

Modern Art in Pakistan and Sheikh Safdar Ali

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Introduction

Sheikh Safdar Ali (1924-1983) a founding member of The Lahore Art Circle (LAC), established in 1952 with five other artists,¹ was one of Pakistan's most important avant-garde artist. As similar to other LAC members, Safdar's visual and stylistic conventions engaged with the modernist abstract syntax of early 20th-century Western art movements such as *De Stijl*, Abstraction, Cubism, and Post-Impressionism. Frequently, Pakistani scholars and critics have dismissed and devalued mid-20th-century Pakistani modern art as merely a derivative of Western art movements.² Through the analysis of several works of Safdar, this paper will argue that Safdar was not only a successful designer and entrepreneur for the SV (Safdar and Vivian) Advertising Agency, but also one of the leading modern artists of Pakistan who played a key role in innovating a new wave of modern art in Pakistan. Furthermore, although Safdar borrowed the visual vocabulary from European Western art movements, his work is very much grounded in the locality of Indian subcontinent and thus cannot be written off as merely derivative. Safdar's use of black outline and denial of perspective connects his work to the centuries' old tradition of Ajanta Cave painting and Indian miniature painting. While the use of grid in his work can be attributed to the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian's *De Stijl* movement. However, Safdar's employment of the grid to merge figure, landscape, and still life together is his unique modernist innovation. Partha Mitter in his pivotal essay, *Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant Garde Art from Periphery*, questions crediting all modern works as stemming from the Western canon. He suggests to shift the prevalent, homogenous discourse of modernism to a more heterogeneous definition and focusing on global modernism by including other regions in the world to produce a more inclusive art history. He also calls into question the "purity" and worldwide preponderance of Western modernism and the consequent effect of the periphery's necessarily derivative character. Mitter argues:

“The discipline of art history has yet to change in any substantive manner the implicit evaluation of non-Western modernism as derivative and devoid of originality (Partha Mitter 2008, 534)”.

Ironically, in the case of Pakistani modernism, the challenge for art historians and others is to question not only the prevalent homogenized Western canon of modernism, but also the simultaneous perception of it as an unoriginal transplant. Following Mitter’s suggestion to destabilize Western modernism’s hegemony, this paper will analyze Safdar’s work using the theoretical framework of postcolonial studies. Because Safdar created art during the Indian subcontinent’s postcolonial-era when Pakistan became a separate nation, the concept of *hybridity*, a term coined by Homi K. Bhabha, a notable English and American Literature scholar and Director of Harvard University’s Humanities Center, will be invoked as a diagnostic. For Bhabha, hybridity is a discourse that enables him to focus on the contrapuntal nature of cultural works in colonial and postcolonial contexts, which are critical in their impure appropriation of elements from mainstream and either subjugated or developing cultures, as is the case with Pakistan in its formative years (Homi K. Bhabha 1994). The notion of hybridity will enable this paper to undertake a postcolonial analysis of Safdar’s work in order to pinpoint the significance of his work and its special contribution to the initiation of Pakistan’s art history.

Background

Born in Gujarat, (now Pakistan) in 1924 to the middle-class family of Rabia Begum and Mohammad Ali, Safdar demonstrated from an early age an exceptional talent for drawing. Initially self-taught artist, he pursued an informal art education by copying reproductions of famous old and modern Western masters, which he found in his elder brother’s poster collection.

Safdar experienced a difficult childhood, occasioned by his father’s death when he was only two. His elder brother Barkat Ali, supported the family financially throughout Safdar’s early years. According to Safdar’s son Nasir Ali, his grandmother would tell him stories about his father’s passion for drawing. She described how Safdar, at the age of 13, would draw huge charcoal pictures of the neighborhood on the walls of his home. Due to grim financial circumstances, in 1940

