

## OPEN CALL

6th Episode of

**“URONTO”**

**Residential Art Exchange Program  
in Gourarang, Sunamganj, Sylhet.**

**URONTO is an artist community who are in a new way working toward documenting a sector of memories of old architectural existences through any discipline of Art.** Basically “URONTO” Residential Art Exchange Program is a meeting place for creative individuals to work with a common theme and space, but in different languages. Visual Art, Photography, Activism, Literature and fiction writing, Animation, Architecture, film Making, Land Art, Art Education, Crafts, Music, performing art, Poetry, Printmaking, Research, Sound Art etc. are only few disciplines who will be participating at these gatherings, which will often take place in rustic landscapes, whether it be old, abandoned houses or camp out in rural communities and mostly to any soon-to-be dumped or finished place or natural atmosphere.

The aim of the program is to accommodate and sustain an organic environment for the artists to fall in rhythm with the natural sphere and project their insights amongst fellow artists, **ultimately creating an tribute** for the structure and a reverberating atmosphere to inspire further projects.

**Participants of each project are invited to reveal and praise the history, stories, myth, values or anything about the architectural structure or house or building chosen for every episode.**

We do believe that every form of art is inter-related and also it has its own prosper strength individually indeed. Therefore we invite artist of any creative discipline to participate, so that we can have a unique documentation of the chosen structure in enormous variation of artistic media. Where a writer might produce literary pieces or an article; an artist might prepare a painting or an installation piece while a musician may create a tune/number based on mood, history and atmosphere of the place. **We encourage experimental works and new challenges in every episode.**

## Intentions & Functions:

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1. Cultivate the creative genre among all
2. Providing a wider field to creative intentions
3. Encourage collective work and snub struggle
4. Documenting the Undocumented histories
5. Sharing the histories in the international field
6. Creating responsible aesthetical practice and growing awareness
7. Putting any and all discipline under one roof
8. Developing local art concepts in the rural
9. Inspiring work with founding natural materials
10. Developing the connection between human and nature

The exchange program is truly a refreshing time for the participants where we do provide them a very natural atmosphere to live in with nature where they can 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.**

## Guideline of the project:

<b>Venue:</b>	Gourarang Palace, Sunamganj, Sylhet Division, Bangladesh.
<b>Date:</b>	29 Sept – 05 Oct 2017
<b>Reporting Date:</b>	29 sept 2017 at Gourarang, Sunamganj
<b>Working dates:</b>	30 Sept-04 Oct 2017
<b>Open studio day:</b>	05, 06 Oct 2017

## Theme and mark of this project:

This season the participants are invited to portray the ruined diverse beauty of the palace, the lost history, glory, the truth even why not myth as well through their distinctive media. The palace is a big area with lot of natural materials around and many scopes to work with. The attractive structure is barely standing with a beautiful environment and land area around it. We are mostly looking forward for artist who can bring out the unspoken words of the palace using the surroundings in a creative way, because the surroundings can always explain the place in the best way. **The expression of the participants must express anything about the palace or anything related to that and its history. Any discipline of artist or creative individual is invited as long as they can connect to the site with their artistic practice. Participants are highly encouraged to bring out the best, working with natural founding material or available materials around.**

## Who can Participate:

- Any art loving, creative individual who wants to work along with the theme.
- Adventurous persons who can accept aesthetical challenges within rural living.
- Participants of any discipline (Visual Art, Photography, Activism , Literature and fiction writing, Animation, Architecture, film Making, Land Art, Art Education, Crafts , Music, performing art, Poetry, Printmaking, Research, Sound Art etc and any.)  
Mostly we look forward for young (from mind) & energetic participants and want to have them from multidiscipline.
- 10-12 Artists out of all application will be selected by the Committee.

## How to apply:

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### Papers to submit

-CV (with portrait)

-Images of artworks or practice works

-Artist statement about his/her work

### -Proposal for the project

(Brief of why he/she wants to be a part of it and what kind of work he/she might be doing)

-A copy of passport (international participants only)

### **Paid by URONTO:**

Accommodation  
Food  
Site visits

### **Artist Responsibility:**

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

\* We expect all selected artists will share a small presentation on their artworks or multidisciplinary practices of their own while the exchange program with all other participants.

