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‘Readymade: 9 Bangladeshi Artists to Know’

By Michele Chan

Art Radar profiles 9 exciting artists from Bangladesh.

Aicon Gallery presents the first ever extensive survey of contemporary Bangladeshi art to be held in New York. Art Radar looks more closely at the nine artists in the exhibition.



The Bangladeshi contemporary art scene began to grow in the 1990s, twenty years after the country gained independence from Pakistan in 1971. Today, Dhaka burgeons with young talent, with new art venues sprouting up alongside established art spaces.

The exhibition “Readymade” features nine exciting Bangladeshi artists who explore diverse social, political and economic issues in their country. On show at the Aicon Gallery in New York, the exhibition runs until 6 September 2014.

Mohammad Wahiduzzaman

Mohammad Wahiduzzaman (b. 1978, Dhaka, Bangladesh) works in the genre of pop art. The winner of the Grand Prize of the 14th Asian Art Biennial, Bangladesh (2012), the artist says he is fascinated by how societies transform and how traditions fade away, finding both inspiration and despair in the throes of change. The artist often receives artistic stimulation from the streets, and Readymade II is a tribute to street art as well as a reference to the politically fraught Bangladeshi garment industry.

Wahiduzzaman received his Diploma in Fine Arts from Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts and a Diploma in Engineer in Printing Technology from the Institute of Graphic Arts in Bangladesh.

Imran Hossain Piplu

Imran Hossain Piplu (b. 1970, Dhaka, Bangladesh) melds the visual and the conceptual into thought-provoking mixed media pieces. The artist specialises in alternative materials, mainly recycled, to produce extraordinary creations out of everyday objects. The artist received an MFA in Sculpture in 1998 and has been an artist-in-residence in Brazil, Scotland, Taiwan and India.

In The Utopian Museum, Piplu investigates the Warrasic Period (c. 1600 to 2000 AD), during which dangerous animals became extinct and human beings learned to live more peacefully amongst one another. Weapons gradually fell out of use and Piplu’s ‘museum’ features weapons existing only as fossils. The work references the history and power of military rule long after independence.



Khaled Hassan, 'Born To Be Migrant (Positive or Negative) (detail)', 2013-14, film and digital process installation with digital prints, dimensions variable. Image courtesy the artist and Aicon Gallery.

Khaled Hassan

Khaled Hassan (b. 1981, Dhaka, Bangladesh) is one of Bangladesh’s most notable photographers. His works are about unequal balance of power, rights, discrimination and standing up against justice. “I may not be able to make the change,” he states in his exhibition biography, “but it is my duty to show where change is needed.”

Hassan’s photography also tracks change and social progress, telling heartwarming stories of healing and survival. The artist graduated with a BFA from the South Asian Media Academy in 2001 and has been awarded several accolades, including the Humanity Photo Documentary Award organised by UNESCO in 2009.



Promotesh Das Pulak, 'Encapsulated - 9 (Ed. of 3)', 2014, shola flowers, resin and plastic, 9.5 x 7 x 4.5 in. Image courtesy the artist and Aicon Gallery.

Promotesh Das Pulak

Promotesh Das Pulak (b. 1980, Sylhet, Bangladesh) creates art as a response to the “pollution, war, social crisis, and the political unrest of Bangladesh and the rest of the world.” One of his signature motifs is the mask, which represents not only environmental pollution but also corruption – a form of social pollution.

The artist completed his MFA in 2004 from the Department of Drawing and Painting of the University of Dhaka Faculty of Fine Art. Apart from drawing and painting, Pulak experiments widely and successfully with different media. His works have been shown in Bangladesh, Nepal, Japan, Italy and Canada.