Safdar had to move to Bombay at the age of 16 to make a living and to learn art. Safdar managed to meet Karachi-based artist Muhammad Turab (1907-77), who was working as a set designer in the Bombay film industry.³ Safdar used his proficient drawing skills to persuade Turab to employ him as a member of his set designers' team. He began to earn his livelihood by painting the backgrounds of the film sets in Bombay. Whenever his financial situation allowed, Safdar would take occasional art classes at Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art (famously known as the J.J. School of Arts). Later, Safdar worked on freelance projects, designing brochures and press layouts in addition to the film set designs he made for Turab. From 1944-1946, he received the commission to design decorations for the *All India Industrial Exhibition* in Karachi. During these same years, Safdar, along with several fellow artist friends, formed *The Muslim Art Sketch Club*, which many young commercial artists joined, including the most celebrated Indian/Qatari artist, Maqbool Fida Husain.⁴ At this time, Safdar established himself as a successful commercial artist. He lived well, traveled throughout India, and enjoyed becoming acquainted with its spectacular art and architecture. His visits to Ajanta, Ellora, and Elephanta sparked his great respect for traditional Indian painting, including the Mughal and Pahari Schools. Among Western artists, Safdar appreciated works by Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse, and Salvador Dalí, all of which were familiar to him from mass-media journals he had studied in his childhood (Anna Molka 1957).

Among the most important artists in the pre-partition India, Safdar admired the earlier landscape paintings of Krishana Howlaji Ara (1914-85), Syed Haider Raza (1922), and Sadanand K. Bakre (1920-2007), which he was able to see in the annual exhibition of paintings of the Bombay artists. He was also a great admirer of the Indian painters Kanu Desai (1907-1980) and Jamini Roy (1887-1972).

After the partition of India and Pakistan in August 1947, Safdar migrated to Pakistan to join his family in Lahore.⁵ He then moved to Karachi with his family to work in the film industry again. He was successful in securing contracts to decorate the interiors of cinema theaters such as Nishat, Nigar, and Nagina in Karachi. As these were difficult times, he tried to use his drafting skills in various other fields. He made perspective drawings and building designs for a construction

company and simultaneously worked for the advertising agency called “Kontakts” in 1951. Kontakts’s clientele included major Pakistani industries such as Bata Shoe Company, Lipton Tea, and General Motors (Molka 1957). Kontakts sent Safdar to Lahore in 1951, to open the art department of its new branch.

The Art Scene in Lahore

Because of its geographical location and rich history, Lahore had been the center of art and culture in West Pakistan for centuries.⁶ Hence, Safdar’s move to Lahore provided him opportunities for new and important artistic ventures. Later in 1952, besides successfully launching his own business with his friend Vivian Jacob, which they named SV Advertising Agency, he attached himself to a group of young artists in Lahore.⁷ These young artists regularly met at the Coffee House and the Pak Tea House, located at Mall road in Lahore. The Coffee House was the artists’ meeting place for informal yet meaningful discussions about the visual arts, while the Pak Tea House was the center of activities for Lahore’s justly famous literary circle of prominent writers and poets such as Sadaat Hassan Manto, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Intizar Husain, and Abdullah Hussain, who would gather there in the evening. At both places the young LAC painters participated in lively debates about the prevalent social, political, literary, and artistic affairs of their newly established country, as well as international issues.

With the end of the Colonial era in 1947, a new and exciting phase in the history of Pakistan began. It was a time of anticipation and flux. In 1951, Pakistan, only four-years-old, was still trying to construct its government and restructure its cities while establishing a distinct culture separate from India. These activities included reallocating migrants properties, reformulating new government institutions, the educational system, the economy, and other such social structures. The Pakistani government’s unspoken political agenda was to shed thousands of years of the history it had shared with India and to establish itself as a new Islamic Republic. During this time, in the field of fine arts, several different trends were developing. The pre-partition senior artists, Abdur Rahman Chughtai, Fyzee Rahamin, Anna Molka, and Ustad Allah Bux, already held prominent positions in the art scene of Pakistan with their respective Persian-Mughal, Bengal and European academic painting styles. These artists were creating art with Islamic

references to the glorious, pre-colonial past of the Mughals, as well as the pure, regional themes of Punjabi folklores. Rather than carrying any reference to Indian history, these subjects and themes were politically correct and benign, fitting the ideology of the nation-state of Pakistan.⁸ Among the younger generation, Zubeida Agha was the only artist at that time in West Pakistan whose training by an Italian war prisoner in Lahore, Mario Perlingieri, introduced her to the abstract art movements of the West.⁹ In East Pakistan, Zainul Abedin was well known for his minimal modernist pen and ink drawings.

