



ELI AND EDYTHE **BROAD ART MUSEUM** MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Broad Art Museum at MSU Presents First Major Museum Exhibition Examining Two of Bangladesh's Most Celebrated Experimental Artists

The Artist as Activist: Tayeba Begum Lipi and Mahbubur Rahman Presents Works Confronting Social and Political Issues in Bangladesh and across the Globe

Exhibition Features Nearly 40 Works of Video, Sculpture, Photography, Installation, and Charcoal Drawings, Including Never-before-seen Work by Both Artists



Mahbubur Rahman, *Transformation (ongoing performance 2004–2014)*, 2004. Patenga sea beach, Chittagong, Bangladesh. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Tayeba Begum Lipi.

East Lansing, MI--January 20, 2016 (Updated January 27, 2016) – The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (Broad MSU) will present, for the first time, a joint exhibition of contemporary Bangladeshi artists Tayeba Begum Lipi and Mahbubur Rahman. The exhibition will explore the artists' commentary on and challenge of social values, expectations, and conventions that are a part of everyday life—raising questions about national and global issues including gender-specific violence and sociopolitical conflict.

The exhibition will mark the first time Lipi and Rahman's works are put in dialogue with one another—revealing an interchange of ideas, overlapping themes, as well as connections between materials used. On view March 5 – August 7, 2016, *The Artist as Activist* will include nearly 40 works across media, as well as never-before-seen pieces by both artists.

“Many of the societal norms Lipi and Rahman challenge within the context of their native Bangladeshi culture have deep resonances around the world—from issues of personal identity to gender equality to migration,” said Caitlín Doherty, curator of the exhibition and Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs at the Broad MSU. “I have

personally been fascinated by their work, drawn to the ways in which both artists' activist instincts are realized throughout their practice. Sparking dialogues across cultural and geographic boundaries is central to our mission, and we are so proud to welcome them to the Broad MSU for their first joint museum exhibition.”

The Artist as Activist: Tayeba Begum Lipi and Mahbubur Rahman joins other exhibitions at the Broad MSU examining work by living artists from the U.S. and around the globe who are addressing a range of social and political issues through their practice—including recent exhibitions of South Asian artists Naiza Khan, Imran Qureshi, and Mithu Sen.

Installed across three galleries within the Broad MSU and occupying an entire floor of the Museum, *The Artist as Activist* will begin with an introduction to each artist individually, emphasizing the distinct themes of their unique practices. At the close of the exhibition, works by Lipi and Rahman that were created in concert with one another will be presented side-by-side. With over 35 works included, the exhibition marks the largest presentation in a U.S. museum for both artists. Highlights include:

- Lipi's *My Daughter's Cot* (2012), part of an installation of works in the exhibition that overhaul ideas of domesticity by fabricating everyday furniture and clothing objects out of razor blades, including a bath tub, dressing table, sewing machine, and shoes.
- A new work by Lipi, *Womanhood-2* (2015), also created from razor blades and depicting a series of vests in a commentary on aspects of motherhood.
- Two video works by Lipi that explore female identity, including her first video work *Little Learner* (2008) and *I Wed Myself* (2010), which challenge the expectations of arranged marriage and religious routine for women in Bangladesh.
- New and past works by Rahman in his series of photographs and sculptures, *Transformation* (2004-present). The series references a poem by Syed Shamsul Haq and uses the symbol of a bull as a metaphor for societal and economic oppression.
- Rahman's photographic work *Feature – 2* (2013) and sculpture *Sounds from Nowhere 8* (2015), both of which comment on the human cost of corporate greed. The works, depicting stainless-steel scissors, reference the rudimentary tools used to free survivors of the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster, in which over 1,000 factory workers perished when the clothing factory collapsed.
- Rahman's charcoal drawing *Landing* (2010), which challenges notions of national borders, forced migration, and denial of freedom of movement.
- An installation of works by both Lipi and Rahman addressing the isolation of and building awareness for the transgender community within Bangladesh.

Challenging traditional perceptions of artistic professions in Bangladesh, Rahman has pioneered a cross-media approach, working primarily as a performance artist and painter exploring sociopolitical conflicts shaping the history of Bangladesh and South Asia. Lipi's artistic practice spans painting, printmaking, installation, and video art, and her work often focuses on themes of female identity and gender-specific violence in Bangladesh and around the globe. Lipi has also collaborated with artists throughout her career, most notably serving as commissioner of *Parables* for the Bangladesh Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2011.

The artists, who are also married, co-founded the Britto Arts Trust in 2002. Bangladesh's first artist-run alternative arts platform, the Trust is dedicated to organizing exhibitions, enabling international dialogue and exchange, and providing support to the country's artists through residencies, workshops, and funding.

The Artist as Activist: Tayeba Begum Lipi and Mahbubur Rahman is curated by Caitlín Doherty with support from Amit Kumar Jain, Curatorial Consultant for the exhibition, and organized by the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University.

A comprehensive catalogue will accompany the exhibition, chronicling the artists' practice through essays, images, and interview excerpts. Support is provided by the Broad MSU's general exhibitions fund.

