

**OPEN CALL**

8th and 9th Episode of

**“URONTO”**

**Residential Art Exchange Program**  
**in Dubolhati, Naogaon, Rajshahi.**

**WHERE IS THE PAST IN YOUR FUTURE ?**

Keeping the question above open ended for all,

URONTO invites artist and creative collaborators across all disciplines to explore a self-directed Residential-Art-Exchange program for 10 days, responding to the diverse ruins of Dubolhati Palace in Naogaon district in Bangladesh. Participants can unplug from modern hectic routines and explore the mysterious charms of this massive Palace standing on its last leg. Applications are warmly invited with a proposal to create a body of work in response to any direct or abstract narratives, myths and geography of the palace.

The palace is a massive area providing enormous possibilities to work within. The attractive structure is barely standing strong with a beautiful environment and land area around it. Participants are highly encouraged to bring out the best, working with natural founding material or local available materials without doing any harm to the structure. An alternative documentation of the space and story-telling through interactive aesthetical expressions are expected and collaboration between artists and local people are highly recommended.

URONTO is an **Artist-Led Open Collective** in Bangladesh, founded in 2012, in order to enforce a new organic platform for creative practitioners and researchers from all possible disciplines to collaborate and **enhance** their **transdisciplinary works** to inspiring the local and Global community. At the same time **upholding their Artistic responsibilities toward the Society.**

Since the beginning of the collective, URONTO is hosting site responsive residential art exchange programs within disused or abandoned spaces and heritage buildings to document cultural memories and brand Bangladesh globally through multidisciplinary artists' collaborations. URONTO's activities not only provide much-needed opportunities for emerging artists to expand their working practice and collaborate with

international artists, but through each residency, they create an alternative documentation about the history of the selected site before it's demolished and forgotten.

URONTO reconnects the local community with the space through workshops run by the selected artists. Each episode culminates in a final open studio celebration which ignites exchanges between artists, community and countries, creating dialogues in-between, to generate new ideas and add values to the place. This pop-up platforms in heritage buildings are opening up new opportunities and challenges for artists and thinkers, convey the heritage memories internationally, Strengthens the society to be more aware about their cultural roots.

### Upcoming Project Outline:

This year there will be two Episodes of URONTO Residential Art Exchange program back to back at the same location. This is designed to explore how different groups of participants reacts to the same place with different situation in different time period.

#### **8<sup>th</sup> Episode:**

**Venue:** Dubolhati Palace, Naogaon, Rajshahi Division, Bangladesh.  
**Date:** 15-27 Nov 2019  
**Reporting Date:** 15 Nov 2019, (at Dubolhati Palace, Naogaon.)  
**Working dates:** 16-25 Nov 2019  
**Open studio day:** 26-27 Nov 2019

#### **9<sup>th</sup> Episode:**

**Venue:** Dubolhati Palace, Naogaon, Rajshahi Division, Bangladesh.  
**Date:** 27 Nov – 08 Dec 2019  
**Reporting Date:** 26/27 2019, (at Dubolhati Palace, Naogaon.)  
**Working dates:** 28 Nov – 06 Dec 2019  
**Open studio day:** 7-8 Dec 2019

The project take place in rustic landscapes in old abandoned houses or camp out in rural communities and mostly to any soon-to-be dumped or finished place in natural atmosphere. The exchange program is truly a refreshing time for the participants to make themselves free from regular hectic life and dive into the beauty of nature. **But we must include that nature is beautiful and refreshing but not luxurious so all participants should have a clear understanding of that. Expectations of luxurious living will end up with disappointment and people habituated with luxury are barely encouraged in this program.**

### **Who can Participate:**

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We do believe that every form of art is inter-related and also it has its own prosper strength individually. Therefore, we invite artist of any creative discipline to participate, so that we can have enormous variation of artistic disciplines delivering experimental and exciting works responding to the space.

