



in(site)

Kazi Salahuddin Ahmed

# In(site): Reading in fragments the narrative of a mutating city

1.

From within the matrices of a city in flux, with an ambition of an artist who unequivocally situates himself between the 'perverted present' and the 'nostalgic past' (of that city), Kazi Salahuddin Ahmed has assumed a role of a unique cartographer with a territorial claim to his own habitat – the Old Dhaka. In(site), his current exhibition, designed as an enumeration of his achievements of the last twenty or so years, is a site where all the empirically gathered fragments make their appearance to form a 'whole'. His oeuvre, one which has so far flowed in a number of trajectories, reads like a series of symbolic gestures made by a witness who stands proof of the degenerating landscape, to which the trope 'urban desert' may readily be employed.

Salahuddin's recent series consisting of collages that echo the urban chaos seen from above, though laid out onto a series of sizable canvases in the manner of all-over paintings, facilitates a navigation of an aesthetic kind – one that makes the onlooker aware of the reality they confront on a daily basis in the desecrated urban outdoor.

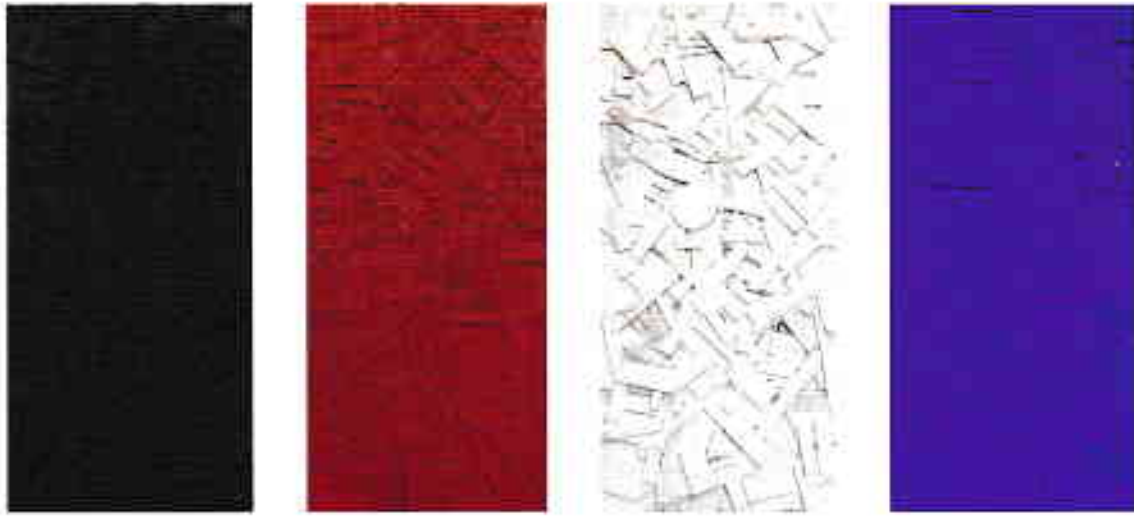
The time Salahuddin has spent meditating the spatiotemporal realities of Dhaka and, in turn, translating them into his artistic expressions is time invested in explicating the intimacy with the materially complex and spiritually challenging 'outside'. His point of entry into the domain which lies external to the body-mind duet is his interpretation of the forms and elements that best serve his aesthetic goal – which is to reenact the experience of the real in terms of tactile and visual stimuli – colours, textures, shapes and forms.

With these stimuli Salahuddin retrospectively alludes to both the organizational matrix or 'order' and the anomalies of growth around him which undermine the very idea of urban sites as an articulation of the ethos of its inhabitants. Thus, his re-articulation of Dhaka's chaos, the disorderly order, serves as a point of entry into a state of consciousness – a punctum in our thinking minds through which to arrive at a 'position' vis-à-vis the forbidding realities of city life. As he iterates, he does so not merely to create an index of the real, rather to find a way to explicate his love-hate relationship with his hometown, and most of all, as a helpless witness who must relate his state of mind to his viewers in one form or another.

