

Co creation: international artists on social issues in Bangladesh

This summer, a unique three month artistic exchange on social issues is taking place in Dhaka, Bangladesh, organized by Dhaka Art Center and The Faketory.

If you watch a news broadcast, Bangladesh seems to be overwhelmed by insolvable social problems. However, the images we get from the mainstream news media about Bangladesh are nothing but empty rhetoric facilitating neither reflection nor change. The Dhaka project seeks to form an alternative to this, by listening to the silent voices, showing their faces to the world, and thus raising the question: Is there a way out, a way to escape?

Facilitated by Martijn Crowe, artist and creative director of The Faketory, more than 25 local and international artists work together based on the method of co-creation. The team chooses a social theme and from this, every artist contributes with his talents and perspectives, in a continuous dialogue with the rest of the team in weekly meetings. The project invites the participants to give depth to their art, and to let their works be part of a broader social movement.

A crucial question in the co-creation process is how to connect: How can the artist connect with the subjects he is portraying, and how can we use the art work to connect with the rest of the world?

One of the artists, Sumon, is asking the city's rickshaw drivers and homeless people to do drawings themselves to create an intimate relation with them. Another artist, Ali, is searching for prejudicious and hateful comments about homosexuals on the internet, then painting these comments on the back of gay men and photographing them. Taken together, the projects demonstrate the contrast between listening and shouting, between having a conversation and communicating in a one way direction.

The project will result in a website, a book and an exhibition of all the works. Co-creation is also important in the process of showing the art to the world. How can we reach out to people who do not get in contact with the marginalized people we are portraying, how to make sure that we reach out to as many people as possible, not just to a certain group? This process is as important as the results.

Art starts with raising a question, and then asking this question to someone else. By this, we can contribute to the world.

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