### **Application deadline:**

- Interested Artist must submit/email their papers by 20 April 2017.
- Send to urontoinfi@gmail.com

Use bellow title as the subject of the email:

**APPLICATION FOR 6<sup>TH</sup> EPISODE OF URONTO RESIDENTIAL ART EXCHANGE PROGRAM.**

- Selected applicants will receive a confirmation letter through e-mail by 26 April 2017

### **Details about the Venue:**

#### **Sylhet Division:**

Also known as Greater Sylhet or Sylhet region is the northeastern division of Bangladesh, named after its main city, Sylhet. It is bordered by the Meghalaya, Assam and Tripura states of India to the

north, east and south, respectively; and by the Bangladesh divisions of Chittagong to the southwest and Dhaka to the west. In 1995, Sylhet was declared the 6th division of Bangladesh. Prior to that, it was part of the Chittagong Division. The Sylhet Division is subdivided into four Districts: Habiganj, Moulavibazar, Sunamganj and Sylhet. Further, the Sylhet Division contains 35 sub-districts (upazila/thana), 323 union parishad, 10,185 villages and 14 municipalities. Population: approximately 10 million, which is less than 7% of the total population of Bangladesh.

Sylhet is considered one of the most picturesque and archaeologically rich regions in South Asia, and has major Islamic Sufi shrines and Hindu holy sites. Its burgeoning economy has contributed to the regional attractions of landscapes filled with fragrant orange and pineapple gardens and tea plantations. Many Sylheti community members are working and residing abroad, particularly in the United Kingdom. They send remittances to fund projects and industries within the Sylhet Division, which have led to the expansion of the export industry and foreign investment sectors.

### **Sunamganj District:**

The name Sunamganj is derived from its founder, Sipahi Sunamuddin, who established a bazaar on the bank of the river Surma. Sunamganj is renowned for bards and folk music.

Sunamganj is located in north-eastern Bangladesh in the Sylhet Division with the Sylhet District to its east, Habiganj District to its south and Netrokona District to its west. The Surma River and Kushiara River run through the district whilst Ratna River crisscrosses the district and beyond. The River Da'uka or Danuka also run through district Sunamganj.

The annual average temperature of Sunamganj has a maximum of 33.2 °C and a minimum 13.6 °C, with annual rainfall of 3334 mm. There are many haors and beels (wetlands ecosystems) in Sunamganj. Sunamganj District was underwater in ancient time; it was part of a vast sea by the name of Ratnag, which was an abbreviation of Ratnakar (common noun for sea in Bengali: রত্নাকর). Ratnakar expanded from cliffs of Meghalaya on the west to the coast of Tripura in the east, both Meghalaya and Tripura were inhabited by Kirata people of Mongoloid race. People from Meghalaya travelled to Tripura and vice versa by seagoing vessels. Seabed began to rise by the end of twelfth century due to alluvial silting over the centuries. It was northeast of the district that first began to elevate in form of atolls and then most parts of the district arose from underneath the sea.

Sunamganj has a total population of 1,968,669; males constitute 50.89% and females 49.11%. People of Sunamganj are racially and ethnically diverse. Since 1960 sunamganj has been known for the stone and sand business. Sunamganj has more haors than any other district in Bangladesh and this makes it famous for fishery business. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) industry is relatively a new sector in the country's economy. Though, it is yet to make tangible contributions in the national economy.

Sunamganj District comprises 11 sub-districts or Upazilas: Bishwamvarpur, Chhatak, Derai, Dharamapasha, Dowarabazar, Jagannathpur, Jamalganj, Sullah, Sunamganj Sadar, Dokkin Sunamganj, and Tahirpur.

## **GOURARANG:**

Nidhiram was the primogenitor of the Gourarang Jaminder(landlord) family. He was the son from a Kayasth Family (Kayasth are considered to be members of the scribe caste in Hindu Religion). He was sent to Sylhet (previously known as Srihatya) for most probably treasury work with a promotion too. There he married a beautiful daughter of a landlord and ended up living there in a high forest land on the east side of Surma River which he got as a gift from a prince. Since then his generations expanded in this country.

The Gourarang Palace is standing on the last bricks also the stories of this family and the palace are almost lost now-a-days but luckily one priest named Nirad Chandra Chakrabarti who use to be one of the record keeper once in the family court room wrote a small piece about the family where he tried his best to give detail about the family generations and the histories behind the palace of Gourarang. Another writer named Attutcharan Charan Deb Choudhury also wrote a book before him, title: Srihotter Itibritto (Sylhet History) where he wrote a brief story of Gourarang but Nirad Chandra to some extent do not agree with what he wrote in that book. Anyhow he himself did not knew all of it too, but he knew few members and relatives from the family, like Madan Das who was a maids child from the family, he lived a long life and died sometime in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. His nephew Bichitra Kumar Das was brought up by the family and also got a standard education. He knows many old stories of the family. And Nirad took his interview to find out the history of this jaminder family and the palace.