In 1952, the painter Shakir Ali returned from the Europe after studying at the Slade School of Art, London (1946-49) and working at André Lhote's studio in Paris (1949-50). He settled in Lahore while taking a teaching position at the Mayo School of Arts in Lahore (presently The National College of Arts or NCA). Shakir's arrival in this city presented fresh ideas for young artists who were looking for new directions in their art practices commensurate with the new nation and its future. They wanted to introduce an innovative and distinct form of expression that would distinguish their work from the older generation of artists by using a modern visual language that was not limited by past Indian traditions, but instead engaged in dialogue with the modern art movements of the West. Their effort was to situate themselves in the larger art world that included Pakistan, the West, and Non-Western countries. According to Akbar Naqvi, scholar of history of art:

The Art Circle came into being because these artists wanted freedom to breathe and to do things beyond the range of Anna Molka, Chughtai, and Allah Baksh, the three icon of Lahore's art establishment. They wanted to go modern whether anyone liked it or not (Akbar Naqvi 1998, 270).

Shakir was the first artist of Pakistan to be formally trained in the West, therefore, had first-hand experience with the Western art movements. He was enthusiastic about stimulating discussions pertinent to Western artistic trends on his return to Pakistan. His presence, views, and steady encouragement helped catalyze the group of young artists and writers to form The Lahore Art Circle (LAC), which besides Shakir Ali, included artists: Ahmed Parvez (1926-1979), Ali Imam (1924-2002), Anwar Jalal Shemza (1928 -1985), Moyene Najmi (1926-1997), and Sheikh Safdar Ali. Later, several other artists joined the circle as

well¹⁰ and LAC became pivotal in Pakistan's modern art movement. LAC members had no first-hand exposure to Western art movements except for Shakir Ali. Therefore, they all relied on and gave deference to Shakir's views. LAC members were not only involved in debates and dialogue about visual arts, but they were also very interested in acquiring knowledge about literature and theories of various Western philosophers and poets. Shakir, himself, was a great admirer of Julius Fucik (a Czech Communist journalist) and would talk at great lengths about Rainer Maria Rilke's poetry. Such debates were very fruitful as they introduced the young LAC members to the ideas and issues of art in the West, thus encouraging and inspiring them to explore new directions in their own work by experimenting in their chosen media. Thus, each member of LAC invented his and her own syntax of modern art, and they collectively introduced a new wave of modern art in Pakistan.¹¹

Theoretical Framing

Before analyzing Safdar's work for a better understanding of what "Modernism" meant for this modernist artist, it will help to introduce some of hybridity's important concepts. Homi Bhabha, argues that the relationship between colonizer and colonized is much more complex because of ensuing ambivalent relationships between the two, culminating in dynamic interactive patterns that disrupt the clear divisions between them. Hybridity creates a third space, a place of liminality that is neither here nor fully there.¹² Therefore, the works of art produced in postcolonial societies are inherently hybrid, being both ambivalent and destabilizing in their ability to mimic aspects of the colonizer without being subsumed under this power's auspices. Bhabha further states that "ambivalence" refers to the ambiguous way in which colonizer and colonized regard one another. The colonizer often regards the colonized as both inferior yet exotically Other, while the colonized considers the colonizer as both 'enviable' and yet 'corrupt'. It is the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizers and colonized. This relationship is open ended because the colonized is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer.

