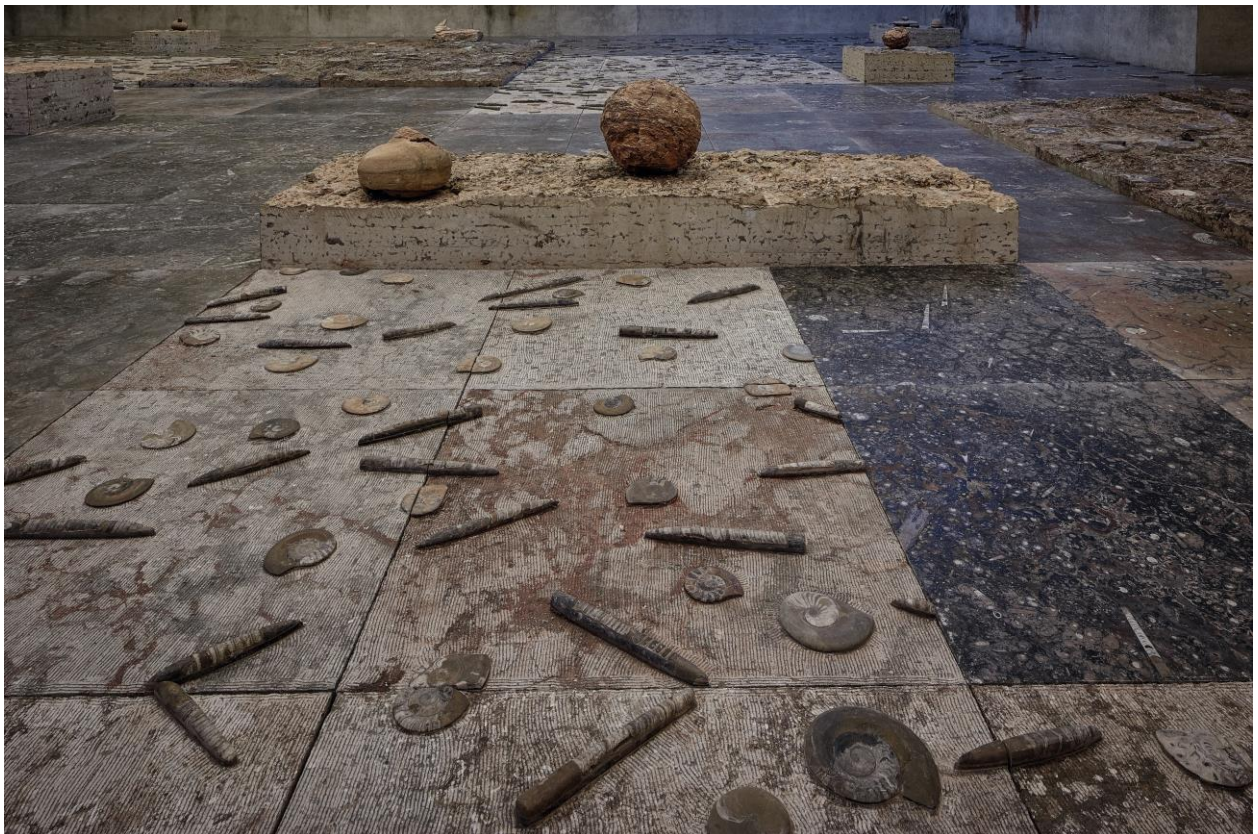




Dhaka Art Summit

For Immediate Release
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ARTISTS, SCHOLARS, CURATORS AND COLLECTIVES COME TOGETHER FOR
SEISMIC MOVEMENTS: DHAKA ART SUMMIT, BANGLADESH
7 - 15 FEBRUARY 2020



Adrian Villar Rojas, *The Theater of Disappearance*, 2017. Courtesy the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York / Paris / London and kurimanzutto, Mexico City. Photo credit: Jörg Baumann.

