

Shabana Celebrates Power of Art

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The celebrated Indian actress and social activist arrived in Dhaka Saturday to inaugurate the exhibition titled Jai Bangla by the pre-eminent Bangladeshi artist and freedom fighter.

Shabana Azmi said she finds Shahabuddin's work strong and powerful.

"There are no words to express how it feels: I am deeply moved."

And as she spoke at the opening ceremony, touching upon a wide range of issues including art's contribution to humankind, her audience at the packed Dhanmondi venue was indeed moved.

Art, according to Shabana Azmi, has the power to create a "climate of sensitivity" to bring about change.

"And it's a meaningful contribution to society."

The actress, successful in both artistic and commercial ventures, however, turned down any questions on her work, be it film, social work or as a parliamentarian.

At the inaugural ceremony, she said that the power of Shahabuddin's work left her spellbound. "I was completely oblivious of the crowd around me and was transported to another place."

Finance minister AMA Muhith, who attended as the chief guest, told the audience that Shahabuddin's works depict a wonderful blend of strength and power with optimism.

"Jainul Abedin is called the artist of famine; in the same way Shahabuddin should be called the artist of Jai Bangla."

Speaking as a special guest, French ambassador Charley Causeret said the artist has created a distinctive style in his work by using a sense of motion.

The paintings depict the resilience and courageous nature of the nation, said the envoy from France, where the painter has lived for years. "This exhibition is an inspiration for many young artists in the country."

Shahabuddin, who was the one to hoist the nation's flag on Dec 16, 1971 at the Bangladesh Betar premises, told the audience that he was earnestly trying to take forward the spirit of 'Jai Bangla' with his works.

The ceremony also saw the artist, the actress and the envoy presented with three original works of the eminent painter Kamrul Hasan, by daughter Sumona Hasan.

Born in 1950, Shahabuddin, a company commander in the nation's war of independence from Pakistan in 1971, graduated from then Bangladesh College of Arts and Crafts before going to Paris for higher studies with a scholarship by the French government.

Over the last three decades, Shahabuddin has been showing his remarkable works extensively around the world. He received the honour of being one of the "50 Master Painters of Contemporary Arts" at the Olympiad of Arts, Barcelona in 1992.

After a break of nine years, the painter came back to his beloved city with 32 of his works, most of the paintings focused on the theme of the war of liberation.

The exhibition is open from Monday to the 11th of October.

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