In mimicry [one of hybridity's strategies], the colonizer compels the colonized to imitate them - to use their language, customs, religion,

schooling, and government. Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite (Homi K. Bhabha 1984, 126). Mimicry is thus the sign of a double articulation, a complex strategy of reform that appropriates the Other as its visualizing power (Bhabha 1994). Hybridity, in fact, creates a space that is the passage or the gap between the fixed identities of established binaries. Bhabha states:

It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of ourselves and others, and by exploring this 'third space' we may allude to the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves (Homi Bhabha 2003, 209).

In the case of the Indian subcontinent, the introduction of European academic style in the field of fine arts was imposed to inculcate a "good" taste among native artists, so that quality commodities were produced for the European market, and yet on close inspection, these so-called commodities did not entirely subscribe to market dictates since they are hybrid works reflecting certain aspects of dominant European styles while differing from the other at the same time. One such example is the development of company painting- a hybrid of Indian court painting and European academic naturalism that flourished in India from 1760-1860.¹³ This brief overview of hybridity, ambivalence, and mimicry is to provide the theoretical framework to analyze Safdar's work. Bill Ashcroft, professor of postcolonial studies and literary theory argues:

"It is not possible to return to or rediscover an absolute pre-colonial cultural purity, nor is it possible to create national and regional formations entirely independent of their historical position in the European colonial enterprise (Bill Ashcroft, Griffiths Gareth, and Helen Tiffin" 1989,196)

In the postcolonial time following the partition of 1947- it became evident for the Pakistani artists that the next stage in the development of the fine arts was to create a distinction in the use of visual vocabulary, style, and ideas that would resonate to the progressive prevalent time; a syntax compatible with the global art scene representing the newly established country. However, the artists must have realized that it was not possible to completely divorce the traces of Indian history and colonial experiences. Thus, the following analysis of Safdar's work represents just that struggle and experimentation to carry the two with

the adoption of new stylistic vocabulary.

Safdar's Work

Safdar's earlier landscape paintings from late 1940's are a mix of naturalist and abstract renderings. His picturesque landscapes appear to be mimetic in their use of color, but abstraction is evident in its various forms. His thick application of impasto oil paint on masonite testifies to his early childhood exposure to Vincent Van Gogh paintings.

Figure. 1

*Landscape. Early
1950's, Collection of
Lahore Museum*



The *Landscape* painting Figure 1, is an example of his earlier work that shows Safdar's self-taught artistic skills acquired from his own drawing and painting practice, as well as from his professional experience of designing film sets for Bombay Talkies before partition. His two-dimensional treatment of space in this painting renders the trees and mountains by fusing the two together. The mountains in the background are thickly outlined with a slightly darker color of the mountains, the impression of which seems to go straight through and over the trees in the foreground, hence flattening out the sense of perspective, and placing the mountains on the same visual plane as the trees. The proportion of the trees is either far too small or too tall considering the size and placement of the mountains, further denying the illusion of any kind of space altogether, as the various elements seems to be pasted together. The scene depicted appears to be naïve and

rendered from memory, thus denying the European academic painting style, which was in practice by Ustad Allah Bux, a renowned painter of Punjab in West Pakistan. The painting also does not conform to Abdur Rahman Chughtai's Mughal Persian stylistic tradition that was actually very popular in Pakistan after its establishment, as he rendered themes celebrating the Muslim's glorious past.¹⁴ Safdar's thick application of oil paint is similar to the post-impressionist painters of the West, as well as his use of masonite board and oil paints also reflects the adoption of the Western commodities.¹⁵ This particular representation dwells somewhere between the ideal and the familiar, in a sense that it is neither purely abstract nor realistic. Mitter argues that the Indian artists adopted the idiom of Western abstraction to challenge the traditional mimetic practices. He states:

"The language of modernism, signifying changes in artistic imperatives in a rapidly globalizing world, offered the Indian avant-garde a new visual means to challenge the previous artistic paradigm centering on mimetic representation" (Mitter 2008,40).