Convening a critical mass of artists, thinkers and participants, the fifth edition of the **Dhaka Art Summit 2020: Seismic Movements** will provoke us to reconsider (art) histories, movements, borders and fault lines. From 7 - 15 February 2020, Dhaka will be the epicentre of a radical upheaval of how we think about art, activated by intellectual and curatorial contributions and spanning four floors of the Shilpakala Academy in the city's vibrant University belt. Built through alliances across Africa, Australia, South and Southeast Asia (and also extending into Europe and the US) this platform will be free to the public and include contributions by 500 individuals including artists, scholars, curators and collectives, gathering together for panel discussions, performances, and symposia as well as opportunities for participation from the 300,000+ visitors focused on one broad theme: what is a movement and how do we generate one outside the confines of an exhibition? Chief Curator **Diana Campbell Betancourt** says:

*“An apt metaphor for the build-up of layers of ideas and collaborations emerging across nearly a decade of activities at **Samdani Art Foundation**, seismic movements do not adhere to statist or nationalist frameworks. They join and split apart tectonics of multiple scales and layers; their epicenters don’t privilege historical imperial centers over the so-called peripheries; they can accumulate slowly or violently erupt in an instant. DAS 2020 works across art, craft, architecture, design, research, and institution production to catalyse new forms of collaboration between artists, thinkers and its extensive and diverse audience.*

We are not alone in believing that too much attention is paid to “showing things” via exhibitions, rather than the careful consideration and nurturing of the conditions that are necessary for great art to be created. DAS does not just consider forms of artistic production, but also creative forms of institutional production that enable artistic practices and pedagogies, generating new vocabularies of social organization and building better ways to create and live together.”

GEOLOGICAL MOVEMENTS

In the heart of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, visitors will stand on an immersive installation by **Adrián Villar Rojas** made of 400-million-year-old ammonite and orthoceras fossils. These now extinct species of undersea creatures thrived for 300 million years, traversing the super-ocean Panthalassa within the safety of their shells and witnessing the creation and breakup of the supercontinent Pangaea. Their geological presence in the Himalayas speaks to a time when these melting peaks were once under water, as much of Bangladesh is expected to be in fifty years. This work serves as a metaphor to think of our past, present, and future on this planet outside of human-bound time, and to consider common ground upon which to gather together. This installation will later develop into a permanent pavilion at Srihatta: Samdani Art Center and Sculpture Park.