- **Any art loving, creative individual committed, respectful to the opportunity.**
- **Participants of any discipline** (Painter, Photographer, Graphic designer, Fashion designer, Writer, Curator, Theorist, Historian, Blogger, Animator, Architect, Film Maker, Land Artist, Graffiti artist, Art Educator, Crafts man, Musician, Performance artist, Poet, Printmaker, Researcher, Sound Artist/designer, Theater performer, Dancer, Singer, Engineer, researcher, archeologist and any dedicated and productive creative practitioner.)
- **Adventurous persons who can accept aesthetical challenges within rural living.**
- **10-12 Artists out of all application will be selected for each Episode.**

### **How to apply:**

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- Submit the application form given in the link here:  
<https://forms.gle/6B2yCGRD7f5wa8N49>
- Submit Sample of artworks/ production/ previous practices (max 10 examples) via email at: [urontoinfo@gmail.com](mailto:urontoinfo@gmail.com)  
Use bellow title as the subject of the email: **(your name)-APPLICATION FOR 8<sup>TH</sup> & 9<sup>TH</sup> EPISODE OF URONTO RESIDENTIAL ART EXCHANGE PROGRAM.**

### **Paid by URONTO:**

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- Accommodation
- Food
- Site visits (Local)

### Artist Responsibility:

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- Transportation Cost (to the venue and back to their home)
- Art material cost

**\* All selected artists will have to do a presentation on their previous artworks or multidisciplinary practices of their own while the exchange program with all other participants.**

### Application deadline:

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- Interested applicants must complete their submission by **05 August 2019**.
- Please read the How to Apply section carefully
- The results will be declared by **12 August 2019** with a confirmation letter through e-mail
- Selected(only) Participants will have to submit the Registration fee of **25 USD** after the confirmation letter.

### Details about the Venue of 8th and 9th Episode:

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#### Rajshahi Division:

Rajshahi Division is one of the eight first-level administrative divisions of Bangladesh. Rajshahi Division consists of 8 districts, 70 Upazilas and 1,092 Unions. It is bounded by WEST BENGAL state of India and DINAJPUR and GAIBANDHA districts on the north, RAJBARI and KUSHTIA districts on the south, JAMALPUR, TANGAIL and MANIKGANJ districts on the east, West Bengal state of India on the west. This division is most valuable division of Bangladesh. It has an excellent rail and road communication infrastructure. The divisional capital of Rajshahi is only six-seven hours road journey away from Dhaka, the capital city. A major landmark in Rajshahi is the Kantajir Mondir, a Hindu temple north of Dinajpur. The Varendra Research Museum in Rajshahi is one of the foremost museums specializing in history of ancient Bengal.

### Naogaon District:

Naogaon district is located in the northern part of Bangladesh. The word Naogaon has been origin from Nao (New- a french word) Gaon (village). So, the word Naogaon means new village. By the passing of age the region was turned into Naogaon city and finally Naogaon district. Once, the region was included in Pundrabardhana. It is also a part of Barendra region. The ancient inhabitants of the region were the inheritor of Pundra nation. Indigo Rebellion (1859-62), Peasant Revolt against the landlords (1883) etc are the remarkable chapters of the region. Naogaon subdivision was established in 1877 with three police stations under Rajshahi district and the subdivision was turned into a district in 01 March 1984. The area of Naogaon is 3435.65 Sq Km.

### Dubolhati Jamindari:

The entire Rajshahi Division was famous for prominent jamindari territory in Bangladesh. Naogaon district under Rajshahi Division had several Landlords ruling there but majority ruler was Hindu. After the eviction of Jamindari customs most of the Jamindar went back to India leaving behind their belongings specially the palaces and so the history of the palaces is mostly gone with them. Among the landlords in Naogaon district Dubolhati was significantly the pioneering one.

Dubolhati area used to look like an island during the rainy season having lots of water bodies (ponds and cannels) around it. It is being told that a Salt traders named Jagat Ram came and settled at the Kashba Village near Dubolhati and took some of the wetlands on lease. Gradually Jagat Ram became a half-independent landlord in the area. During Muslim ruling period when the rulers demanded TAX, the landlords in the wetlands explains how they are not able to grow crops in the water and so they are unable to pay the tax. The landlords requested the Muslim ruler for other adjustments and myth says, that the they used to send 22 Kahon of large Koi Fish to the ruler as alternative of Tax amount. Though it is not authentic but very popular story indeed.

Dubolhati Jamindari spread from Naogaon, dinajpur, Bagura upto some parts of India too. While the permanent settlement process British Lord Cornwallis leased his land to Krishnonath in exchange of 14,495 Taka. By 1853 Horonath Ray Chowdhury, son of Krishnonath took the state in his hand and made a lot of development in the area, like introducing scholarships for students, building schools, Govt. offices, Medical college and hospital, 16-wheel chariot and developed a lot financially. The

period of Horonath Ray Chowdhury was the most glorious years of Dubolhati Jamindari. He was awarded with the title “Ray” in 1875 and the title “Bahadur” in 1876. In the same year the English medium free school was named after him.