2.

Who is this witness who chooses to work in the scope of an artist interrogating the muddle that is a city, interjecting into it the visual equivalent of some of its derided features? What does he attempt to accomplish in iterating his state of mind vis-à-vis such features? As one is hard put to dissolve the distance between art and reality, one should only be contented with a 'witness's account' where the essence of the real is not lost. Rather through this 'essential element' Salahuddin has managed to stay relevant in the art scene. In his work Dhaka reverberates in myriad different ways.

As a mutating site, Dhaka has been subject to an uneven urban growth. In the absence of what western modernity has given rise to in the form of the 'planning gaze', which is enforced to ensure that all building activities commence under a totalizing scheme, this city that lies at the periphery of the global mainstream has failed to grow following an organic pathway which would have reflected the social value(s) of its inhabitants. At present, too many ungainly forms consume Dhaka, a city that resisted the unifying, all-consuming grid patterns not to demonstrate its ability to self-disciplined ways of growing but to sink into the mire – where both navigation and habitation is de-prioritized to lend weight to the production of spectacles in the affluent areas and ill-conceived constructions and densification in the rest of regions.



3.

A fragment cannot fully demonstrate the ecology, or the multifarious form(s), or even the metaphorical weight of the real. The real always remains elusive. Consequently, Salahuddin chooses to create a corpus of images – nonspectacle-like, yet not entirely placid – employing a nonhierarchized visual ethos to the service of the perceived real – which is an aesthetical reconstruction of the 'state of being'. What he gives rise to is the 'memory image', through which to reiterate the real.

The non-resemblance between life and representation is a topic that has been examined by Roland Barthes in his *Empire of Signs*. To understand the paradoxical relation between life and art one may survey the bird's eye views of urban sites (built as bricolage of newspaper and magazine cutouts) and the three dimensional constructions such as the scaled up jilapi – where the idea of the real is subject to the aesthetical value. And this seems enough to give rise to the actual artistic acts through which to re-enter the real as a revitalized individual living in the 21st century Dhaka, where a flailing urban utopia assumes the shape of a nondescript assemblage.

In the final analysis, the purpose of Salahuddin's work is to interrogate the notion of art as a representation of reality as well as reexamine the life lived in 'transcendental rationalism' (Antonio Negri's formulation) by turning a blind eye towards the hostile, hyperkinetic climate of a highly financialized capital Dhaka has turned into over the years.

Though frayed urban utopia and the collapsing reality is Salahuddin's first premise he shows no fetishistic attachment to the urban spectacles to signify the crisis. It is the endangered geography to which he refers and lends the touch of the hands that are habituated to construct/create symbols following the morphological bounds he sets for himself, and that too only to break away from it to arrive at another formal matrix, thereby creating a number of ways to give voice to his chosen theme. In Salahuddin's realm the pictorial colludes with the real employing a method of synecdochical referencing. What is made visible is always, as a rule, coloured with the subjective, toned with the disposition of the agent – the artist, one who has acquired a personalized voice with an appeal to a wider audience by situating himself between what we may interpret as the aesthetical realm and the real.

— Mustafa Zaman



*Sheer Chaos 24*, acrylic and newspaper on canvas, 165x140cm, 2012.



Kazi Salahuddin Ahmed, *Sheer Chaos 25*, acrylic and newspaper on canvas, 183x366cm, 2012

Cover Image: *Sheer Chaos 66*, acrylic and newspaper on canvas, 180x180cm, 2013,

Page 3: *Unity in Fragments 1,2,3 and 4*, acrylic, corrugated board on canvas, 120x60cm, 2014.