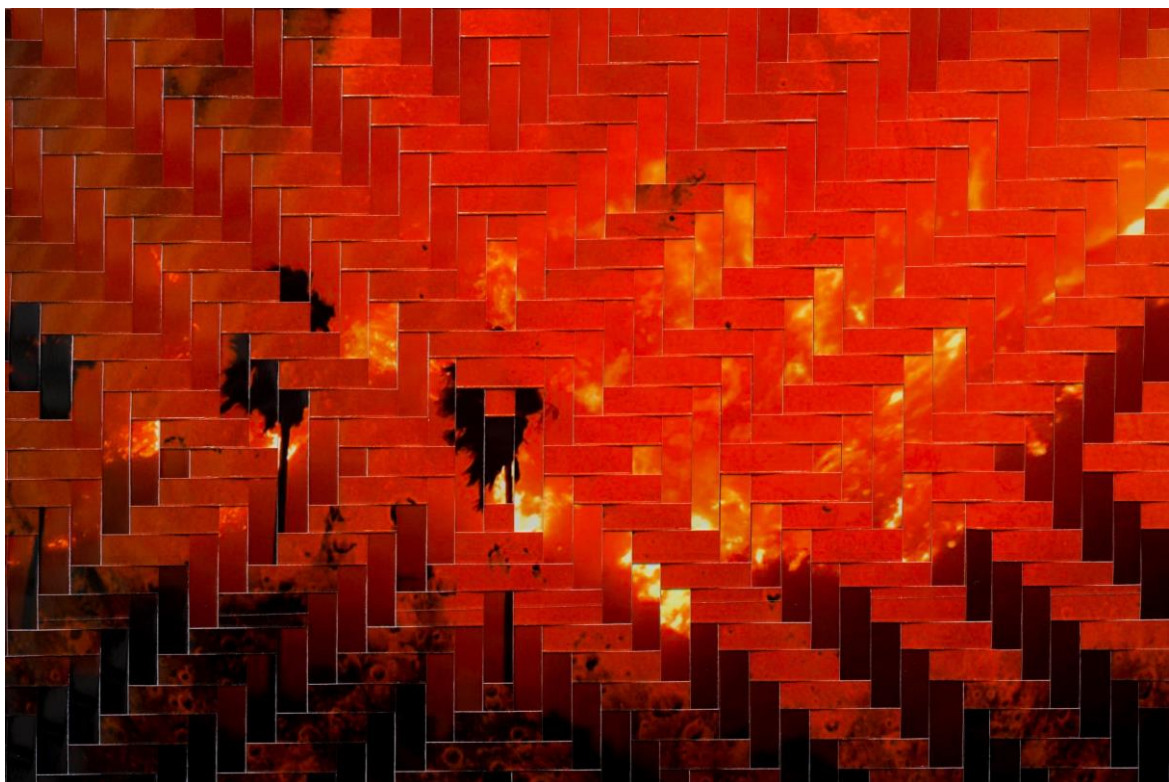
COLONIAL MOVEMENTS

Colonial regimes extend their tentacles deep into the furthest reaches of the world through the seeds of commodities. Visitors will enter DAS through a newly commissioned performative installation by **Kamruzzaman Shadhin** in collaboration with the artist-led initiative **Gidree Bawlee**; the work considers the role of the British-era railways in changing Bengal’s lands from growing food (rice) to producing cash-crops (jute, indigo) through migration stories found in traditional folk songs from Bangladesh. **Thao Nguyen Phan** explores an adjacent history in Vietnam while consulting texts about the Bengal Famine of 1943 in her three-channel film *Mute Grain* (2018), that unearths a little-known famine in 1945 that killed nearly 2 million people. DAS will contextualize this work within modern and contemporary Bangladeshi artworks that evoke the specters of history among those lands that were deliberately kept from nourishing those who worked on them in order to feed a global machine of capitalism.

Yet, colonialism and empires are still not done. **Sawangwongse Yawnghwe**’s new paintings place visitors within the entangled political web of control and addiction created through the production and trade of opium from Ancient Egypt to today’s opioid crisis. **Nilima Sheikh** is creating one of her largest murals to date for DAS 2020, chronicling women’s ongoing struggles in Kashmir, the epicentre of the destruction left in the wake of the British Partition of India and rising Indian nationalism. The video and photographs of **Liu Chuang** and **Samsul Alam Helal** observe displacement of indigenous peoples and cultures left in the wake of

harvesting massive amounts of energy from the building of hydroelectric dams, connecting historical narratives across China and South and Southeast Asia via the mountainous region known as Zomia.

Otobong Nkanga extends her ongoing project *Landversation* (2014 onwards) to Bangladesh after iterations in Brazil, Lebanon, and China. This project will be developed through a month-long residency in Dhaka and sets out to interrogate the complex relationship between the human subject and land, dealing with the contradictory ways in which we inhabit the earth and are dependent on it. Such dichotomies complicate the socio-political modes through which we deal with our own intersections. **Clarissa Tossin** surveys the 21st Century desire for space travel in the midst of unprecedented environmental destruction in the Amazon, weaving together satellite images of deforestation in Brazil with Amazon.com boxes.



Clarissa Tossin, *Self-inflicted Natural Disaster* (2019) (detail), woven archival inkjet print on photo paper, 26.25 x 21 x 1.5 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council.

INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS

Artists played a dominant role in Bangladesh's fight for independence, from the 1905 Swadeshi movement, to the Language Movement of 1952, the country's ultimate independence in 1971 and the activism performed today. Works by artists such as **Murtaja Baseer**, **Quamrul Hassan**, **Rashid Talukder**, and **Zainul Abedin** evoke this spirit, grounding the exhibition in the country's history of protest and the artistic movements that were part of its struggle for freedom.