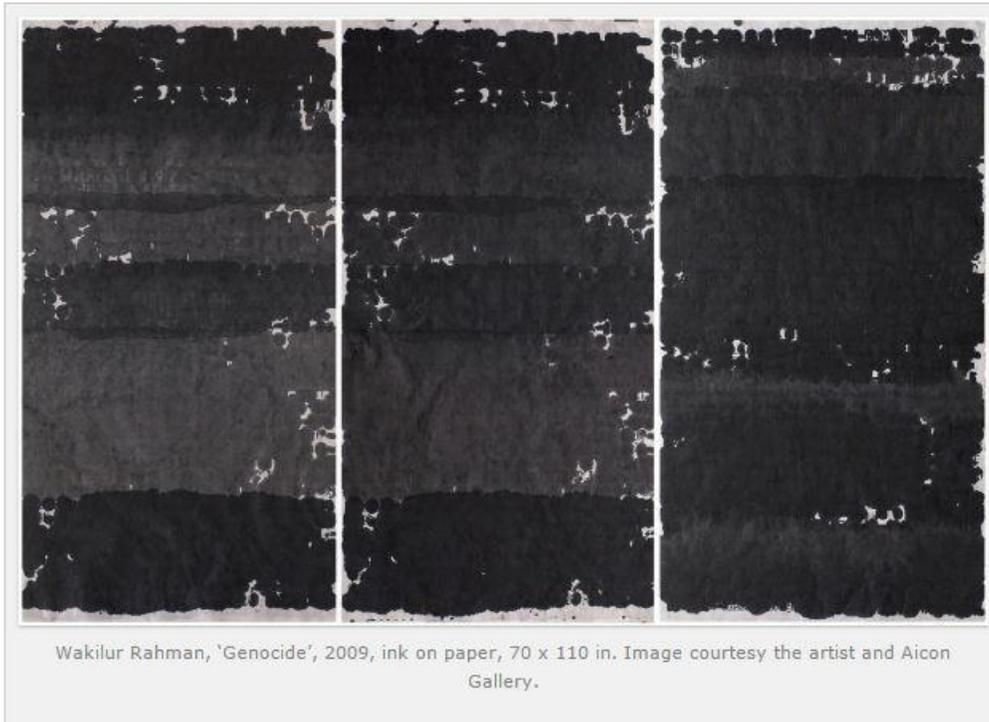


Masum Chisty, 'The Acting' (still), 2014, single channel animation projection, 0 min. 30 sec. Image courtesy the artist and Aicon Gallery.

Masum Chisty

Masum Chisty (b. 1976, Narayanganj, Bangladesh) experiments with diverse modes of expression and various media, most notably at the intersection of fine art and animation. The artist crosses boundaries to challenge the ideals and processes of contemporary art, using his work as a dialogue and voice against the injustices and wrongs of present times.

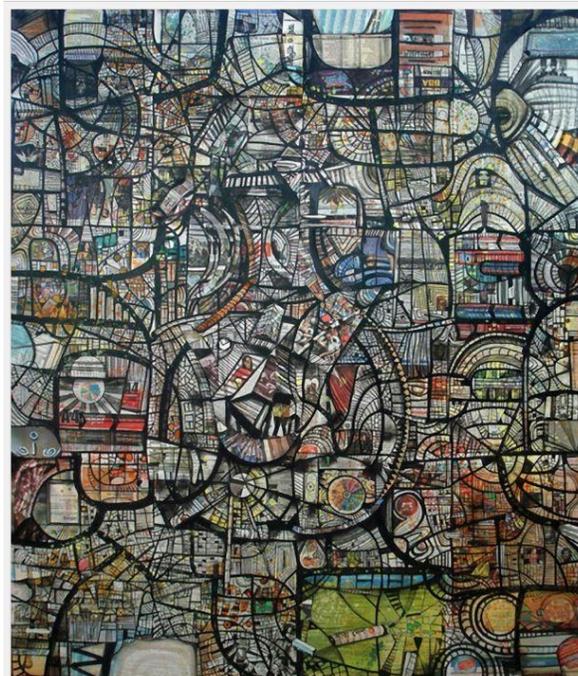
With increasing exposure to animation, Chisty combines fictive elements with peaceful ideals to bring a fresh perspective to the condition of humanity. The artist received his MFA in Sculpture from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, and in 2005 received an award for Best Short Film in the Bangladesh International Short & Individual Film Festival.



Wakilur Rahman

Simultaneously a painter and a printmaker, Wakilur Rahman (b. 1961, Bangladesh) is widely known as an experimental artist with novel ideas and exciting aesthetic outlooks. The artist addresses social issues through his paintings and installations and has earned widespread acclaim for his work. In the paper triptych *Genocide* (2009), uneven blotches of black ink are interspersed with grainy white patches that pay homage to forgotten people killed during war.

Rahman completed his BFA in 1981 from Dhaka Art College (presently the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka) and went on to acquire an MFA from the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), Beijing, China. He says he is drawn to contemporary art because it involves viewers in the artistic process.

