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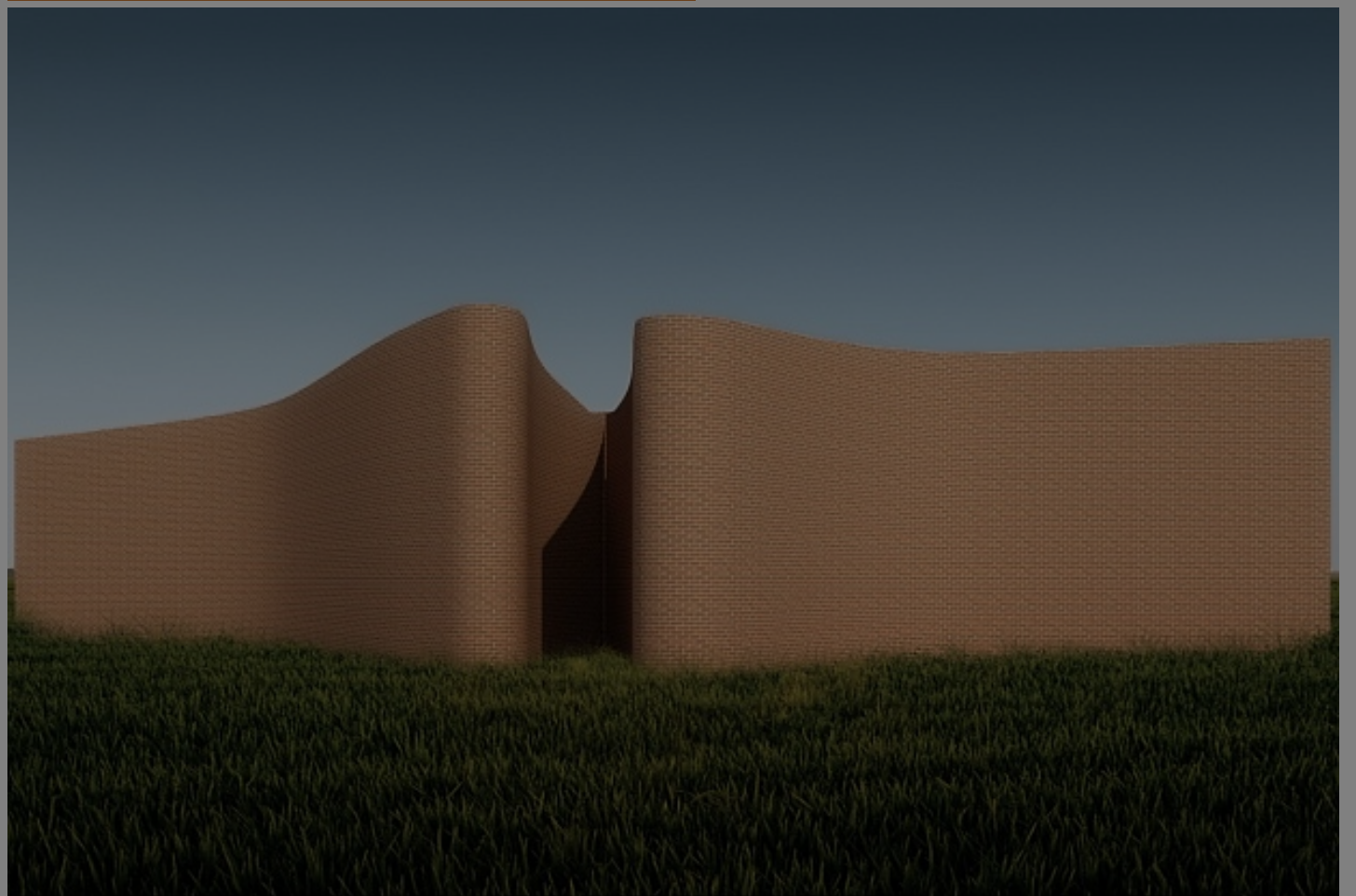
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Art takes shape in Bangladesh



As reported in [The Art Newspaper](#), the first major contemporary art institution in Bangladesh is taking shape in a rural area of Sylhet, around 250 km from Dhaka. The [Srihatta-Samdani Art Centre and Sculpture Park](#) includes artist residency spaces and a gallery for international and regional art.