Bangladesh's history is parallel to similar histories of independence movements throughout Africa, South and Southeast Asia. **Maryam Jafri's** *Independence Day 1934-1975*, an ongoing work begun in 2009, features over 60 archival photos culled from more than 30 archives of the first Independence Day ceremonies of various Asian, Middle Eastern, and African nations, honing in on the 24-hour twilight period as these places transform from territories

into nation-states. In her ongoing project, *Flowers for Africa*, **Kapwani Kiwanga** researches archival imagery relating to African independence, whilst consulting with florists to re-create those flower arrangements found therein. Initially fresh, the flowers run the course of their transient cycle and then wilt and dry. In Kiwanga's own words: "Just as the enthusiasm present during the period of independence has faded, pan-African dreams have been eclipsed by the everyday difficulties of the average African citizens."

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND FEMINIST FUTURES

Independence and freedom are two different ideas. Just because a new nation-state is created does not mean that the State recognizes everyone within its borders as a citizen with rights to protect. Disenfranchised peoples continue to fight for a space to exist. **Chitra Ganesh** expands upon her consideration of gender and power in a futurist imaginary that takes the 1905 utopian, sci-fi, feminist novella *Sultana's Dream* by Bengali author and social reformer Begum Rokeya as a point of departure to consider a world where men stay home, and women innovate new ways of being by harnessing the power of the sun. **Ellen Gallagher** imagines a parallel universe underwater in her *Watery Ecstatic* series, inspired by the legend of Drexciya (developed by the electronic music duo of the same name), which imagines a birth through death, where children of the pregnant slave women thrown overboard during the Atlantic Crossing are born with gills and don't have to come up to the oppressive world above for air. Nearly every society across time includes imagery of women carrying pots of water on their heads; in his performative installation, *Movimientos Emisores de Existencia*, **Héctor Zamora** explores what a life emancipated from this burden might look like as women smash the pots that weigh them down with patriarchal burdens. In an ongoing collaboration with **Artspace Sydney**, **Taloi Havini** collaborates with her community in Bougainville, transforming traditional weaving techniques to create a monumental meeting place at the centre of DAS. This new commission is a space to consider personal and political narratives around themes of place, protection and resilience at a time when communities across the globe find themselves at the tipping point of environmental and social change.

The recurrent task of the Black Feminist Critic and the Black Feminist Poet, according to philosopher Denise Ferreira da Silva, is to work towards "the end of the world produced by the tools of reason." Working towards the end of a certain kind of world, which is decolonization, requires the emancipation of "the category of Blackness from the scientific and historical ways of knowing that produced it in the first place." Emancipated from narratives of science and history, Blackness "wonders about another praxis" as it "wanders in the World" guided by the "ethical mandate of opening up other ways of knowing and doing." Inspired by Ferreira da Silva's *Feminist Poethics of Blackness*, *To welcome the end of the world as we know it*, **The Otolith Group's** film programme for DAS 2020 assembles wandering sounds and wondering images that open up other ways of knowing and doing.



Installation View, Chitra Ganesh: *Her garden, a mirror* at The Kitchen, New York City (2018).

