Five Minutes For Sundarbans*, framed as a silent protest against the Rampal coal power plant project to be set up near the Sundarbans, takes up hours of slow-mo scenes by the artist.

Hasna Hena Porosh's performance *I Have to Run; I Don't Know How to Stop* and Meherun Akter's *Self Conversation* both relayed their personal experiences in the societal context. The most pervasive form of ego-massaging was apparently raised by Sharke Nasrin Toontoon – her performance *Selfie* depicts how projecting ourselves on social media is gradually making us unable to differentiate our subjective schemas from physical realities. In a different vein, a similar theme of socially-psychologically benumbing a phenomenon is tackled in *Brahma Akhon Ghumaitachen* by Niloofer Chaman. Her work traversed certain chapters of the Mahabharata where Lord Brahma is asleep when the whole world is burning. A counterpoint to this is to be found in Atish Saha's *An Invisible Man*, in which the issue of political abduction and forced disappearance is played out in a slow unfolding of a morbid presentation where the artist remained tied inside a gunny sack.

Sanjoy Chakraborty, in his *Blood, Nation and a Speech* voiced his thoughts in favour of national unity where he makes all castes and creeds dissolve into one. To delve into issues of femininity, womanhood and child abuse, Arpita Singha Lopa, Afsana Sharmin Zhumpa and Farah Naz Moon appeared with their pieces entitled *Freedom in Femininity*, *The Feminine* and *Phenomena* respectively.

In *A Conversation with Rock* by artist Waley Jaff and *Cage of Present* by Efat Razowana Reya – both performances were symbolic presentation inflected by hope. On a different note, Reetu Sattar's *Isn't It Time You Let Me Go* conveyed a spiritual message and called for an unburdening of our spirits from our material concerns in a highly financialized society. Ashim Halder Sagor, in *Remember to Forget*, presented the dual functions of our memory to store and erase traces of certain events and phenomena.

Some artists showed a penchant for self-examination – they questioned the very idea of art or artistic concepts as an artist's property. Sanad Kumar Biswas, Nazia Andaleeb Preema and Emran Sohel lent their skills to such an end. Sanad, a performance artist and

a sculptor, through his *Artist in a Gift Box* lets the audience interact with him. With *See Me, See You*, Preema addressed interactivity from within a similar premise and let the audience become a part of her performance by making them (re)act spontaneously and respond imaginatively to her cryptic acts. Emran, on the other hand, staged a three-day long act entitled *Announced and Unannounced*, capturing images of objects/spectators. He allocated the penultimate day to placing those photographs into an automated mortar maker while he roamed the streets making 'blind drawings' with his eyes covered with chunks of a brick. He also interacted with actual street canvassers who sell cheap medicines to the effect that left one wondering: what is the difference between real life performances or acts and the artists' performances staged as a generic form of art?

As a sequel to the Art Week, an exhibition entitled *Ephemeral: Perennial* put together video and photographic documentations of all the performances at two of their premises – the Daily Star-Bengal Arts Precinct and Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Bidyapeeth. It is in these sites that the organizers' mission to examine 'what role does it [performance] play in cultural and political activism as opposed to white-cube spaces?' could be revisited. The exhibition was jointly curated by artist Mahbubur Rahman and Tanzim Wahab, and ran its course between 6 January and 25 February 2017.

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PUBLISHED WRITING

# Censored Image: A euphemistic approach of censorship on Art and State!

by Kehkasha Sabah

Artist Wakilur Rahman has been always worked as a protagonist artist for using text, image and contextual discourse in his artworks. His few exhibitions - 'Nobody is perfect everybody is perfect', 'Cultural Fast food', 'News Food' and 'Phonetic Image' - were admirably thought provocative photography based exhibitions for bridging contextual dialogue with our cultural behavior and visual politics. Now following to those, the 'Censored Image' is another photographic image based art project - created, curated and censored by Wakilur Rahman, which also invoke us to deal with such a camouflaged word 'Censorship' in visual culture.