A new art centre and sculpture park aims to draw international visitors to north-eastern Bangladesh, re-drawing the art world map. Srihatta-Samdani Art Centre and Sculpture Park is due to open in the rural tea district of Sylhet, around 150 miles from Dhaka, late next year.

Nadia Samdani and her husband Rajeeb—Bangladesh’s most high profile collecting couple—are behind the vast new arts complex, the first major contemporary art institution in the country. They established the [Samdani Art Foundation](#) in 2011, and launched the first edition of the biennial [Dhaka Art Summit](#) the following year.

The Srihatta-Samdani Art Centre and Sculpture Park is funded entirely by the couple via the foundation (the cost is undisclosed). Nonetheless, Diana Campbell Betancourt, the foundation’s artistic director, told Artnews that Srihatta is “not a private museum”. A spokeswoman says: “It is a free venue, ticketless, geared to the public and the art viewing public.”

The new complex will open in stages, with the inaugural phase due to launch late 2018. “This will include several commissions for the 100-acre sculpture park; 10,000 sq. ft of artist residency spaces; 10,000 sq. ft of plazas; and a 5,000 sq. ft gallery designed by the Bangladeshi architect Kashef Mahboob Chowdhury/URBANA,” the spokeswoman says.

A show of new media works is scheduled to inaugurate the new gallery space with pieces on show by Bangladeshi artists including Zihan Karim and Ayesha Sultana. International names such as Ceal Floyer, Lucy Raven and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster will also feature.

Betancourt will meanwhile organise exhibitions drawn from the foundation’s 2,000-strong collection, which is centred on South Asian Modern and contemporary art. Artists represented in the collection include Dhaka-based Naeem Mohaiemen and Lahore-born Shahzia Sikander.



A giant figure of a reclining woman, titled *Rokeya. A Sculptural Congress: Pawel Althamer and the Neighbours* (2017) by Pawel Althamer has already been installed in the sculpture park. Other artists commissioned include Rana Begum, Subas Tamang, Yona Friedman and Monika Sosnowska who will create a “monumental concrete river that will serve as a walking path through the landscape”, the organisers say. The Indian artist Asim Waqif will create a “living sculpture” by transforming a bamboo forest into a wind instrument (the wind will create a sound as it blows through the bamboo canes).

The founders hope that the new venue will become a destination for international visitors. “Srihatta is a ten-kilometre drive from Sylhet international airport, which has direct flights from London, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Dhaka,” the spokeswoman adds.

Source: [article by Gareth Harris in The Art Newspaper](#)

Images:

A rendering of the gallery at the Srihatta-Samdani Art Centre and Sculpture Park designed by Kashef Chowdhury/URBANA (Courtesy of the Samdani Art Foundation)

Pawel Althamer's Rokeya. A Sculptural Congress: Pawel Althamer and the Neighbours (2017) (Photo: Noor Photoface; Courtesy of the Samdani Art Foundation)

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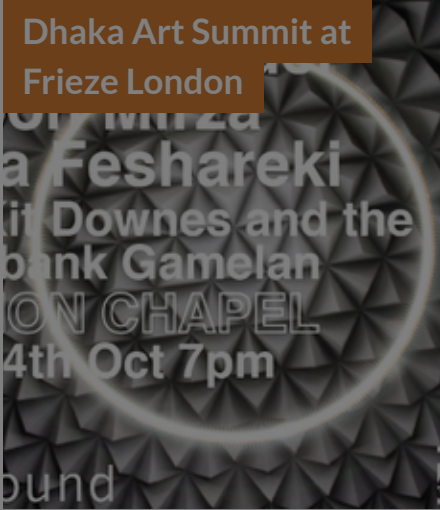
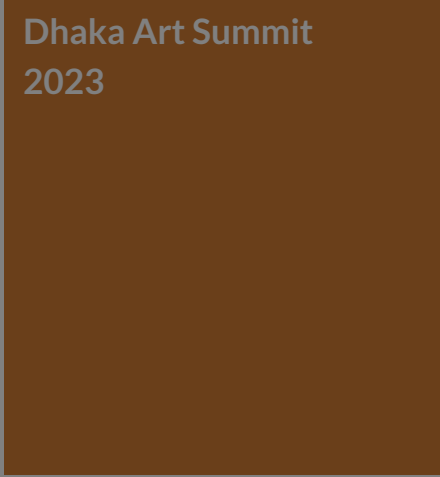
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