

Bangladeshi Artist Firoz Mahmud`s Organic and Phenomenal Artworks in International Arena

One of the most fascinating developments in contemporary art over the past 10 or 15 has been rise of a new, far-flung class of artists from China, India, Latin America and the Middle East. Though obviously varied, these artists all use techniques borrowed from the Conceptual and Minimal Art which first emerged in the United States and Europe during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and thus, their work does share certain characteristics: It tends to take the form of untried painting, very large and dramatic installation art, often created with found or recycled objects. Photography, video and film are likewise often incorporated. More to the point, while the work appears to be Western on the surface, it is rooted in the artist's particular culture of origin, and usually mixes biography with larger historical or social referents. This work, in other words, represents the first art movement that is the direct result of globalism, and not surprisingly, these artists have become a staple of international art fairs and surveys like the major international exhibition or Biennale/Triennale. Firoz Mahmud, whose show "*Sucker`wfp21*" is currently on view through 21 August until 31 October at the **1st Aichi International Art Triennale 2010** at the Aichi prefectural Museum of Art in Nagoya, Japan, is a good example.

Firoz Mahmud, Bangladeshi young artist who was born in Khulna and primarily studied at Dhaka University's Fine Art Institute. He left his country about a decade ago for Amsterdam shortly after his education when he got a fellowship from Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take a research program at the Rijksakademie Van Beeldende Kunsten (Royal Academy of Fine Arts). He is the first Bangladeshi artist to take the research under the Dutch Fellowship after Bangladesh born British artist Runa Islam. He moved to Japan in 2004 under Monbugakakusho scholarship by Japanese government for his research and did a PhD on Fine Art from Tokyo University of the Arts (Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku). Recently he has been living in Tokyo and New York for art project, exhibition and artist residency and he continues to spend part of his time for art in Europe. He is also a recipient of Starr Foundation/ Asian Cultural Council (ACC) fellowship in New York. His work could be easily interpreted as an allegory of his patriotic and peripatetic life. "*Halcyon Tarp*", for instance, was created Royal Bengal Tigers, its kingdom and Bangladeshi clay hut. It was created for Sharjah International Art Biennale in Sharjah which was in conjunction with Dubai Art Fair in UAE.

Firoz's work also reflects upon the war and militarism, mythology, social belief, popular icon who has both popularity and controversy. Aichi International Art Triennale 2010 in Nagoya is his one of the major exhibitions where he is presenting photograph and drawing on war and a huge sculpture of 26 feet/8 meter fighter aircraft ("*Sucker`wfp21*").

The artwork of aircraft considers the interplay of war, militarism and prejudice related to the state of civil defense that most of the governments are in. Each government spends money for war, defense, weapons,

military aircraft sucking money from public tax and revenue. This militarism is ripe with pride and always prepares for an eventual war. This aircraft is made of FRP with metal structure and glass. Beans, crops and rice will also cover the entire body based on the concern that many people share: survival. These aircrafts function as a stage for the reinterpretation of political militarism.

This aircraft is the model of 5th generation fighter aircraft **Super Hornet F/A18**. The fighter aircraft is based on Bangladesh Liberation war and recent militarism state which public are sharing and surviving on.

This project also implies recent war and conflicts world wars and aftermath devastation in Rotterdam and other cities in Europe and America, wars in Africa and Asia, Hiroshima/Nagasaki bombing in Japan. Global war of the 21 century, militarism and artillery which is sucking general people's share: survival. The `wfp21` implies `World Food Program of twenty-first century` launched by UNESCO. Thus the `Sucker-wfp21` implies sucking general people's share: survival as world food program at the age of twenty first century.



(Photo of the Exhibition view at Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art and (below) making progress with assistants)

Sucker`wfp21 , Installation/Sculpture, 2009~2010, Size:L. 800 cm x W. 510 cm x Height:270 cm

Materials:Fiber Reinforced Plastic(FRP), metal, bond and Desi bean, drawing (About 1,204,849 beans/70 kg)

He spent one year to make this artwork in Tokyo. There were 25 assistants, technician and artists helped him to make the work until the opening of the Aichi Triennial. His fighter aircraft "Sucker`wfp21" will be exhibited in several museums in Japan, USA and Europe in next years. The Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, The University Art Museum in Tokyo, Chinritsukan Museum gallery, Aichi Art Center/Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art and International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISCP) in New York are among other venues.

The Aichi Triennale is one of the largest international art exhibitions in Japan. The theme of the triennale 2010 is "Arts and Cities," the inaugural event sets out to create a euphoric atmosphere of excitement and provide visitors with a variety of impressive experiences while introducing cutting-edge trends from around the world through the exhibition of contemporary art works .It will run from August 21 to Sun., October 31,

2010 (72 days) and Venues are Aichi Arts Center, Nagoya City Art Museum, the Choja-machi area. In addition, exhibitions will be held in urban spaces near the main venues such as Oasis 21, and in business and shopping districts around Hirokoji-dori. In addition to the international exhibition of contemporary art by numerous international famous artists from all over the world, the exhibitions based on the results of a competition for young artists will be held.

Firoz is the only artist participating from Bangladesh. Approximately 130 artists and artist groups from all over the world will participate in this year's Aichi Triennale. The majority of the works, whether they are newly commissioned or being shown for the first time in Japan, can only be seen at this festival. Firoz Mahmud is one of few artists granted an award of 3,000,000 Japanese Yen or about 25 Lak/- BD Taka.