'Censor' derives from the Latin for census taker or tax collector, as magistrates who held censuses and supervised public morals of the Roman Empire. In ancient societies, like China, the first censorship law was introduced in 300 AD and was considered a legitimate instrument for regulating the moral and political life of the population. Today through censorship an authority can narrow what we can say, see, hear, think, and even imagine. Basically, in every Civilization, Nation, Culture or private authority has their own cultural code/norms where they use censorship as a tool to suppress the content they find undesirable or the person who wants to revolt them. This portrayal renders the 'Censor' as the very opposite of Democracy, Freethinkers or Artists.

We have seen almost every society have dreadful examples of visual censorship on free thinkers or artists for their Ideologies, Books, Paintings, Sculptures, Performance, Films, and Images, etc. And there has a long debate on the legality of visual censorships, as those forbidden contents were actually harmful or not for audiences. And we have also seen whenever something censors by an authority; people become intensify about the issues. If we look into our visual culture, whenever an authority censored a film, book, image, sculpture or artwork that censored issues became more attracted to us to know its forbidden content. So, what's the benefit of visual censorship? At this contextual ground Wakil's 'Censored Image' step-in but in a euphemistic approach.

Here Wakil presented 44 manipulated images or photographs, each image printed in a similar ratio (small image printed in large paper), white framed and hanged over the exhibition wall bordering to each other as a city horizon line. On a closer look, the viewer could feel utterly ridicule with the images overwritten manipulation. Why a well-established artist like Wakil, has undermined the aesthetics or subjectivity of the images by using unnecessary symbols, blocked colors, lines, blurriness here and there? Does his photography is more than a medium for factual communication of ideas?

For further understanding, we can see the exhibition prologue, where Wakil has stated these images are mostly 'Banal Images' and chosen from his Facebook account! He has also stated

this project idea came to his mind when Facebook authority blocked his few uploaded images referring 'Objectionable Contents'. So, he starts to intrigue the consequences of the censorship on visual politics. If we tracked back on Wakil's Facebook account, we can see almost every day he uploads random images of self, body reflections, friends, composition of spaces and objects, roadside snapshots, landscapes or Architectures, which suggests he use some digital handled devices with him always and do some territorial investigation of his everyday life. And these photographs are not accidents - they have always represented as a concept when he uploaded them on Facebook referring to a thematic project, like- Narcissus, Skin, Public performance, In-between, etc. 'Censored Image' - the same nature of Facebook project had been started on 2015. Here Wakil dealt with similar axiomatic images but he has applied typical censor tools or digital manipulation to achieve his conceptual growth of censorship. But exactly how Wakil became able to connect our recent socio-political scenario of 'Censorship' with art aesthetically and conceptually in a single image?

Wakil's series starts with censoring some Landscape images, where he doodled rectangular color patches or lines, which creates a different layer of composition on the previous image and a banal image turned in an abstract aesthetics to its viewer. But in this series, few images are very significant, they are images of Intimate indoors - selfie, friends, and body in bed or simply unmade beds, which hardly seems banal if we overlook the manipulation! We know, it's difficult in photography to overcome the superficial power or subject; the concept and statement must be quite convincing in themselves to win over a dramatic and compelling subject situation. And exactly at this point, Wakil has appropriately used the tools of 'Censorship'. In a cautious way, he has censored the images identification elements (part of beds, body, faces), that precedes or enhances the audience's curiosity at a different level. The audience starts to intrigue the concept of morality, judgment, social behavior and starts to feel like an intruder in Wakil's personal space, which feelings are deeply rooted in our cultural behavior. Furthermore, in some images