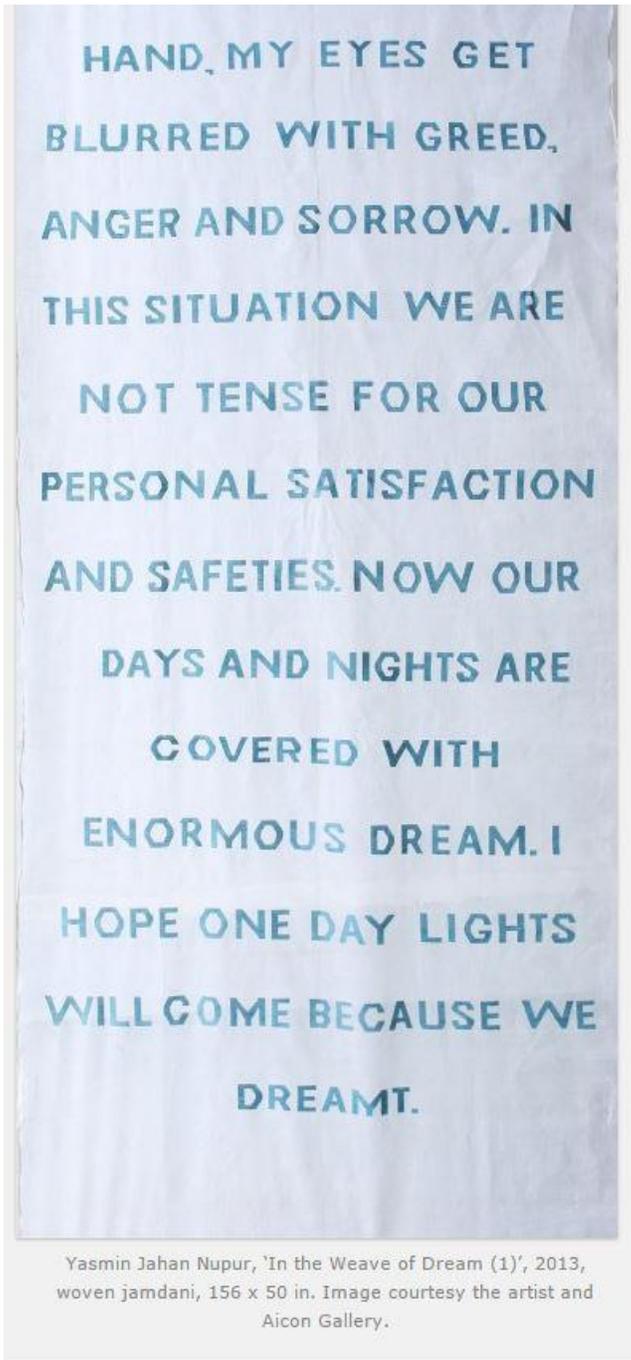


Kazi Salahuddin Ahmed, 'Sheer Chaos 26', 2012, acrylic and newspaper on canvas, 65 x 55 in. Image courtesy the artist and Aicon Gallery.

Kazi Salahuddin Ahmed

Kazi Salahuddin Ahmed (b. 1963, Dhaka, Bangladesh) is a self-taught artist with no academic background in art. After completing an MSS in Public Relations, he developed his artistic talents by practicing on his own, going to exhibitions and talking to artists.

Sheer Chaos is a series of collages echoing urban chaos seen from above. The artist paints on large canvases with bold, sweeping brushstrokes, displaying powerful engagement with form, texture and illusion. The artist says that he believes that old Dhaka has much to offer and that his work attempts to reinvent the old city.



Yasmin Jahan Nupur

Yasmin Jahan Nupur (b. 1979, Chittagong, Bangladesh) is inspired by urgent ecological and social problems of her region, often working closely with people in her community. Her work spans across drawing, installation, performance, text and video, engaging dynamically and inventively with the issues close to her heart.

Nupur's work was featured in the Bangladeshi Pavilion in the 55th Venice Biennale. She also recently received an Honourable Mention Award at the 15th Asian Art Biennial, Bangladesh.



Dhali Al Mamoon

Dhali Al Mamoon (b. 1958, Chandpur, Bangladesh) is a painter, printmaker, performance and installation artist with a passion for Bangladeshi myths and traditions. The mythical character Behula is a source of inspiration for him, used by the artist to bridge allegory, history and memory with the present context.

Lost Memory, a series of lead pencil drawings on paper, depicts abstract skeletal figures that are a reference to the mass killings during the 1971 war of independence. As artillerymag.com states:

Sure-handed images of nature, beaks and reptilian remains echo the early phases of evolution from which all of humanity, regardless of caste or creed, emerged. Viewed in this context, human violence seems particularly savage-like, and Mamoon's deft conception of abstract figuration makes the work all the more effective.

Ultimately, Mamoon believes in the power of the artist to “redress the damage of the society through his or her artistic venture[s].” The artist graduated with an MFA in Fine Arts in 1984 from the University of Chittagong, Bangladesh.

Michele Chan