So was the case with Safdar, along with his other friends of LAC, explored the genre of *still life* in his experimental work to move away from his earlier mimetic practices. As a genre, *still life* does not exist in the history of Indian painting, but actually belongs to the Western painting tradition. For example, in Dutch still life painting of seventeenth century, the purpose of still life at that time was to depict the unprecedented prosperity and wealth brought to the Netherlands through the global trade of commodities from various colonies including the East India Company. According to art historian, Julie Hochstrasser:

"The genesis of Still-Life painting as an independent genre coincides in time and place with a key period in the birth of consumer society. Indeed the still life painting mirrored the general course of the Dutch prosperity" (Julie Hochstrasser 2007,1).

The genre of still life painting in the West, included: (1) *ontbijtjes* (breakfast pieces); (2) *banketjes* (banquet pieces) and sumptuous *pronkstilleven* (still lifes of display).¹⁶ The genre also demonstrated the technical virtuosity of the artist. Quite differently from Dutch still life painting, the nineteenth-century French artist, Paul Cézanne, painted still life objects to experiment with shape, color, and lighting. Dutch

Figure. 2

*Still Life, Early
1950's*

*Collection of Nasir
Ali*

painter, Vincent Van Gogh made paintings of sunflowers that demonstrated his dynamic brush strokes, thick and intense application of paint. In some cases still life paintings are also allegorical, denoting religious or quasi-religious narratives.



However, Safdar's borrowing of the still life genre from the Western tradition is very different, his painting has its own distinct character. It cannot be placed into any one of the aforementioned categories of the Western tradition of still life painting, because they neither display prosperity of trade commodities, virtuosity of painting perspectives, nor allegorical narrative. In Safdar's *Still life* painting (Figure 2), the picture plane is divided and subdivided in several different planes and spaces by geometric shapes with black outline. Safdar experiments with cubist sensibilities in which the still life does not show one perspective, but presents the objects from multiple perspectives. For instance, the strong black outlined plate with fish and two lemons shows the view from the top and sideways simultaneously. The two fish and two lemons placed in a round dish, on the right side of the painting, almost looks three dimensional with skillfully blended strokes of various tones of grey, yellow, and green, but the black outline immediately gives the objects a two-dimensional cutout shape, hence depriving the objects of depth and dimensionality. The carefully placed jug with a black designed neck on the left side of the painting appears to be painted from eye level as well as above eye level. The strokes of the brush sometimes seem to be following the round form of the jug, however, the handle is painted in flat patches. The black outline around the jug defines its shape thus flattening it too. In the center of the painting there is a framed image, the inside of which is painted with ambiguous abstract shapes that could be viewed as a human form, foliage or something else. Whatever the form may be, this part of the painting becomes charged as it contains the most dynamic abstract image in the composition, thus making it the focal point of the painting. The painting in totality looks like a scene

of an interior space. It may be a room, where all the objects are placed almost to the edge of a table—an awkward position. The window in the background highlights the foliage on the top right of the painting, which may be inside or outside. The leaves are carefully painted in an alternative dark and light pattern, not with any observation, but purely as an element of well-thought-out composition. This painting is one example of Safdar's work in which elements of design such as shape, line, and color are dominant. The thick outlines of objects in the painting resonate with the eastern stylistic tradition of Ajanta cave paintings, and traditional Japanese scroll paintings of Heian period, and 20th century paintings of Jamini Roy based on Bengali folk art. This is a typical example of Safdar's hybridization of the Eastern and the Western artistic sensibilities.

Safdar's restless artistic nature compelled him towards continuous experimentation in his work. Since he was a successful businessman, he was not risking his livelihood by relying on the sale of his artwork. His advertising career provided him the opportunity to experiment without any fear of financial failure. In fact his engagement and experience in commercial arts and acquisition of designing sensibilities played a vital role in his painterly endeavors that was continuously evolving through his rigorous experimentation with color, form, and texture. Safdar's experimentation with cubist approaches in his still life paintings further developed into introducing figure and grid into his work. The two motifs became interwoven, and his use of the grid became his signature style for the rest of his artistic career. In his *Untitled* painting from 1957 (Figure 3), the dominant feature is his use of an irregular grid pattern, which divides and re-divides the picture plane as seen in his earlier, experimental *Still life* painting (Figure 1). His use of simple circular, oval, rectangular, and square shapes create a pattern, which is further divided into sub-shapes, thereby making the grid more complicated.