*Image of the City 51, 54, 55 and 57, acrylic, bamboo cane on canvas, 60x60cm, 2012*



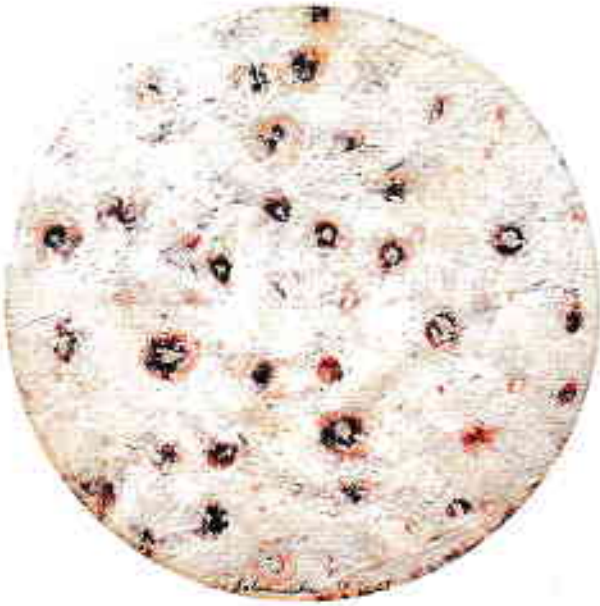
*Image of the City 60, 62, 65, acrylic, wood grain on paper, 60x60cm, 2012; Image of the City 70, wood grain on paper, 120x120cm, 2012.*



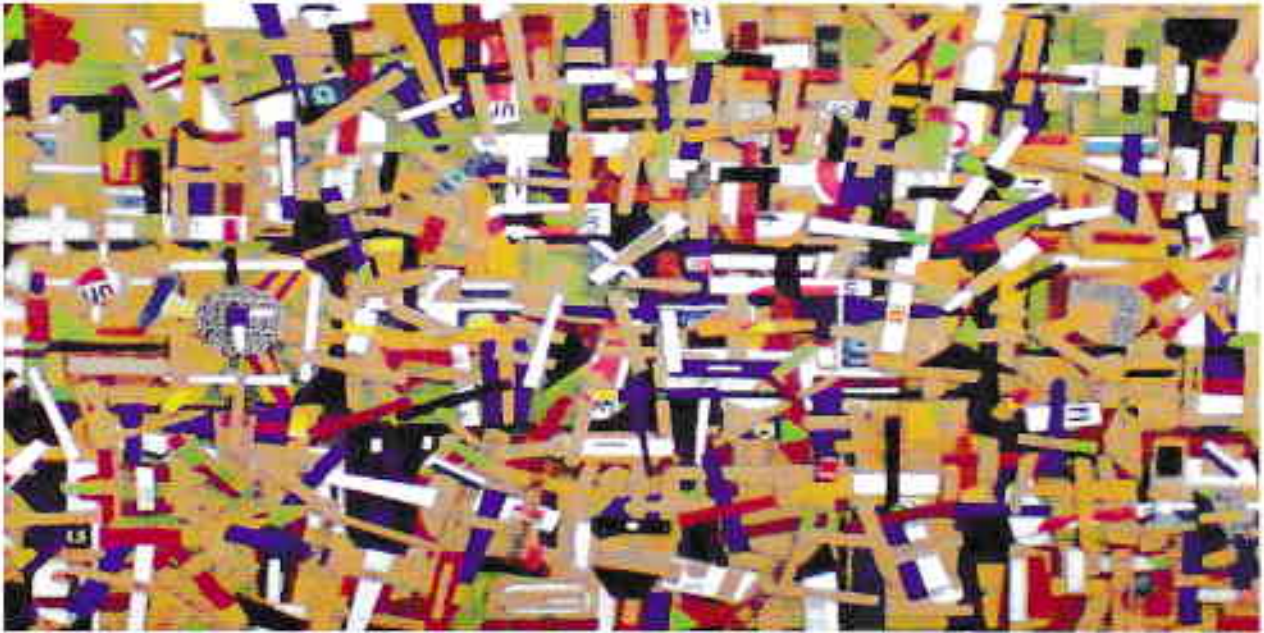
*The Taste of the Real 4*, cane, canvas, wood grain and acrylic, 2014.