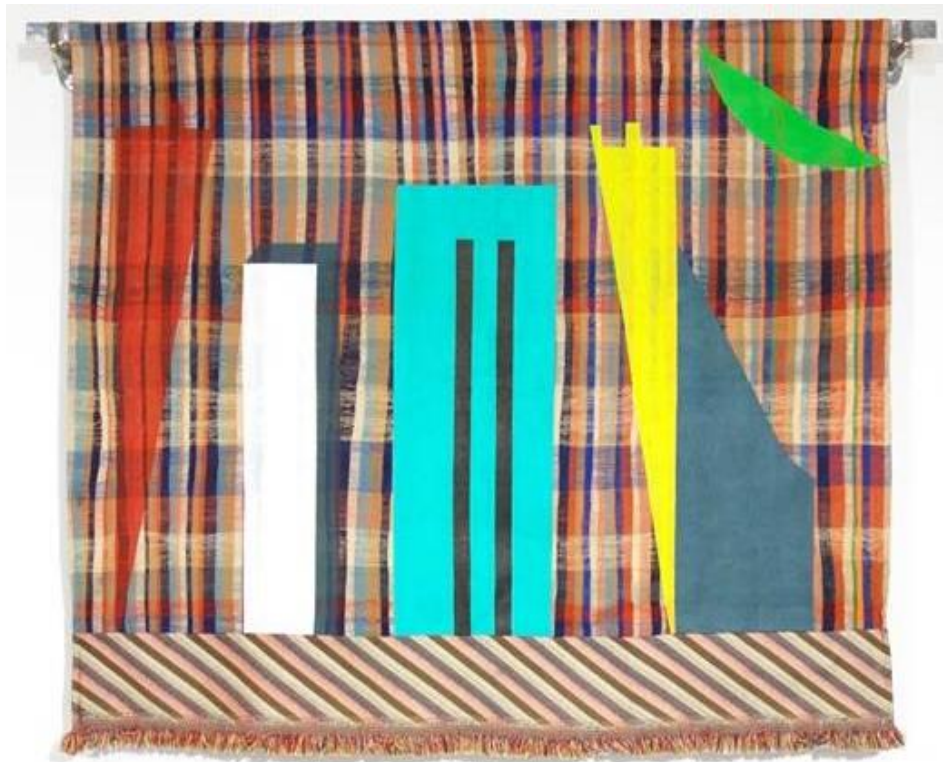
SPATIAL MOVEMENTS

On Muzharul Islam: Surfacing Intention is a group exhibition of primarily commissioned works by 17 artists and collaboratives responding to the built and unbuilt legacy of the groundbreaking Bangladeshi architect Muzharul Islam (1923-2012). Co-curated by Diana Campbell Betancourt with **Sean Anderson** (Associate Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art) and **Nurur Khan** (Director, Muzharul Islam Archive), the exhibition observes the interplay and occasional confrontation inherent among architectural spaces within an emergent nation-state. Active in politics because of his own conviction that “it was the most architectural thing he could do,” Muzharul Islam humbly and uncompromisingly forged an architectural movement in what was East Pakistan, as part of a broader claim toward decolonial consciousness in the 1950s leading to the country’s independence in 1971. His buildings and ideas influenced multiple generations of Bangladeshi architects working today as well as international figures such as Louis I. Kahn, Richard Neutra, and Stanley Tigerman, each of whom contributed to ideas around modernist architecture in South Asia. Working across photography, painting, sculpture, performance, sound, and film, the artists in the exhibition present work that negotiates and builds worlds that are borne from the local environmental and cultural climate of Bangladesh. For Islam, and the artists presenting, architecture and art are conceived as benefiting all who make up the lands of any nation, no matter their origin, without the boundaries of class or caste.

Extending across the Shilpakala Academy’s three floors, Rio based artist **Daniel Steegmann Mangrané** is creating his first work in Asia inspired by Islam’s Institute of Fine Arts (1953-1955), a masterpiece in brick that dissolves in the surrounding tropical gardens. Steegmann’s film and installation mixes fiction and contemplation, exploring the past and the future specters that haunt present day Bangladesh. Delhi based **Tanya Goel** is creating her first painterly intervention on architecture as a play of words on the word pillar; creating pigments from destroyed and decaying elements of unpreserved Islam buildings in

Bangladesh, she pays homage to the pillars of Bangladeshi architecture by painting the columns in the plaza area of the Shilpakala Academy. Many of the details of Islam buildings carry the marks of their makers, such as fingerprints, and British Bangladeshi artist **Rana Begum** is creating a participatory installation in the central staircase of DAS where the fingerprints of the collective of the DAS team, the artists, and visitors come together to form a portrait of the collective energy of the Summit.

Surfacing Intention features 12 new commissions with a total of 17 artists and collaboratives: **Aditya Novali, Ayesha Sultana, Daniel Steegmann Mangrané, Dayanita Singh, Hajra Waheed, Haroon Mirza, Lucas Arruda, Maria Taniguchi, Marlon de Azambuja, Monika Sosnowska, Prabhavathi Meppayil, Rana Begum, Seher Shah and Randhir Singh, Shezad Dawood, Tanya Goel, The Otolith Group, William Forsythe.**



Shezad Dawood, *University*, 2019, textile and tapestry bricolage and acrylic, with stainless steel hanging system, 184.5 x 145 cm. Courtesy of the Artist, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai and Timothy Taylor, London.