Four mask-like portraits in the middle of the painting are enclosed in a frame within



Figure 3

Untitled, 1957

Collection of Mrs.
Hamida Salimullah
Khan

Figure. 4

Mother and Child,
1954

Collection of
Pakistan National
Council of Arts,
Islamabad

the larger picture plane. The three portraits, strongly outlined in black are in a frontal position, confronting the viewer; the fourth one is in profile as seen in the Mughal portraiture of Shah Jahan and ancient Egyptian wall paintings. The three portraits in the middle of the painting are abstract and rendered in basic shapes, which do not reference to any particular culture, but present a general rendering of “a face”. His use of simplified facial features here indicates his move away from his earlier traditional approach of rendering the figures as in (Figure 4, *Mother and Child*, 1954).¹⁷



This could also be understood as a transitory phase where Safdar is trying to find the balance between the Western syntax of abstraction and his earlier depiction of Indian figures. His use of blue-green colors in swatches is a clear reference to landscape, which he is using in an abstract manner in the background. This abstract background of landscape is probably coming from his *Landscape* painting (Figure 5), which he was painting simultaneously with the one analyzed above. The grid pattern in Figure 5 becomes stronger and more abstract and shows Safdar’s drastic shift from his idealist *Landscape* (Figure 1) rendering to a completely abstract landscape. The painting resembles as if it is an aerial landscape picture. The strong black outline divides the picture plane in an irregular grid pattern and the application of thick paint and dynamic brush strokes creates various textures that define the spaces. This grid-laid abstract landscape can also be seen in reference to the four- thousand-years-old grid planning of Indus Valley civilization, which is the proud inheritance of Indian subcontinent (Figure 6).

One of the most recognizable characteristics of Safdar’s work is his merger of grid, landscape, and figure into a unified composition. The *Untitled* (Figure 7) shows Safdar’s progression from somewhat comprehensible grid (*Landscape*, Figure 5) to a completely abstract composition. The background of the painting is painted in various tones of greens, which is then juxtaposed with a strong black, geometric,

grid-like structure. The female figure is entirely fused within the grid, making the lines and figures inseparable. A careful look at the painting reveals certain embellishments of a traditional, eastern female figure, such as the hint of a nose pin and earring on the right side of the painting. Considering this painting and its predecessors, Safdar's work exhibits a continuous quest to find a distinctive idiom, one that is neither completely Eastern nor Western, but instead a hybrid that reflects both. Although one may consider his use of the grid and abstract landscape coming from the Western modern art movements, Safdar's use of visual elements are specific to the Indic region, which grounds his work in the locality of Indian subcontinent. The use of geometric shapes and colors bear strong witness to Safdar's calculated sensibility of balance.

The last *Untitled* work (Figure 8) epitomizes Safdar's abstraction. The painting seems to embody essential abstract elements while shedding those that are unnecessary. The strong black outline from his previous work is absent in this painting. The picture plane is filled with various geometric and organic shapes, which join and overlap, creating more complicated shapes; some of them are recognizable but most of them are not. The switch of color between enclosed areas or shapes distinguishes them from each other. As such there is not a pattern in the repetition of colors, but, somehow, it is harmonious. A closer look at the painting reveals several abstract figures, which are



Figure. 5

Landscape, 1958

Collection of Mrs. Rehana Tafteeq



Figure. 6

Aerial View of Indus Valley

(Reproduction from *The Art and Architecture of Indian Subcontinent* by J.C Harle)



Figure. 7

Untitled, 1960's

Collection of Lahore Museum



Figure. 8

Untitled, Late 1960's

Collection of Lahore Museum

not readable at first glance due to the complicated juxtaposition and overlapping of various shapes. The image is ambiguous and intriguing as it reveals more on a closer reading of it.