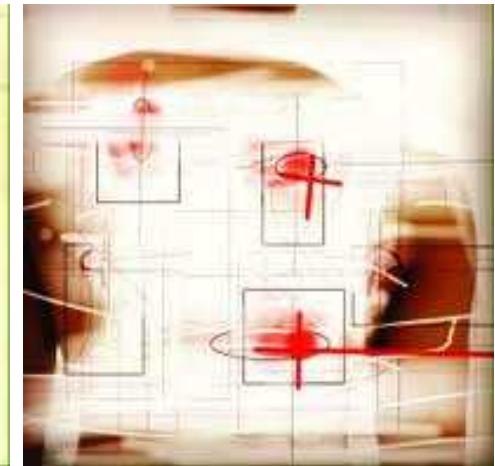
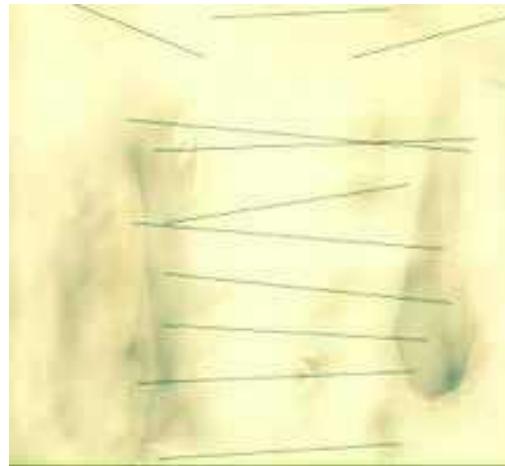


Image 1 & 2: Photo from 'Censored image' series, These images are write protect by artist.

of roadside snapshots, he censored some parts with red color, censoring random roadside frame galleries iconic or random faces, erasing the written slogan on Legendary Noor Hossain's\* back, blocking some parts of animal sacrificing scenarios - extremely inflame our thought on the political dialog.

Actually, Wakil uses these manipulated elements on some ordinary images as symbols of the typical censorship tools used in the Media, TV or Film's image to provoke us about our recent political (and partly religious) censorship on internet, social media, Viber, You-tube, blogger & free thinkers, newspaper and electronic media. We know these censorship issues openly came from our Government when they approved an autocratic law of (ICT) Censorship. This Law as Section 57 raised concern among the writers, journalists, bloggers, and human rights activists as it directly interferes with the freedom of expression and right to privacy as guaranteed by Articles 39 and 43. Now Wakil's ridicule starts to become sensible to us, why he self-censored his works. Since it was not easy for Wakil to express his thoughts concerning these issues openly! Through 'Censored Image' Wakil narrated the ethnography of censorship of art, literature, film, media, and religious tolerance to public speech on our unnerved political space. Thus, simple way Wakil has drawn audience's curiosity in a space of personal & political.

Finally, as we know, most of the time Power breeds corruption. It also invites ridicule. The ridicule often provokes retaliation from the powerful. Criticism and insults directed at the powerful is one thing, but ridicule cuts deeper. 'Censored Image' has tried to give this same deeper cut onto its viewer mind for using some banal images and ridicule manipulation to express a radical contextual discourse of our recent socio-political state of 'Censorship'. "The government is always the guardian of tradition, and art is the guardian of innovation. If there's no friction between the government and artists, it's abnormal." - a quote from Alexander Melamid's reminds us Wakil's art is not just about artists and artworks. This exhibition has the most important insight from a sociological approach to art.

This text was published in the exhibition Catalogue of Censored Image at Kalakendra, 2016  
All images are write protect by artist.

# Participated in Exhibitions as an Artist (Selected)

2016: Dust to dream, dream to dust a site-specific installation 'D27' curatorial art project in Dhaka.  
2015: '6-hour durational performance' at Samdani International Performance art Openday, at Shilpkala Academy.  
2015: 'One mile<sup>2</sup>', a month-long Community Art project conducted by Britto Arts Trust.  
2014: Photography Installation, "Destination Unknown: climate, life & behavior" public art project by ARTLAB Dhaka on Climate crisis.  
2014: 'Performance art Festival-2014' at Chhobit Haat, Dhaka.  
2014: Performance 'Trust me' at 16th Asian Biennale, Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy, Dhaka.  
2014: 'Urban Hour' site specific project by Back Art Foundation.  
2014: 'Post Academic dilemma' Group Exhibition, Dhaka Art center.  
2014: Performance Art Open Studio, Depart.  
2013: Performance Art, at 'News Food', Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka.  
2013: Installation project, 'Longitude & latitude - V', Curated by Shehzad Chowdhury; Dhaka.  
2012: 'Art through Camera's Open studio, Photography installation; 2012; Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka.  
2012-2008: All Annual Art exhibitions at Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka



## Concept:

"Transformation and spirituality" as a theme of this curatorial site-specific exhibition. I found both topics have a unique connection with this house, which is true for our personal to collective existence too. The existence and the transformation of both the human and the nature are inevitable, and in the midst of this transformation, the spiritualism is hidden, the spirituality is dependent on living, faith and belief, and after finding these links in the old history of this Mr. Delu's house. Delu brother, who, with utmost care, lived, cherished a dream and built a pedestrian nursery and it survived for more than 50 years. But today for growing needs and demand this dream will be shattered, dream will be dust again, another new construction project will be developed here, maybe it will be a new story of many new possibilities, maybe it is not something else, and after a long time, here again we will see some shattering dreams. This is the game of spiritual transformation in the world!

So here I gathered some rubbish from broken building install them as a meditative circle in a dark room and hang some balloon with LED light in it as a cloud of dream, which was constantly in on and off mode giving a poetic rhythm to remind us the process of transformation, beginning and ending and beginning...."

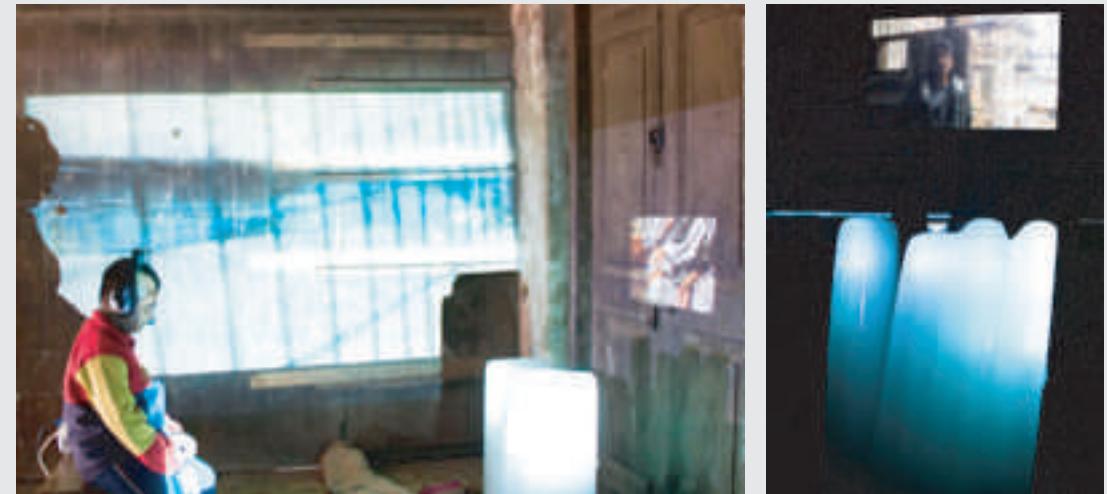
Work title: Dust to Dream, Dream to Dust,  
Dimension: 10' x 10' x10' : Year: 2016  
Exhibition: D27, a Site specific, public multidisciplinary art project, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Work Title: I exist

A site-specific Installation For 'One mile<sup>2</sup>', January 2015.

Executed Venue: Ruplal House, Old Dhaka;

Image from the Installation site



Installation Views



Projection: 1 (7 day journey from my home to old Dhaka, documented inside CNG)

Projection: 2 (Interview of Ruplal house Residents, and their story depicts a Memory loss)

## Concept:

'I exist' is a conceptual installation of - How an existence exists in a transformed way and its memory dissolved or overlapped every day! For this project went old Dhaka for 7 days and roam around in our given square mile area. Each day I went with a hired CNG, captured my route through video camera, reach Old Dhaka and stay about 4 hours, experience new places, new stories and also try to capture them with camera. End of the day I search a place for artwork, came back home and became busy with my regular life activity. Next day I again go there and my memory overlaps with new places, new stories and thus start to dissolve the previous memories. But through this every day journey my knowledge, my interaction capacity with people and a new bonding with them was transforming to another shape. So, I try to capture all of this things through an installation with ice block and 2 video projections. All three of these materials shows substantial and insubstantial transformation of existence. And for this installation I found Ruplal house very connected, for its transformation history of ownership and the memory loss for continuous overlapping dwellers.