MOVING COLLECTIVELY

Since 2017, the **Samdani Artist-Led Initiatives** programme has been committed to supporting the work of Bangladesh's independently established and self-funded art collectives and initiatives. Building on this existing platform, DAS has invited **RAW Material Company** (Dakar), **Gudskul** (a public learning space established by **ruangrupa, Serrum and Grafis Huru Hara** in Jakarta), **Artspace** (Sydney), **Para Site** (Hong Kong), and **Alserkal** (Dubai) to create programming and workshops between and across the collectives and the public on how to build and sustain grassroots institutions in contexts with little existing local infrastructure and empowering them with new techniques on how to work collaboratively. **Stepping Out of Line; Art Collectives and Translocal Parallelism**, organised by RAW

Material Company and supported by Alserkal in an ongoing collaboration with DAS, will open the Summit as a forum to address practices and forms of production that take cooperation and non-hierarchical group formation as guiding principles.

Working collectively creates insights beyond individual interests while strengthening the ongoing work of DAS. Co-curated with **Kathryn Weir** (Cosmopolis, Centre Pompidou Paris), **The Collective Body** is an exhibition that crystallises concerns pertinent to collaborative practices in Bangladesh, including rural to urban knowledge transmission (including longstanding aesthetic forms) to historical movements around agricultural labour and to the environment. It draws parallels and creates exchanges with other collective movements emerging across Asia, Africa, Central and South America, and Oceania. The Lagos-based Pan-African photography, video and writing project **Invisible Borders** will collaborate with the important lens-based Bangladeshi photographic collective, **Drik/Pathshala/Chobi Mela** - (an early inspiration for the formation of Invisible Borders) - to organise one of their celebrated road trips commencing in Bangladesh. The Dhaka-based **Jothashilpa** initiative together with **SAVVY Contemporary** (Berlin) will create a graphic timeline of exchanges between the African and Asian continents as an extension of SAVVY's ongoing **Geographies of Imagination** project. From puppet shows to concerts and debates, installation and performance, other collectives and initiatives will collaborate around issues ranging from land rights and resource extraction, to strategies of visibility and contestation, to analyses of the intersection of gender, caste and ethnicity over the course of the Summit.

Grounding this platform in the history of collaborative creative practice in the country, Bangladeshi writer **Mustafa Zaman** will shape an historical exhibition entitled **Nobody Told Me There'd be Days Like These**, exploring the vibrant work of art, architecture, film, literature, and theatre collectives active in Bangladesh during the 1980s otherwise known as the years of Martial Law.

Over forty collectives and collaborative platforms active in Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Central and South America will be present at DAS 2020. These are: **Akaliko** (Dhaka), **Aman Iwan** (Paris), **Art Labor** (Ho Chi Minh City), **ArtPro** (Dhaka), **Artree Nepal** (Kathmandu), **Back Art** (Dhaka), **Bangladesh Garment Sromik Samhati** (Dhaka), **Britto Art Trust** (Dhaka), **Calpulli Tecalco** (Milpa Alta), **Center for Historical Reenactments** (Johannesburg), **Charupith** (Jessore), **Chimurenga** (Cape Town), **Depth of Field (DOF)** (Lagos), **Drik/Chobi Mela/Pathshala** (Dhaka), **Gidree Bawlee Foundation of Arts** (Thakurgaon and Dhaka), **Green Papaya** (Manila), **Gudskul** (ruangrupa, Serrum and Grafis Huru Hara) (Jakarta), **Hill Artist Group** (Chittagong), **Hong Kong Artist Union** (Hong Kong), **Invisible Borders** (Lagos), **Jatiwangi Art Factory** (Majalengka), **Jog Art Space** (Chittagong), **Jothashilpa** (Dhaka), **Laboratoire Agit'Art** (Dakar), **Mata Aho Collective** (Aotearoa), **Pangrok Sulap** (Sabah), **Shako** (Dhaka), **Shelter Promotion Council** (Kolkata), **Shoni Mongol Adda** (Dhaka), **Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh SECMOL** (Leh), **The Otolith Group** (London), **Trovoa** (Rio de Janeiro), **Ueinzz Theatre Group** (Sao Paulo), **Uronto Artist Community** (Dhaka).

