

# An unforgettable experience in the most crowded place on Earth

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Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, is one of the most crowded cities on the planet. With an estimated population of 15 million, a flux of 350,000 immigrants coming each year, and around 400,000 rickshaws, the challenges that have to be faced in order to survive are too much for a human being. In terms of housing, traffic, justice, food supply, medical attention and work, the city is faced with problems that seem unsolvable. Where to begin?

This summer, a unique three month long project on social issues is taking place. This project has been initiated by Martijn Crowe, artist and creative director of The Faketory art studio, and artist Ronald Merkesteyjn. They work together with over 50 organizations, local artists, schools and students, an orphanage house and university professors to facilitate this project. The idea is to show the world the real and complex face of Dhaka. They aim for awareness and responsibility. As soon as you know about it, you are also responsible.

The Dhaka project is described by Crowe as “an international project that shows the unseen faces giving them their humanity back in doing so.” The sensation of sinking into a mass of human beings is overwhelming once you enter Dhaka. In this colorful chaos and congested metropolis, there is an abundance of everything. If you can’t find it in Dhaka, you can’t find it anywhere. It is like the concept of all concepts and thus pure and imminent chaos.

The images we get from the mainstream news media about Bangladesh are nothing but empty rhetoric facilitating neither reflection nor change. The Dhaka project listens to the quiet voices, showing their faces to the world, and thus raising the question: Is there a way out, a way to escape?

For the sake of telling the untold stories, Crowe works together with a group of 25 artists at Dhaka Art Center and the Faculty of Fine Art. The team will choose a social theme and from this create different art works based on the method of co-creation: Every artist contributes with his talents and perspectives, in a continuous dialogue with the rest of the team and with Martijn Crowe as facilitator. The project invites the participants to give depth to their art, and to let their works be part of a broader social movement.

This three month long project will be followed by a blog, several expositions, photo works, articles and lectures. The connections between different groups in and outside of Bangladesh will be brought together by art and expositions worldwide and any form of expression possible.

“What I do together with Martijn Crowe is extraordinary in many ways,” explains Ronald Merkesteyjn. “Art for us is not a goal in itself, nor a means to make a profit, but an approach to understand life.”

*For articles and other materials on The Bangladesh Project, and for the opportunity of making a reportage, contact us: [contact@thefaketory.org](mailto:contact@thefaketory.org)*

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