Inspite Horonath Ray Chowdhury’s good works in the area, it was established that he was not very much kind to the Muslim Prajas (vassal). Higher rate of tax was collected from them and were discriminated in other many things and clearly was treated badly. As a result, by 1893 around 50 thousand Muslim Praja stood together against Horonath for their rights and filed a case against him. The legal case went on for next 7 years, then finally the two wives of Horonath Ray Chowdhury apologized to the Prajas and settled the matter in between. This Rebel was a motivating incident for all the Muslim Praja for future.

### **Dubolhati Palace:**

Dubolhati Jomidar Bari/Palace is located at the Dubolhati union of Naogaon district, 7 km distance from Noagaon city. This is around a 200 years old building situated in around 2.45 acre area, some documents say its 5 acres including the garden area around it. Compare to the other Jamidar houses/Palaces from Bangladesh, this one is a massive one. But unfortunately, the condition of this one is very poor and it looks like it will collapse badly in any moment.

It was built by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century during the Horonath Ray Chowdhury ruling period. The palace was constructed with Brick, lime stones, Iron and expensive Shal Wood. The entire structure contains a lot of Iron bars and wooden doors and windows which are robbed gradually after the palace being abandoned.

The palace is formally two-storied but in few corners, there are extra rooms on the top. The entire structure can be divided into two Sections: Indoor and Outdoor. In the outdoor section there was two segments: the Nachmanahl/Natmancha (dance/performance stage), the official court chamber section, the indoors were the main residential section and the Cooking area. In both floors, the sections were same. There is a well in the palace to collect water. At the entrance, there are tall pillars like any Greek structure in history. After entering few steps away is the Nachmahal, that is the main

entertainment area of the palace where performers entertain landlords and officials with traditional dances.

Dubolhati was a massive structure and a large portion was used for Court chamber where all kind of official works and tax collection accounts were maintained. In that period, many of the employees were resident at the palace to maintain the daily court works smoothly. In the residential indoors there are big bedrooms with beautiful balcony with each of them. The entire palace is designed beautifully keeping access of light and wind from every side. The cooking area is on the south-east portion of the palace. Local people says the palace had about 300 rooms and accommodated a large number of people, the numbers of the rooms might not be authentic but a large group of people indeed stayed here.

It is popularly known that there was an ivory throne which the British took with them. The present situation of the palace is terrible and still various groups of the society is looting the bricks, irons and other possible elements from the palace. The Archeology department had a board in front of the area but no preservation initiative has been taken so far. The designs around the palace significantly represents glory and pride.

The structure is a bright example of Indo-European design. Corinthian and Tuscan pillars can be seen in fronts of the palace and the balcony area, also Venician influence in the wooden windows, Greco-Roman classical influence in the sculptures on the top of the entrance, Muslim influence in the motifs of the design with grape leaf pattern and other ornamentation is also observed there.

Other than this massive main palace there was a small villa near to it as part of this main palace. That villa was locally called Hawa-Khana, Hawa is Bengali of wind. The villa was designed in such interesting way that it used to stay cool all year by the natural flowing wind through all the rooms. The Hawa-khana or the villa was mainly constructed as the entertainment area for the Prince. The prince had personal entertainer to stay there with him for his pleasure. After the eviction of Jamindari customs the main large palace went under government ownership and the villa land was exchanged with Abdul Kuddus Molla with his Land in India. From then the generations of Abdul Kuddus Molla is living in the villa and the main palace is left abandoned without any maintenance.