According to Nirad Chandra's finding and Bichitra Kumars words, Nidhiram the forefather came from Shoktigor/Shantipur area located in Bardhaman of West Bengal. When he came he was known as one of the bharadwaj. Later that title was lost once he expanded his family in Sunamganj. The place where he first started living is presently famous as Lokkhonsri. Nidhirams elder son Dhanaram got the Choudhury title after he was assigned in treasury work and revenue collection. Dhanaram was a very intelligent and smart personality. He knew how to control and expand business and incomes very well. But the younger son Anantaram converted to muslim and became known as Ayezdi. After conversion he took half of the asset from Dhanaram and Dhanaram was not very happy about this. Maybe for that reason they moved to another place on the south just beside the Shonapashi beel (seasonal Wetland). They were living as a temporary basis there because they already planned to build a permanent residence in Gourarang then and the area of Gourarang seemed very perfect to the famous landlord Dhanaram for a grand palace. Dhanaram's Son Shyam Ray, his son, grandson and great grandsons was with him then.

In the beginning of the palace design, A Kali temple with a Kali and Shiva incarnation of black stone was placed on the east of the palace entrance and on left which is the west, a great Gourango

temple with a brass incarnation of great Gourango and Nityananda was placed. Each of which weighted more than 20Kg. After the establishment of these two temples the place was named as Gourarang which is still continuing. And their previous temporary place got the name as Old village permanently. The 6th Generation Son Radhakanto Ray was adult by the time of palace construction; he was dedicatedly involved in the construction work. His good taste and hard work reflects in the exclusive design and decorations all over the palace. Radhagobinda Ray the elder son of Radhakanta Ray Choudhury made the front gate a two storied structure then, where guards could stay and watch a wider area. He even built a beautiful wooden house inside the palace with decorative wood. Just like his ancestors he also added more and more glory and prosperity to the family. The palace had more than 80 rooms including family residence, office area, farms area, maids and other employee's residence area etc. The palace was always full of enjoyments and celebrations, special ritualistic programs like Puja parbans also Jatra pala, mahra and lot more like these. The entire village used to be participating willingly in these festivals and celebrations.

The entire palace was a very worthy and attractive one. The palace had elephants, horses, big and small boats, very decorative palanquin, maid servants, passenger, workers, personal servants, postman, cook, headmaster, Scholar, guard, treasurer and many more, in one word almost nothing was missing there. There were two ponds, one big and one small. The big pond was at the south of the palace beside which the entrance roads were made. The big pond was secured with high walls around it for the female members from the family. The small pond was inside the palace. There were a lot of underground lockers in that house which were made of iron and strong concrete equal local materials. There was a Durga temple inside the house, one nachmahal (performance hall), a two storied gallery and roofed balcony. Female members of the family use to enjoy dance and drama from the gallery and it was a mysterious staircase to enter the gallery that nobody could understand how the ladies use to appear suddenly in the gallery those days. Most probably in 1897's massive earthquake the Durga temple, gallery area and a side of the palace completely eclipsed and few sections went underground too. Later the Nachmahal , gallery area and the parts of residence area was built again. While this reconstruction another grand entrance gate was built and decorated which is usually called Shingho Dar. They had court room where records were kept in a very systematic and work friendly way. Nirad chandra the writer of all these history, worked in this court room as a record keeper for certain period. Many important document from there was stolen, burnt and destroyed while the 1971 liberation war.

Maybe before 1904 the entire palace was done with its constructions and decoration. Gourarang palace were not built with modern conventional materials like brick and cement, fairly that grand palace was made with small size brick-like things which were made with betel nut streak, lime and mortar and many more natural and sustainable materials. These kinds of materials were invented and used since 250 years back. After the Gourarang palace was made it was famous for its structure, constructions and strength, which still can be heard from old villagers.

The Landlordism was carried out by generations until the Landlordism was withdrawn and landlords had to leave their majority of lands and rule in limited area. Presently the 16 and 17 generation of the

ray Choudhury is alive and living in Sunamganj city since 1972. The 14th generation Family member Nagendra Kumar Choudhury lived in Gourarang till 1989 then when the house got a bit risky to live alone for the old man his son took him back to Sunamganj permanently. And in 1995 the entire area of Gourarang was being sold to few local families living around there. The Ray Choudhury families don't have any ownership anymore in Gourarang but they still do own the original memories said the man from 16th generation Anjan Choudhury.

