

Novera dies in seclusion

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Sculptor Novera Ahmed's emergence in the 1950s coincided with an important shift in the art scene of the erstwhile East Pakistan. Through her unbridled spirit and creative association with the likes of Hamidur Rahman, she had not only contributed substantially to that modernist shift but also had sculpted art works that have inspired many generations of artists.



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The iconoclastic artist died on Tuesday in France where she had lived in seclusion for over four decades. She was 85.

The Banglapedia entry on paintings mentions that Hamidur Rahman "along with sculptor Novera Ahmed designed the historic shaheed minar that commemorates the martyrs of the language movement."

The recalcitrant air that she had about herself in a male-dominated art scene of the time was aptly captured in Novera, a novel written by Hasnat Abdul Hye. Creative glimpses of her creative association with Hamidur Rahman are to be found in the novel *Taish Number Toilochitro* by Alauddin Al Azad. Very few artists in the country have seen such passionate novels written about their life and work, a feat which also demonstrates the power of her art amongst contemporary artists.

Born in 1930 in Kolkata, Novera studied in Kolkata and Comilla, and against all odds went to England to obtain her Diploma in Design in the Modelling and Sculpture course from Camberwell School of Art in London in 1955. At Camberwell she studied under the renowned British sculptor Sir Jacob Epstein and Karel Vogel of Czechoslovakia. She also enriched her perspective on European sculpture by studying under the sculptor Venturi Venturino in Florence and later in Vienna.

She was influenced by many western modern sculptors such as Henry Moore and the modern art approach of the Western World.

Within a short span of time, from 1956 to 1960, Novera had worked on about 100 sculptures in Dhaka. Her first exhibition was held in 1960 in erstwhile East Pakistan.

Out of 100, 33 sculptures were collected by the Bangladesh National Museum (BNM).

Marked by diverse experimentations with history, forms and treatment of materials and media, her creations have become part of our history.

She has been a keen observer of village life and folk motifs and has based many of her artworks on what she had observed.

She has created an extensive family series, including sculptures of endearing women with their children.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at her death, reports UNB.

In a condolence message, Hasina said Novera's death was a great loss to the whole nation. She also prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and expressed her sympathy to the bereaved family members.