DAS 2020's talks, screenings, and workshops will address other collective practices and initiatives including Somankidi Coura agricultural cooperative (Mali), Karrabing Collective (Australia), the methodology of SÖI (Peru) and the militant cinematographic movement that formed around independence leader Amilcar Cabral in Guinea Bissau.

ARTISTIC MOVEMENTS

Artists in Bangladesh have played a key role in building the institutions that support artistic production in the country, from founding formal institutions like art schools (such as Zainul Abedin with the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka and Rashid Choudhury with the Institute of Fine Arts, University of Chittagong) as well as informal art education outside of the capital (S.M. Sultan's Shishu Swarga and Charupith). Dhaka based artist and educator **Bishwajit Goswami**'s exhibition *Roots* examines the transfer of knowledge by art educators who have been critical in the building of Bangladesh's art history.



Safiuddin Ahmed, *The Angry Fish* (1964), etching and aquatint, 26 x 46 cm. Image courtesy of Ahmed Nazir.

DAS is firmly committed to supporting the artistic development of the country's emerging artists, and the 5th edition of the Samdani Art Award, curated by Philippe Pirotte, gives artists the opportunity to create new work for DAS and to be supported in a residency at Srihatta. Shortlisted artists are: **Ariful Kabir, Ashfika Rahman, Faiham Ebna Sharif, Habiba Nowrose, Najmun Nahar Keya, Palash Bhattacharjee, Promiti Hossain, Soma Surovi Jannat, Sounak Das, Sumana Akter, Tahia Farhin Haque, and Zihan Karim**. The international jury is chaired by **Aaron Cezar** (Director, Delfina Foundation) with **Adrián Villar Rojas** (artist), **Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev** (Director, Castello di Rivoli), **Julie Mehretu** (artist) and **Eungie Joo** (curator, SF MoMA).



Faiham Ebna Sharif, *Rohingya: The Stateless People* (2017), photograph. Image courtesy of the artist.

MODERN MOVEMENTS

With support from the Getty Foundation's *Connecting Art Histories* initiative, The Dhaka Art Summit, Institute for Comparative Modernities (ICM) at Cornell University, and the Asia Art Archive have launched Connecting Modern Art Histories in and across Africa, South and Southeast Asia (MAHASSA). The project brings together international faculty and 21 emerging scholars to investigate parallel and intersecting developments in the cultural histories of modern South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa and the public will be engaged through a series of comparative art historical discussions held daily in the DAS auditorium. The team is led by **Dr Iftikhar Dadi** (Associate Professor of History of Art and Director of the South Asia Programme, Cornell University) with a guest faculty of **Dr Elizabeth Giorgis** (Director, Gebre Kristos Deta Center, Addis Ababa University), **Dr Simon Soon** (Senior Lecturer, Visual Art Department, University of Malaysia), **Dr Ming Tiampo** (Professor of Art History, Carleton University), **Dr Salah Hassan** (Professor of African and African Diaspora Art History and Visual Culture, Cornell University), and **Dr Sanjukta Sunderason** (Art History and South Asian Studies Lecturer, University of Leiden) with support from organisers **Amara Antilla** (Senior Curator, Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati) and Diana Campbell Betancourt and the **Asia Art Archive** team led by **John Tain** (Head of Research, AAA) and his team of researchers, **Dr Sneha Ragavan**, **Dr Chuong-Dai Vo** and **Michelle Wong**.

BEING MOVED TO ACT

"A movement requires us to be moved," writes theorist Sara Ahmed in her book *Living A Feminist Life*. Moments that move us personally to do things, to make a change, to unite with

others, and to build institutions are considered across the exhibition and the public programme. **Murtaja Baseer**, for example, was moved to change the spelling of his name in 1971 to embody his pride for the Bengali language. **Tuan Andrew Nguyen** chronicles love as a seismic movement, as Senegalese soldiers changed sides when fighting as French subjects against the Vietnamese independence, bringing back Vietnamese wives and children to Senegal in the wake of the war. **Bouchra Khalili's** *Constellation Series* (2011) translates the illegal journeys of individuals, mostly migrants, into lines that give shape to stories of individuals helping others across what might seem like insurmountable borders.