Work Title: Dealing with personal fear | Duration 6 Hours | Year: 2015  
Executed Venue : Samdani Seminar - Performance Body Workshop (Open day) Bangladesh Shilpokala Academy, Workshop Conducted by Nikhil Chopra and international artists team

### Concept note:

I fear to open any knots in my life, from tangible to intangible knots. Tangible knots like Rope or string's knots made me nervous to open from my childhood. Intangible knots from, religious value or social boundary played a contradictory role in my life and body but usually I feared to break those only for my family rules. Through this long durational performance I get a chance to make a self-conversation and convinced myself to open any knot ahead in my life path.

Work Title: I'm an object  
Performance Video art Installation  
Duration: 10 min, Single channel video  
Executed Venue: On PIXALATION-3, a workshop by Britto arts trust, 16-22 June, 2014  
Video link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hh-dRKyC6gRq&feature=emb\\_imp\\_woyt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hh-dRKyC6gRq&feature=emb_imp_woyt)

## Concept:

Being in a motherhood...every moment of this 10 months is precious. It's a wonderful feeling but it's a complex feeling also - feeling of love, caring and restraint or protective towards an unborn baby, sometimes feeling own body as a vessel for another life. I've done this performance in my eight-month pregnancy when I was strongly feeling how my baby growing inside me. My dreams, wishes, thoughts - everything were changing for baby and I'm no longer a subject to me or to the world around me. I was feeling like an Object.

With this performance, I tried to investigate how a body can perceive as an object? As we know an object is the "person/thing receiving or affected by the action" or an object is "the element that is not the subject but which becomes the subject of the passive". So, I installed my performance video with two more references of objects - a wooden tool and text (definition of object). Through this video installation, as a performer I become an art object to its viewer.

Title: Being and Absurdity  
Executed Venue: Chobirhaat performance  
art festival, November 7, 2014  
Duration 1 hour



### Concept note:

Our body is a perfect machine that can hold balance and take control of a space. Body is so powerful; it allows a space to exist. An absurd presence of a body, gives a space tension. I want to understand the boundaries of my own body when it comes in a space with an absurd action and how people react on it. Through this performance I also want to instigate people to aware of their bodily presence and to feel how anxiously we always take care our body.

**The Curator:****Kehkasha Sabah**

Interview by Koshik Zaman - Illustration by Julia Lun

**C-P:** Hello Kehkasha, our paths crossed a couple of years ago when I was visiting Dhaka and my aunt introduced us. Knowing my interest in contemporary art, she was very keen on us to meet and it turned out that you were living in the same building. Such a coincidence.

Would you like to tell me a little bit about your background and how you got engaged with the local art scene?

**K.S:** Yes, our meeting was such a pleasant surprise. I remember prior to meeting, that I was traveling to Sweden for a conference and your aunt asked me to visit you, but sadly I couldn't find the time then. But there we were in Dhaka, destined to meet!

Well, the engagement with the art scene started with my BFA studies at the Department of Drawing and Painting, the University of Dhaka, known as Dhaka Charchukala. It was a place for artistic junction, a place that dominated the art scene

for decades. Back then, the academy and institutes were majorly focused in modern art. The contemporary languages were seen as alternative practices and led by only a few artists or collectives. During my MFA, my passion grew for contemporary art mediums, which wasn't possible pursuing inside the art academy, so I had to reach out and my real engagement with the art scene started.

According to my MFA research, contemporary art started to rise in 2000, but institutes didn't have the proper infrastructure to accept. Curated exhibitions were rarely visible and practiced in limited venues helmed by a few initiates. The practice was immensely needed to be taken by the major art institutes, to accommodate the new art languages and to elevate the art scene. Delving between art history and practicing different art mediums led me to steer towards curating as a profession.