Conclusion

Bill Ashcroft offers a valuable insight into the inherent hybridized phenomenon of postcolonialism. He argues:

“Postcolonial cultures are inevitably a hybridized phenomenon involving a dialectic relationship between the ‘grafted’ European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create an independent local identity” (Ashcroft, Gareth, and Tiffin 1989,195).

The analysis of Safdar’s work in this paper demonstrates his progression and development of a particular version of modern art, a hybrid localized version that was not a complete break from the past of Indian tradition, but a synthesis of various Western art movements and schools of thought, including abstraction, Cubism, *De Stijl*, and Post-Impressionism. Indeed Safdar’s specific syntax of modernism was different from prevalent and traditional art practices at that time, yet it was very much grounded in the locality of the Indian subcontinent. If his use of the grid comes from Piet Mondrian, and application of paint from Paul Cézanne, his use of the strong black outline and treatment of two-dimensional space must be attributed to the Eastern tradition of painting.¹⁸

Safdar is an intermediary figure, largely seen as a graphic designer of an advertising company, yet his serious engagement with modern art is an important contribution to the art history of Pakistan. His commitment to art is evident from his continuous experimentation, in the quest to find his own distinct style that persisted throughout his life. He never settled for one style over another and, instead, kept inventing new ways of exploring formal language of color, shape and form.¹⁹ He participated in the national and international art scene by exhibiting in several shows within Pakistan and around the world including São Paulo, England, and United States of America.

The author contends that although the Western art movements fascinated Safdar and he adopted visual elements from various art movements of the West, he invented a visual language of modern art

that was his own innovation and not a derivative. Instead of a reductive reading of Safdar's work as derivative of Western art movements; the concept of hybridity offers a critical lens to reexamine Safdar's work. The framework of hybridity is the most effective tool to challenge the hegemonic canon of Western modernism and "to fashion a more nuanced art histories, drawing on the richness of truly global experiences" (Mitter 2008, 541). Hybridity is represented not only in Safdar's work but also in his choice to simultaneously work in two disciplines, design and fine arts. Safdar's hybrid work in fact disrupts the universalizing notions of center and periphery, which occupies the Western canon of modern art movements.

Endnotes

1 Shakir Ali (1914-1975), Ali Imam (1924-2002), Moyene Najmi (1926-1997), Ahmed Pervez (1926-1979) and Anwar Jalal Shemza (1928 - 1985) founded the Lahore Art Circle, Later Mariam Habib, Razia Ferroz and other artists joined the group too.

2 Jalaluddin Ahmed in his book *Art In Pakistan* (1964, pp.111) references to Shakir Ali's earlier work carrying the invisible tag of "Imported from Europe". Akbar Naqvi, Ijaz Ul Hasan and Marcela Sirhandi also implicitly refer to the modernists work influenced by Western Modern art, but do not focus on what modernism meant in the context of Pakistan. *Ali Imam*, monograph by Marjorie Husain quotes Ali Imam "The British opened art schools in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, and Lahore and the concept of the nineteenth and twentieth century were forced on us. We were taken away from our roots and we began to look four thousand miles away and started emulating, mimicking western painters with the result that a complete new concept of painting was created, having certain elements of Rajasthani painting and the Jain or Gujarati painting style. Eventually in 1940s and 50s a complete breakthrough came and people like Husain, Raza, Souza, Gada and many others started painting in the style of western painters. Now when this western painting style took off, they started being patronized by the west, and in the subcontinent our own people started thinking we are doing tremendous art. Unfortunately painters like Souza, Hussain, Raza, Sadequain, Shemza and Shakir Ali are derivatives. pp. 67

3 Muhammad Turab was born in Hyderabad Deccan and learned painting from Ustad Mohammed Abdul Qayyum, famous for painting stage sets. He worked as a set designer in Bombay from 1924-47, till he migrated to Karachi Pakistan at the time of Independence. This information was provided to the author interviewed Nasir Ali, son of Safdar Ali on March 23, 2015 in Houston Texas.