SRIJAN-ABARTAN

Bangla for “create and destroy”, *Srijan-Abartan*, is an international, cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary research project aimed at developing new tools and methodologies for creating culturally rooted, ecologically sustainable, and socially responsible exhibition displays. The project is funded by **Pro Helvetia Swiss Arts Council**, and led by the Swiss design research practice **common-interest** in collaboration with DAS. Its team is comprised of **Shawon Akand** (freelance artist and researcher, Bangladesh), **Huraera Jabeen** (architect, PhD, Brac University), **Prem Krishnamurthy** (exhibition maker, Wkshps), **Khan Md. Mobinul** (engineer, Dhaka Art Summit), **Nina Paim** (design researcher, common-interest), **Ashfika Rahman** (freelance artist, Bangladesh), **Asifur Rahman** (architect, Dhaka Art Summit), **Dries Rodet** (architect, Truwant+Rodet) and **Inteza Shariar** (freelance architect, Bangladesh).

[ENDS]

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Further Information

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Please visit samdani.com.bd or dhakaartsummit.org

NOTE TO EDITORS

Dhaka Art Summit

An international non-commercial research and exhibition platform for art and architecture related to South Asia, the Dhaka Art Summit seeks to re-examine how we think about these art forms in a regional and wider context, with a focus on Bangladesh.

Founded in 2012, DAS is produced and supported by the Samdani Art Foundation and its network, with additional support from the Bangladesh government through the Ministry of

Cultural Affairs, People’s Republic of Bangladesh, and partnerships with the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy as well as the National Museum and National Art Gallery of Bangladesh.

Rejecting the traditional biennale format, the Summit’s interdisciplinary programme concentrates its international reach towards the advancement and promotion of South Asia’s creative communities both past and present. Led by Chief Curator Diana Campbell Betancourt, local and international collaborators are invited to unlock new areas of inquiry through exhibitions, experimental writing initiatives, film and talks schedules, all supported by an ambitious commissions programme. Other initiatives, including the Samdani Art Award for emerging artists and the Samdani Seminars programme—which hosts lectures and workshops by international arts professionals—express the Summit’s developmental commitment to the local arts community.

DAS has innovated an entirely new modality for bringing together art and arts professionals. Given the breadth and depth of the exhibitions and auxiliary programming nurtured within its doors, DAS meets at an intervention between intervening kunsthalle and pioneering think tank, structuring an art event that exists in terms unparalleled within the scope of South Asia. By connecting South Asian practitioners and artworks to both the Bangladeshi general public and the wider world, free from the reliance on commercial channels for mobility, DAS has fostered important new inquiries into Modern and Contemporary art in the region.

Free for all and ticketless, the Summit’s 2018 edition drew over 300,000 local and 800 international visitors over its nine-day duration.

About the Samdani Art Foundation

The Samdani Art Foundation (SAF) is a private arts trust based in Dhaka, Bangladesh, founded in 2011 by collector couple Nadia and Rajeeb Samdani to support the work of the country’s contemporary artists and architects. Led by Artistic Director and Curator Diana Campbell Betancourt, SAF seeks to expand the audience engaging with contemporary art across Bangladesh and increase international exposure for the country’s artists. Its programmes support Bangladeshi artists in broadening their creative horizons through production grants, residencies, education programs, and exhibitions. To achieve this, SAF collaborates with the Bangladeshi government through official partnerships with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, People’s Republic of Bangladesh, and the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

SAF produces the bi-annual Dhaka Art Summit, a non-commercial research and exhibition platform for art and architecture related to South Asia, which re-examines how we think about these art forms in both a regional and broader context. SAF’s collection of modern and contemporary art from South Asia is lent to institutions and festivals around the globe, demonstrating its commitment to increasing international engagement with Bangladeshi and South Asian artists work. A permanent home for the collection is currently in development: [Srihatta - Samdani Art Centre and Sculpture Park](#), designed by Dhaka-based, Aga Khan Award for Architecture-winning architect, Kashef Mahboob Chowdhury. Located in Sylhet, Bangladesh, Srihatta will house the Samdani Art Foundation Collection, accommodate space for up to ten artists in residence, and commission new works by world-class South Asian and international artists.