## Site Pics:



Image: Dubolhati Palace, PC:Sadya Mizan





Image: Front view and chamber areas. PC: Shams Xaman



Image: indoors. PC: Shahriare Khan



Image: The Iron Structure inside. PC: Sadya Mizan



Image: Indo- European design influenced pillars. PC: Sadya Mizan



Image: The Nachmahal/Natmancha, PC: Sadya Mizan



Image: Behind area Nachmahal/Natmancha, PC: Shams Xaman



Image: Inside ruins, PC: shams Xaman



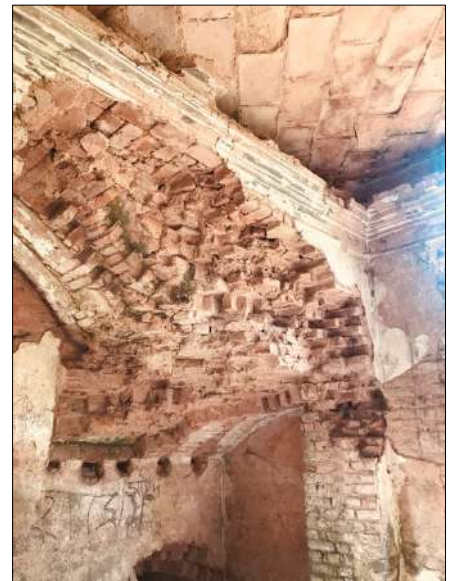
Image: Inside ruins, PC:Sadya Mizan



PC: Rafi Nur



PC: Shams Xaman



PC:Rafi Nur, Sadya Mizan, Shahriare Shihab



PC:Shams Xaman



Image: The fallen part of the hanging balcony (used by local to dry things) , PC:Sadya Mizan





Image: Wide view of the palace from inside, PC:Shams Xaman



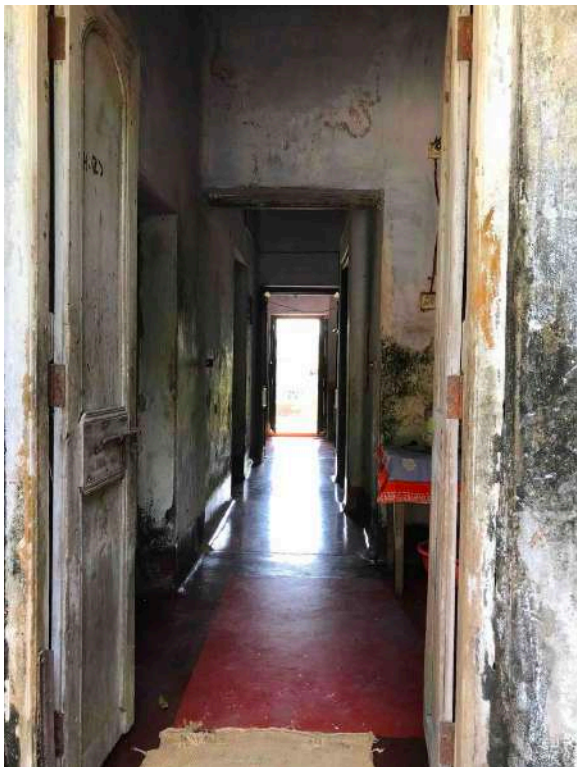
PC: Sadya Mizan



PC: Shahriare Shihab



Image: The Hawa-Khana, PC:Sadya Mizan





**Image: Backyard of Hawa-Khana, PC:Shams Xaman**

### **Transportation Direction:**

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1. By Train: Dhaka to Lalmonirhat train (Lalmanirhat Express), have to get off by Shantahar station. (then a 15-minute Auto ride from Shantahar to Dubolhati)
2. By Bus: Dhaka to Naogaon direct bus from Kollyanpur bus stand in Dhaka.

**More detail direction and Google Map navigation will be to the selected participants later.**

### Useful location link on Google Map:

<https://www.google.com.bd/maps/place/%E0%A6%A6%E0%A7%82%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%B2%E0%A6%B9%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%9F%E0%A6%BF+%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%9C%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%A1%E0%A6%BC%E0%A6%BF/@24.7867872,88.8824929,18.81z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x39fc7bdf39cf07a1:0x4851e15a2767f7a0!8m2!3d24.7868429!4d88.8830484?hl=en>

For any more information or questions about the project please contact through email or call. **All participants are highly recommended to go through the entire document and understand it properly before applying.** Multiple queries are invited from all, before final participations.

No submission after the deadline will be taken, but late submissions with remarkable qualities might get short listed for next episodes. In such cases the participants will be informed in advance.

As a final note, it must be said that “URONTO” is an open collective composed of individuals who wish to freely express their ideas via any medium. However, freedom of expression must always be accompanied by a respectful attitude towards the work space and other members of the collective.

### Contact person

**Sadya Mizan**

+88 01726831636

[urontoinfo@gmail.com](mailto:urontoinfo@gmail.com)

<https://urontoart.org/open-call/>

<https://www.facebook.com/UrontoArt>