## Site Pics:



**Pic: Gourarang Palace (Front)**





**Pic: Gourarang Palace Entrance (left)**



**Pic: Gourarang Palace Entrance (right)**



**Pic: Arches**



**Pic: Ruins**



**Pic: Wrecks**



**Pic: Temple**



**Pic: Gallery Balcony**



**Pic: Nachmahal (Performance Hall) and its decorations last few existence.**

# URONTA

r e s i d e n t i a l

Art Exchange Program

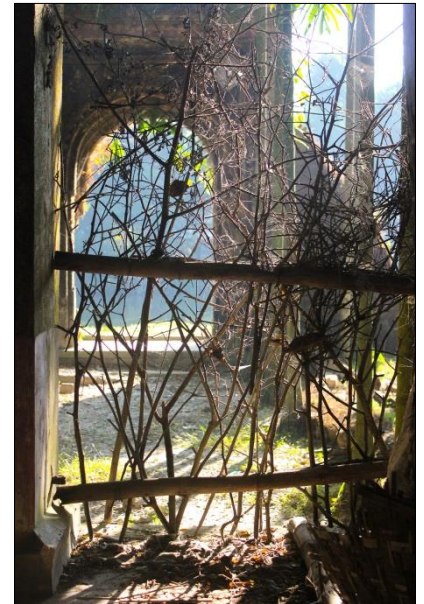
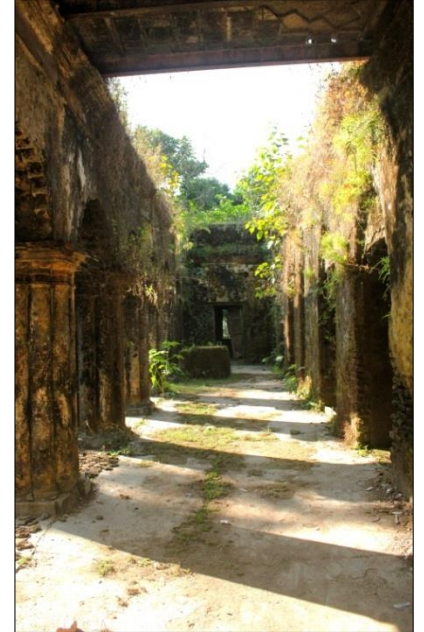
388/D Free School Street, Hatirpool, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205. Ph: +88 01726831636, Email: urontoinfo@gmail.com



**Pic: Grand entrance door**



**Pic: From the corridors.**



**Pic: Corridors**



**Pic: old rooms**



**Pic: old rooms**



**Pic: Gourarang Palace**



**Pic: Gourarang Palace surrounding**





**Pic: Gourarang Palace area**



**Pic: Gourarang Palace area**

### **Transportation Direction:**

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1. Dhaka (Fakirapool bus stand) to Sunamganj Bus Stand by Bus > Sunamganj bus stand to Gourarang by local Autos/CNG motors.
2. Dhaka (AIR PORT) to Fakirapool Bus Stop by Cab > Dhaka (Fakirapool bus stand) to Sunamganj Bus Stand by Bus > Sunamganj bus stand to Gourarang by local Autos/CNG motors.

### **Useful location link on Google Map:**

(Put this address in Google map and check direction from your location)

- Dhaka (Fakirapool bus stand) to Sunamganj Bus Stand  
<https://www.google.com.bd/maps/dir/Fakirapool+Bus+Stop,+Toyenbee+Circular+Road,+Dhaka/25%C2%B0+4'4.29%22N,+91%C2%B023'41.50%22E/@24.3894457,90.4611211,9z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m12!4m11!1m5!1m1!1s0x3755b85c2756953d:0xb992402a17060127!2m2!1d90.4172444!2d23.7348605!1m3!2m2!1d91.3948611!2d25.0678583!3e0?hl=en>
- Dhaka (AIR PORT) to Fakirapool Bus Stop  
<https://www.google.com.bd/maps/dir/Dacca+International+Airport,+Dhaka,+Dhaka+Division/Fakirapool+Bus+Stop,+Toyenbee+Circular+Road,+Dhaka/@23.7916867,90.3378422,12z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x3755c691ba478fbd:0xd1b3f71371eb15ec!2m2!1d90.4026234!2d23.846615!1m5!1m1!1s0x3755b85c2756953d:0xb992402a17060127!2m2!1d90.4172444!2d23.7348605!3e0?hl=en>

**More location map will be provided of the working venues to only the selected participants.**

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. Aside from these particularities, the members are welcome to draw ideas and inspiration from their surroundings, since it is only natural for a creation of Nature to find inspiration within it.

## **Contact person**

**Sadya Mizan**

+88 01726831636

urontoinfo@gmail.com

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