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REVIEW

Blending memories with desire

MONICA Jahan Bose and Nazir- who very recently had their mind-whirling exhibitions at La Galerie, Zoom Gallery and Cafe La Veranda of Alliance Francaise, are certainly artists to reckon with.

Monica has a law degree from the U.S. along with an enviable training in Fine Arts from the same place. In contrast Nazir is a younger self-taught artist. Nazir has won acclaim despite his comparatively humbler origin.

Monica Bose works in a chamber de bonne in Paris. From there she executes her mixed media work, blending memories and historical facts of Bangladesh- where her parents have eventually retired after having worked in the U.S. On the eye-catching canvases, Bose has combined her eastern roots - based on the socio-economic and political scenarios of the past and the present.

She dwells on events such as the Language Movement and women's liberation, taking into recognition the custom of eastern arranged marriages and dowry hang-ups. Acid burning of women that sometimes ensues with excuses of unsatisfactory dowry is aptly portrayed.

These violent and gory scenes have been blended with peace-loving images of blood-red lotus and emerald, fleshy leaves that hold the blossoms up above the scintillating cobalt blue water. Smiling, toiling, working women, with their happy families in the vicinity, have also been delineated with care and careful consideration. These have been juxtaposed with flamboyant Bangla alphabets, which often frame and balance the compositions of Bose's homeland. As a consequence, the paintings - with their bright, contrasting colours - appear like rectangular and square presentations.

One is even reminded of European flags, with their oblong shapes and bold, crisscrossing lines- that divide but simultaneously hold together the canvas.

Bose uses a riot of colours. Her images too are innumerable. They have been done with swift and passionate strokes- driving home the artist's overwhelming emotions and rapid flow of thoughts.

Humans, rivers, birds, trees, flowers, elements of contemporary and historical scenes have been presented with buoyant and confident effects. She has included small installations of simple yet bright saris, along with rose and synthetic black heart-shaped images. Thus life, living and love have been summed up.



The warm, emotional, bright and breezy Nazir, with his green-red and black "badge of courage " on his forehead, overwhelms one. This he does with his innumerable paintings pulsating with dancing images, colours and lines. His work too is symbolic and bubbling with joie de vivre. The golden and black tigers with their cute, cuddly "cabbage patch doll"- like presentations, stand for both man and nature in his optimistic "Pot-chitra"- based creations. Hence his paintings are both forward and burst with proud recollections of the past glories of Bangladesh.

Nazir takes you soaring up to the heavens and then brings you down to the plains- with details of Bangladeshi farmers, fishermen, cowherds, boatmen and the extravaganzas of their constantly working but radiant wives.

Nazir may not be the mighty SM Sultan- but this successful upcoming artist too has envisioned the average individuals of Bangladesh as people to "write home about". Combating floods, famines and other recurring pestilences, the often-ignored people from the villages have been championed with admirable success by Nazir's paintbrushes.

The two artists, with their unparalleled repertoire, surely present feasts for the mind and heart.

By **Fayza Haq**