Back Cover: *The Taste of the Real 1*, acrylic, wood grain, canvas on board, 120x120cm, 2014.





Back Cover: *The Taste of the Real* 7,8,9 and 10, acrylic on canvas, 60x60cm, 2014



*Unity in Fragments 13 and 14, acrylic, corrugated board on canvas, 60x120, 2014*



## Kazi Salahuddin Ahmed

1963 : Born in Dhaka, Bangladesh

### Education

1986 M S S International Relations  
University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

### Workshop:

- 2013 : The 1st Changzhou China International Art Workshop & Festival at China
- 2013 : Art Camp, Remakree, Bandarban Organized by Surface
- 2012 : Ecorea Jeonbuk Art Biennale at Korea
- 2010 : India-Bangladesh Art Camp, Organized by Bengal Foundation, Dhaka
- Spring Art Fair, Organize by Bangladesh Art Council,
- 2009 : 1 Mile Square, Organize by Britto Arts Trust, Arts Council England, Visiting Arts, doms, British Council
- 1999 : India-Bangladesh Art Camp, Organized by Kolkata Nandanica, India
- 1995 : Metal Workshop, Conducted by Suzanne Benton at Institute of Fine Arts University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 1989 : Art History and Art Appreciation Course, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Dhaka, Bangladesh

### Solo Exhibition:

- 2010 : La Gallery, Alliance Française de Dhaka
- Shilpangon Art Gallery, Dhaka
- Birla Academy of Arts & Culture, Kolkata, India
- Nomad Center & Art Gallery, Islamabad, Pakistan
- 2009 : National Art Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 2007 : Bangladesh Gallery, Deputy High Commission of Bangladesh, Kolkata, India

- 2006 : Nomad Centre & Art Gallery, Islamabad, Pakistan
- 2006 : Canvas Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2005 : Jehangir Art Gallery Mumbai, India
- 2005 : Hamial Art Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2004 : Spitahfields Gallery, London, UK
- 2004 : La Gallery, Alliance Française, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 2004 : Hilton Beijing Gallery, Beijing, China
- 2004 : Art Association of Harrisburg pa, USA
- 2003 : Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 2002 : Chuwa Gallery Ginza, Tokyo, Japan
- 2001 : Seas Art Studios and Gallery, Adelaide, Australia
- 2001 : La Galleria, Alliance Franchise, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 2001 : Birla Academy of Arts and Culture, Kolkata, India
- 2000 : Art Konsault, New Delhi, India
- 2000 : Solo Miniature Painting Exhibition, Gallery De Alliance Française, Dhaka
- 1999 : Gallery 21, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 1998 : Tourist Service Center, Kalmandu, Nepal
- 1998 : Shajahan Art Gallery New Delhi, India
- 1997 : High Commission of Indian Cultural Center Gallery Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 1997 : Gallery De Alliance Française, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 1995 : Zainul Gallery, Institute of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka
- 1994 : La Gallery, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 1993 : Gallery, Alliance Franchise de Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 1987 : TSC, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 2007 : 17th National Art Exhibition, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Bangladesh
- 2006 : 12th Asian Art Biennial, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 2005 : 16th National Art Exhibition, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Bangladesh
- 2004 : 5th Art Now Asia, Las Vegas Art Museum, Las Vegas, USA
- 2004 : 9th Art Mirai International Art Exhibition, Tokyo, Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
- 2003 : Orient Color and Shape in Jakarta
- 2003 : 7th International Biennial of Miniature Art Yugoslavia
- 2003 : 8th Art Mirai International Art Exhibition, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
- 2003 : 27th Anniversary International Miniature Art Show, MASE USA
- 2003 : 11th Asian Art Biennial, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 2002 : 2nd Biennial of Contemporary Painting of the Islamic World, Tehran, Iran
- 2002 : 6th Miniature Painters Sculptures and Grover's Society of Washington D.C USA
- 2002 : 20th Annual Juried Miniature Art Exhibition, Long Island USA
- 2002 : 5th International Exhibition of Miniature and Small Pictures, SAMAF France
- 2002 : 39th Annual Lake Oswego Festival the Arts, International Miniature Art Show, U S A
- 2002 : 10th Asian Art Biennial, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 2002 : 26th Anniversary International Miniature Art Show, MASF USA
- 2001 : 19th Annual Juried Miniature Art Exhibition, Long Island USA
- 2001 : 1st Contemporary Young Artists Exhibition from Bangladesh, Chuwa Gallery, Ginza, Tokyo, Japan
- 2001 : 4th International Exhibition of Miniature and Small Pictures, SAMAF France
- 2001 : Paper Mill Playhouse International Miniature Art Exhibition, NY, USA
- 2000 : Contemporary Art from Bangladesh, Exhibition in China
- 2000 : The Sixth International Biennial of Miniature Art | Yugoslavia
- 2000 : 25th Anniversary International Miniature Art Show, MASF U S A
- 1999 : 9th Asian Art Biennial, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 1999 : 17th Annual Juried Miniature Art Exhibition, Long Island, USA
- 1999 : "Sonar Bangladesh" at Art day, New Delhi, India
- 1998 : 1st Tone International Miniature Art Exhibition, Bangladesh
- 1998 : 65th Miniature Painters, Sculptures and Grover's Society of