Artistic Director is Akira Tatehata, Director, National Museum of Art, Osaka . Art curators are Pier Luigi Tazzi , (Curator of Venice Biennale (1988) , Co-curator of Documenta 9, 1992), Jochen Volz :Director, Inhoteim Contemporary Art Center, in Brazil, (Artistic organizer of 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009, Italy), Masahiko Haito, Chief Curator , Aichi Pref. Museum of Art . Hinako Kasagi, Curator, Nagoya City Art Museum, Takashi Echigoya, Senior Curator of Films, Arts Promotion Service, Aichi Arts Center , Eri Karatsu , Senior Curator of Performing Arts, Arts Promotion Service, Aichi Arts Center , Guest Curator: Emmanuelle de Montgazon , Independent Curator, Lives and works in France , Associate Curator:Fuyumi Namioka, Independent Curator, Lives in Switzerland and works in Italy , Hisako Hara, Professor of Osaka Electro-Communication University , Educator" .(More info: <http://aichitriennale.jp/en/> <http://aichitriennale.jp/en/artists/contemporary-arts/-firoz-mahmud.html>)

His “*Halcyon Tarp*” is an installation modeled on a traditional hut. It is rendered with Layapa oil painting technique. The Royal Bengal tiger is the main character for this installation. The tiger appears in the entrance, in the picture frame, in the video and in the drawing (RRR). I am caring for them as “bigots” of my children. I am playing a role as mother here. Their idolized appearance rendered with Layapa oil painting and the protective line drawings on images and videos sign an awareness of the increasingly extinct- oriented ethos of fauna.

I drew lines where the tigers are about to fall down, jump, or move as if they don't fall down from photographs or video motion. The tigers are the national `icon` of Bangladesh, here as symbolic bigots who are intolerant toward people, hold different views, on matters of politics, religion, or ethnicity.



(Photo) “*Halcyon Tarp*”, 2008~2009, Installation Art with Sculpture, drawing, painting & video
size of the hut : w. 530 x L.350 x h.260 cm, Installation view at Sharjah Art Museum during 9th Sharjah Biennial 2009, UAE, Media/
Material: wood, FRP, paper pulp, oil “Layapa” Painting, video, drawing

Firoz's another art project "*Father; Other/SOS (Serene Obligatory System)*" is an attempt to define the coordinates in which contemporary infrastructure is blatantly decreed. The high court as '*Father or judge*' arises like a metaphor in a strained country field, a hope land, but full of contradiction in its essential quest for peace and justice.

It functions as an invisible landscape that we long for, that we manipulate and that in some way we inhabit, both physically and metaphorically. This installation serves as an imaginary model of infrastructure that guides us through an economic utopia. A country soaked up in its power needs to redefine a new cartography by shifting its political and economic sources of power toward an egalitarian level.

Firoz's Oil Painting of stencil technique on shaped canvas depict the subjects amidst the myth, history, imperial expression, and unremarkable moments of everyday existence. The layapa paintings sometimes document the secret lives of Mughal emperor and historical people, leisure, or enjoyment and sometimes simple in idea and subject. His luxuriantly and meticulous style of painting with Layapa Technique is partially enchanted by his interest in the significance of antiqueness, and the passage of time itself. Accordingly, he has collection of ancient coins, Mughal imperial images and good which he transferred to digital mosaic image and uploaded to shaped canvas.



Photo: Oil Painting on canvas (Layapa painting with stencil technique)

left: *HON (geisha)*, 2010, | middle: *Brazen Whip at Night*, 2008, Size: 94 x 90 cm, | right: *Sharing Task*, 2008, Size: 186 x 182cm

About the artist:

Firoz Mahmud was born in Khulna, Bangladesh. Now he lives and works in New York and Tokyo. He did BFA from the Dhaka University's Fine Art Institute (2000), MFA from Tama Art University in Tokyo and PhD on fine arts from Tokyo University of the Arts. He had a research/residency at the Rijksakademie Van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam in Netherlands.

He exhibited in many international and National exhibitions including, 1st Aichi Art Triennale (2010), Tashkent Biennale (2009), Sharjah International Art Biennale, UAE (2009), Cairo Biennale (2008), Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale (2006 & 2009-DAP), Asian Biennale Bangladesh (2008, 2002 & 2000) and also exhibited at the Metropolitan Art Museum in Tokyo, Fuchu Art Museum, Ota Fine Arts, University Art Museum, Mori Art Museum (Art Center Gallery), Tokyo, Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art (2010) in Japan, kunsthau Tacheles in Berlin, Rochester Contemporary Art Center, New York, Sovereign Asian Art Foundation, The Landmark Atrium, Hong Kong, ShContemporary08, Shanghai Exhibition Center, S.M.A.K., The Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art – Ghent, Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, Changwon Sungsan Art Hall, Korea, National Art Gallery, Dhaka, Rijksakademie VBK, Amsterdam, Metropolitan-Gallery Mostings &

Byggeriets Hus, Frederiksberg, Copenhagen, Denmark, Royal Over-seas League, London, Concourse RNCM, Manchester and Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland.

He got several national and international awards and prizes including *Asian Cultural Council's Starr Foundation grant* from New York (ACC-2010/2011), Short listed *5-Jiro Yoshihara Project 2009* mini, Osaka Contemporary Art Center, Prize for '*Art project Ideas*' from Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art(2009), Arts Networks Asia (*ANA research grant*), Singapore(2007), Kaiseikai Foundation Grants (2007), *Monbukagakusho* Japanese Government Scholarship(2007), *Rijksakademie Fellowship* by Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands (2003), '*Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grants*', Canada(1998), *CEDS-Prize*', Royal Over-seas League, London, Khalaghar National Art Prize, Dhaka, *Dilnasheen Khanom Gold Medal* (2002) & *Shilpachariya Zainul Gold Medal*' (All Art Media Best), Institute of Fine Art, Dhaka (1997).

More info: www.firoz.mahmud.com

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