Tayebe Begum Lipi (born 1969, Bangladesh) completed an MFA in drawing and painting at the Institute of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, in 1993. Lipi's practice engages painting, printmaking, installation, and video. Her 2012 work *Love Bed*, which addresses themes of female identity, and references the double bind of political and gender-specific violence, was acquired for the Guggenheim's collection. Lipi was awarded the Grand Prize at the Asian Art Biennial, Dhaka, in 2004, and was the commissioner for the Bangladesh Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011. She has had solo exhibitions at Alliance Française (1998 and 2004) and Bengal Gallery (2007) in Dhaka. Notable group exhibitions include the 2011 Venice Biennale and the 2012 Colombo Art Biennial. In 2002, she co-founded Britto Arts Trust, Bangladesh's first artist-run alternative arts platform, dedicated to organizing exhibitions, enabling international dialogue and exchange, and providing support to the country's artists through residencies, workshops, and funding. Lipi lives and works in Dhaka.

Mahbubur Rahman (born 1969, Dhaka, Bangladesh) completed his Masters in Painting from the Institute of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka in 1993. Working primarily with installation and body art, Rahman's work explores a range of issues including myths, and contemporary political and ideological conflicts, as well as postcolonial issues of power, domination, and control. Rahman has exhibited widely internationally. His selected shows include 54. La Biennale di Venezia 2011; 5th-14th Asian Art Biennale, Dhaka; *Videozoom: Bangladesh*, Sala 1, Rome, Italy, 2010; 9th-16th and 18th National Art Exhibition, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka; *Separating Myth from Reality*, an international show organized by Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu; *Six Degrees of Separation*, South Asian Artists' Exhibition, Anant Gallery, Delhi; and *Off the Beaten Path*, South Asian Artists' Exhibition, Drik Gallery, Dhaka. In 2002, Rahman co-founded the Britto Arts Trust, Bangladesh's first artist-run alternative arts platform, dedicated to organizing exhibitions, enabling international dialogue and exchange, and providing support to the country's artists through residencies, workshops, and funding. In 2009, the Devi Foundation in Delhi published a monograph of his work. Rahman lives and works in Dhaka.

Caitlín Doherty, *The Artist as Activist Curator and Broad MSU Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs*

Caitlín Doherty was appointed Curator and Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs at Broad MSU in spring 2015. A respected international curator, scholar, and director, Doherty has engaged with artists, students, and members of local communities across the globe.

From 2012 – 2015, she served as Exhibitions and Speaker Curator at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCUQatar), where she organized major exhibitions of international contemporary art and design, including *Confluence: Photographic-based work from the contemporary Middle East* (2014); *The Depths of Hope* (2014), by Egyptian-Sudanese artist Fathi Hassan; *Equilibrium* (2012), by Irish sculptor John O'Connor; and *The UP Factory* (2012), an interdisciplinary exhibition by Amsterdam-based international design company DROOG. Doherty also curated VCUQatar's *Crossing Boundaries Lecture Series*, featuring renowned contemporary artists, designers, and leaders within the artistic community including Ellen Lupton, Joachim Sauter, Francesco Bonami, Shirin Neshat, Marina Abramović, and Richard Serra.

From 2006 – 2008 Doherty worked as Director of Lismore Castle Arts, one of Ireland's leading contemporary art galleries, where she oversaw exhibitions featuring artists such as Michael Craig-Martin, Matthew Barney, Richard Long, and Nathalie Djurberg. She taught Art History, Design History, and Museum and Gallery Studies at Waterford Institute of Technology from 2008 – 2010. In Ireland, Doherty also directed the interdisciplinary arts and cultural initiative *Artswave*, and acted as Visual Arts Coordinator for Garter Lane Arts Centre in Waterford. She has published and lectured on contemporary art and museum practice, and holds degrees in Art History and Museum and Gallery Studies from The University of Edinburgh and The University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

Amit Kumar Jain, *The Artist as Activist Curatorial Consultant*

Amit Kumar Jain has been a museum professional since 2003. Since his graduation from College of Art, New Delhi, India, where he pursued a course in Applied Arts and Photography, Jain has been involved in various path-breaking initiatives in the art industry. In 2003, Jain co-founded Navsar, a web-based platform showcasing the work of young artists from India. Today, Navsar encompasses exhibitions, educational programs, and art

consultation. In 2006, Jain joined Devi Art Foundation, India's first private contemporary art museum. More recently (2011), Jain joined The Savara Foundation for the Arts as its Director-Special Initiatives.

Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University

Opened on November 10, 2012, the dynamic 46,000-square-foot museum serves as both a teaching institution and a cultural hub for East Lansing and the region. In keeping with MSU's commitment to applying knowledge to benefit society and further the global common good, the Broad MSU's program of original and traveling exhibitions; initiatives with living artists; performances; and educational offerings for students, faculty, and the community make the museum a center for questioning and understanding the modern world. With a collection containing 7,500 objects from the Greek and Roman periods through the Renaissance and on to the Modern, the Broad MSU is uniquely able to contextualize the wide range of contemporary art practices within a firm historical context. The museum is named in honor of Eli and Edythe Broad, longtime supporters of the university who provided the lead gift of \$28 million. For more information, visit www.broadmuseum.msu.edu.

Michigan State University

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