### Major Group Exhibitions:

- 2013 : The 1st Changzhou China International Art Biennial at China
- 2012 : 5th Beijing International Art Biennial, China
- 2012 : Ecorea Jeonbuk Art Biennale at Korea
- 2012 : 15th Asian Art Biennial, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 2011 : The 150 Birth Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagor, Jaimthy Celebration, Bangladesh & India
- 2011 : 19th National Art Exhibition, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
- 2010 : 4th Beijing International Art Biennial, China
- 2010 : 10th International Biennial of Miniature Art, Serbia
- 2009 : 18th National Art Exhibition, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
- 2008 : 13th Asian Art Biennial, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Washington D.C USA
- 1998 : 30th Painters Exhibition from Bangladesh" Osaka, Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto, Japan
- 1997 : 12th Georgia Miniature Art Inc, USA
- 1997 : 64th Miniature Painters, Sculptures and Grover's Society of Washington D.C USA
- 1997 : 8th Asia Art Biennial, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 1996 : 12th Annual Juried Miniature Art Exhibition, Long Island USA
- 1995 : 10th Georgia Miniature Art Inc USA
- 1995 : 2nd Tone National Miniature Art Competition Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 1993 : 6th Asian Art Biennial, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 1992 : 10th National Art Exhibition, Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 1988 : 8th Young Artist's Art Exhibition, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
- 1987 : Victory Day Art Exhibition, Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka, Bangladesh

### Awards:

- 2012 : Grand Award, 15 Asian Art Biennale, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 2008 : Honorable Mention Award, 13 Asian Art Biennale, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 2002 : Honorable Mention Award, 69th Miniature Painters, Sculptures and Grover's Society of Washington D.C USA
- 2000 : 2nd Prize in Abstract and Surrealism, 25th Anniversary International Miniature Art Show HAS F, USA
- 1998 : Honorable Mention Award, 65th Miniature Painters, Sculptures and Grover's Society of Washington D.C USA
- 1998 : 2nd Prize in Abstract Art and Surrealism, 1st Tone International Miniature Art Exhibition, Bangladesh
- 1997 : 1st Prize in Abstract Art, 12th Georgia Miniature Art Inc USA
- 1996 : 4th Prize in the 12th Annual Juried Miniature Art Exhibition, Long Island, USA
- 1995 : Honorable Mention Award the 10th Georgia Miniature Art Society Inc USA

### Present position: Freelance Artist

### Studio:

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