Kehkasha Sabah

Rolling up the sleeves, I jumped into the battling ground of learning by doing! I started exploring diverse practices with different organizations, developed my own projects, and worked for two years as a Curator at Kalakendra, a non-profit artist-run space in Dhaka. By then, I had been able to curate dozens of shows with most of the contemporary artists here, prevailing my focus on experimental works, socio-political discourse, gender equality and identity, and social inclusion.

In 2019, I received the Exceptional Talent Recognition award for being the country's first female curator by SPBA - Society for Promotion of Bangladesh Art. I feel very glad; the decision I took after my graduation came as my blessing.

**C-P:** You've worked with the Dhaka Art Summit, a biennial which has been generating quite a bit of buzz

internationally, and helped put Dhaka on the international art map. I haven't been able to attend yet but I'm dying to visit. What was your experience working with the biennial like? Also, I'm wondering how the biennial has been received by the general public?

**K.S:** Indeed, it's been quite a buzz! You should definitely visit. First, Dhaka Art Summit (DAS) rejects the traditional biennial format to create a more generative space for art and exchange. It is a non-commercial research and exhibition platform for art and architecture, which appears bi-annually. It has been creating a positive impact in a brief time span. The first edition of DAS started in 2012 and by 2014 the second edition massively intervened in the Dhaka art scene hosting international artists and curators' large-scale works and curatorial discourses - introduced by Diana Campbell Betancourt, the Chief curator and artistic director of Samdani Art

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**A Few Published News of Curatorial work:****LUX Magazine review on Land, Water & Border:**<https://www.lux-mag.com/durjoy-bangladesh-foundation-layers-of-meaning/>

**Majhi Residency Announcement:** <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/423356/third-majhi-international-art-residency/>

**Published Interview in C-print, a Sweden based Art Journal:**<https://www.instagram.com/p/CPXvLEYlzs/>

**De|Real Exhibition opening new on Daily Star:** <https://www.thedailystar.net/arts-entertainment/news/de-re-al-exhibition-curatorial-research-project-response-the-global-pandemic-1930269>

**Dhaka art Summit2020, Collective movement project review by Berlin-based artist and writer Sumugan Sivanesan:** <http://artsoftheworkingclass.org/text/reconsidered-dhaka-art-summit-2020>

**Curated Exhibition 'How do I rent a Plan' review by NAEEM MOHAIEMEN:** [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5adb48841aef1d42661a62f/t/5c27caff88251b499668332c/1546111743943/Ramiz\\_Wa\\_s\\_Not\\_Seen\\_Before\\_1757.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5adb48841aef1d42661a62f/t/5c27caff88251b499668332c/1546111743943/Ramiz_Wa_s_Not_Seen_Before_1757.pdf)

**'Changing Paradigms of Bangladeshi art' written by Ruxmini Choudhury, published in FARGBRIKEN:** <https://fargfabriken.se/en/archive/item/1427-the-changing-paradigms-of-bangladeshi-art-written-by-ruxmini-reckvana-q-choudhury>

**Exhibition review of 'Inside out' published on Daily Sun:** <https://www.daily-sun.com/magazine/details/178630/Inside-Out/2016-10-28>

**Exhibition review of 'Unraveling' published on Asian age:** <https://dailyasianage.com/print-news/33024>

**Exhibition review of 'Fuzzy Fear' published on Daily Independent:** <https://www.theindependentbd.com/printversion/details/2005>

**Exhibition review of 'Celebrated Violence 1' published on Depart**

<https://departmag.com/index.php/en/detail/322/Aesthetic-meditation-on-violence>

**review of 'Informal' published on Depart**

<https://departmag.com/index.php/en/detail/442/Of-surface-and-materiality-and-the-rhetoric-of-andquietnessand>

**Exhibition review of 'Deliberate/Random' published on Depart**

<https://departmag.com/index.php/en/detail/405/>

Engage and disen-gage to initiate sensory ruptures

THANK YOU