4 In many of his exhibition catalogs and Anna Molka's Monograph, Sheikh Safadr has mentioned the formation of *The Muslim Art Sketch Club*. But the author was unable to find any reference outside the above mentioned. Anna Molka, "Monograph Number Seven," *Sheikh Safdar*, The Department of Fine Arts, University of the Punjab, Lahore, 1957, p. 10

5 Nasir Ali describes that his mother was already in Gujrat at the time of Partition. He also informed the author that Safdar did not go through the trauma of migration as other general public was walking on foot and taking train. He instead took a flight to Lahore.

6 Until 1971 Pakistan consisted of East Pakistan (today's Bangladesh and West Pakistan (today's Pakistan).

7 These young artists included Shakir Ali, Ali Imam, Moyene Najmi, Ahmed Pervez, and Anwar Jalal Shemza.

8 It was ideologically consistent with the nation-state agenda to promote an ideology that supported the two-nation theory at the basis of which Pakistan was established and to promote Islam as the state religion.

9 Agha received her initial training by B.C Sanyal and later Agha's brother Abdul Hamid Agha introduced her to Italian war prisoner Mario Perlingieri, a student of Pablo Picasso, who was based in the suburbs of Lahore. Perlingieri guided her concerns about form and structure, liberating her from her earlier academic training of painting.

10 Mariam Habib, Razia Ferroz, Ijaz ul Hassan, Hanif Ramay, Qutub Sheikh and Raheel Qutab also joined the art circle.

11 I use "new wave of modernism" because LAC is not the first ones to introduce modernism in Pakistan. Previously, the Indian subcontinent has a history of multiple modernisms in its artistic arena, which is perpetuated with the rise and fall of political and social conditions. (For further reading, see Geeta Kapur (2000). *When was Modernism*, India: Tulika)

12 Other scholars such as Ranajit Guha has also identified this third space. Gayteri Spivak quotes Guha, "While constructing the definition of the people proposes a dynamic stratification grid describing colonial social production at large. The third group on the list, the buffer group, as it were between the people and the great macro-structural dominant groups, is itself defined as a place of in-between-ess, what Derrida has described as an '*antre*'. (quoted in *Can a Subaltern speak?* : 79) See Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India." *Subaltern Studies I: Writing on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford. This is just a footnote, so not totally urgent now, but clarify the link between the institutional/political structures that Spivak addresses and the hybridity of works of art.

13 In the beginning of the early 19th century, the Tanjore Company artists realizing the British attraction to study the everyday life, scenery, religious rituals, celebrations, cast, costumes, flora and fauna, of India; started making small folios of Indian paintings that would depict British life in India or of Indian topographic, architectural, ethnographic and Natural History specimens. They began to use blank backgrounds with a somber color palette and a highly naturalistic, Europeanized renderings.

14 The Mughal Persian style was very much similar to the Bengal School Style which had been used in pre-partition India as a form of fine art- for anti-colonial resistance.

15 In general the use of oil paint in Indian subcontinent is attributed to Raja Ravi Varma's late 19th, century oil paintings. However, during the anti-colonial, *Swadeshi* movement (1905-1911, which was part of Independence movement) resisted the use of Western products. As a result of which Bengal School art movement came into being that was in against the European academic painting and condemned the use of oil and canvas. In fact, the local indigenous folk style of Kalighat painting with water-based gouache on paper was promoted.

16 Accessed Sep 22, 2015 fro <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/102380/paul-cezanne-still-life-with-apples-french-1893-1894/>

17 Author interviewed Nasir Ali (son of S. Safdar Ali) in Texas, March 2015. Nasir Ali shared pages from his personal diary from 1946 that showed his naturalist rendering of portraits.

18 Cezanne and Mondrian have also used the black outlines in their paintings, but the use of black outline in case of Safdar is exclusively attributed to the Eastern tradition because of the dominant traditional Indian paintings of Ajanta as well as Jamini Roys work that was very popular in pre-colonial India.

19 Nasir Ali described Safdar as a disciplined painter who would make time to work every evening after attending to his business and family affairs.

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