

RACES

BACHHAWAT FOUNDATION ART DAY AT RCTC, IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE TELEGRAPH, BLENDED SPEED THRILLS WITH CULTURE FOR A CAUSE

WHAT: Bachhawat Foundation Art Day held at the Royal Calcutta Turf Club, in association with The Telegraph

WHEN: March 29

THE MOOD: The curious March-end heat could do little to stop 2,000 enthusiasts from enjoying a day of action, art, music, food and fun at the racecourse. While the ladies flaunted chiffon saris, skirts and dresses matched with beautiful hats and headgear, men donned kurtas, suits and even tees, taking advantage of the day's relaxed dress code.

There were eight races for regulars and amateurs to try their luck at the stakes, followed by an art auction that included works of Jogen Chowdhury, Paresh Maity, Shuvaprasanna and Shipra Bhattacharya. The proceeds were shared among the artists and the Army Central Welfare Fund.

CLUB SPEAK: "The last day of the cold weather season 2013-14 was a blend of art, culture and racing — a first at RCTC. The ambience was great, with baul singers giving the day a Bengal touch, a lavish food court, guests viewing great art works and beating the heat at the bar! We'll surely see more events like this at the Turf Club in future," said Anit Casyab, assistant general manager (racing), RCTC.

Malancha Dasgupta
Pictures: Rashibehari Das



This gang of Loreto House girls prettied up the place all right! "It's a sunny day and we saw it as an opportunity to bring out our sleeveless dresses. After a hectic month-long ICSE exams, finally we are enjoying with friends and what can be better than coming to see the races, that too for the first time!" grinned Zainab Firdausi (second from left).



The most important dash of the day was race No. 7, which was aces by Noble and Nice, ridden by jockey B. Mahesh. The winner was presented with The Bachhawat Foundation Trophy, a bronze sculpture by Niranjan Pradhan (inset).



It was horses 'n' hooves everywhere, from racecourse to canvas. A live art workshop saw artists like Tapas Konar and Eleena Banik at work on the RCTC lawns.



Cesare Bieller, consul-general of Italy, and dancer Astad Deboo. "Really happy to see the cause behind all this," smiled Deboo.



US consul-general Helen LaFave watched the races from the balcony. "Good to see the art community, the athlete community and the business community come together for a cause. There are some beautiful art works displayed. Happy to know some are already sold, it'll be easy for me to choose now!" said Helen.



"There was a time when my husband (Bharat Dev Varma) and I would come here quite often, though neither of us are gamblers. In those days, Gayatri Devi used to come. Ladies would dress glamorously and do up their hair — those were the good ol' days! Looking forward to the next season... hope it will be as beautiful and busy as this," said actress and MP hopeful Moon Moon Sen, turning heads in a serene blue-green sari and oversized sunnies.



Shuvaprasanna with wife Shipra Bhattacharya at the workshop.

"The horse has always been a subject for artists and has played an important role in Indian art and architecture. Besides races, we saw artists too letting their imagination run. People from all walks of life have gathered here to enjoy," said art curator Ina Puri.



Jogen Chowdhury takes a look at the catalogue during the art auction. "Beautiful is the word. Getting horse racing and art together is a wonderful idea. Baul and classical music along with an art auction created a different ambience," said the artist-turned-MP.



French consul-general Fabrice Etienne went Indian to beat the heat. "It is too hot to wear a suit. Wearing a cotton kurta is comfortable. This kurta has old Chinese characters written on it. Good to see Calcutta too has a horse racing culture," said Etienne.



Vikram Bachhawat, the director of Aakriti Art Gallery, checked out the art on display at RCTC with wife Priya. "Difficult to decide whether to admire the art works or enjoy the races," laughed Priya.



Sanghamitra Das and her team rendered soulful numbers like *Tomay hrid majhare rakhbo, Khachar dhitor achin pakhi* and more.

A very now floral top, pleated short white skirt, nude heels and minimal make-up — 23-year-old Muskan Marwa got it right and how!



"Horses, art, music and the March sun. What more can you ask for? This is my first time at the racecourse. When we were young, coming here was a taboo. Now I see what I have missed," smiled author Kunal Basu, wife Sushmita by his side.