



RESEARCH PAPER

Form as Protest against an Enduring Legacy: A Postcolonial Reading of Khalid Iqbal's Painting

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates Khalid Iqbal's realist landscape paintings of rural Punjab and contextualize them with a comparative analysis of selected European artists, particularly Camille Pissarro, to consider forms of postcolonial resistance. Iqbal's realism in his landscapes counters modernist abstraction, revealing ecological and cultural realities and dissent against authoritarian censorship, highlighting the silenced experiences of rural Punjab. The study uses visual analysis and critical theory to interpret Iqbal's paintings as symbolic resistance sites, incorporating hybridity, subalternity, and cultural decolonization theories, and examining transhistorical cultural politics. Iqbal's realism critiques provincial decline, military authoritarianism, and cultural suppression, highlighting marginalized communities' everyday lives and psychological endurance. His work archives ecological and social memory, contrasting official histories. The study suggests re-examining Khalid Iqbal's art within global postcolonial and ecological art histories, highlighting its political significance and the potential for cultural preservation.

KEYWORDS Khalid Iqbal, Postcolonial Aesthetics, Landscape, Authoritarianism, Subaltern Resistance

Introduction

Artificial Art is an essential feature of society and serves as a form of communication, cultural mirror and authentic disposition. It beautifies, inspire and elevates, comforts and refreshes creative soul. Art has taken on the form of cinema and has emerged as the new tool of social commentary and activism, codding with mistreatment and dissent to a socio-political systems. But in places where control is concentrated and creative avoidance must take place, art has its own codes for evasiveness; we see this in Khalid Iqbal's landscapes that ultimately operated in a post-Independence Pakistan. Art: Art operates as a hobby and amusement in a leisure capacity as a distraction away from reality. In economic terms, it plays a major supporting role feeding the creative industries such as visual arts, performing arts, film, design and fashion to name but a few creating employment opportunities; for those who do not opt into formal employment e.g. freelancing or self-employment in this sector helps promote tourism and stimulate broader economic growth and development.

The brief of Khalid Iqbal (1929–2014) extensively admired as the pioneer of modern landscape painting in Pakistan was a turning point in Pakistani art. Unlike many of his peers that were either experimenting with abstraction, calligraphic modernism or global postmodern trends, Bhupen remained a loyal realist (Hasan, 1998). With his soft brushstrokes, pale colors, and airy depictions of Punjab's farmland area, Iqbal repeatedly highlighted the gentle rhythms of nature; leafless trees, overcast skies, mustard plants and agricultural scenes. In addition to the visual appeal of his art, often described in terms of its technical proficiency and aesthetic sophistication (Quddus, 2003), there are many values embedded. For example, his landscapes often imbued with the shades of misery and self-discipline reflect an understanding of some of Pakistan's post colonial realities that are further intensified by the prevalence of political, biological and cultural conflict.

The place of Iqbal's project relative to Pakistani authoritarian regimes, particularly General Zia-ul-Haq's dictatorship (1977—88), is critical to understanding his work. The Zia era - had been stamped with a mass censorship program, narrative regulation and Islamize programs that attempted fairly positively to control artistic and cultural expression (Jalal 1995; Sardar 1992). In that hostile complex of state repression as was the case with among others Australia during my youth, polemical art was definite target and artists developed strategies to navigate as far away from the edits as possible some remnant negativity. This emphasis on realism not political, at first glance far from by contrast abstraction or conceptual art or the miniature revival that many of his fellow artists were trying out somehow becomes even more critical to discussion of Iqbal. His thoughtful observation on wastelands and barren planes, empty skies and faded surfaces of Punjab's rural somnolence can be seen as a gentle declaration against the narratives that are imposed by the state equipment promoting narratives of progress, development, control and homogenisation.

This research locates Khalid Iqbal's work in the era of Zia-ul-Haq's authoritarian governance establishing that his landscapes function not as mere pastoral imagery but also function as subaltern memory banks and environmental registers. Seen through a post-colonial lens particularly in Bhabha's hybridity (1994), Gayatri Spivak's subalternity (1988) and Fanon's cultural deconstruction of colonialism (1961), Iqbal's work subtly but necessarily raises alternate counter-discourses to hierarchies of powers in which authoritarianism operate in the fashioning and appearance of feudal structures. As a result, his artwork is both an aesthetic commitment to nature and a metaphorical record of survival, resistance, and decolonization.

After independence 1947, when local identity had been attained for the newly formed country; which was not a goal to be achieved by the younger generation of artists, they had a new sense of freedom in the art world, a desire for adventure and experiment to meet the international standards. So, they left Abdur Rahman Chughtai, Allah Bakhsh, Sadequain, and Miniature Painters with their ambitions for national identity following their own choices. Ever since the development of photography, artists have tended to ignore the realistic aspects. To create sensational art, they sought to discover new techniques, disregarding the connection between visual experience and human inner feelings. While most contemporary painters in Lahore were breaking away from representational painting, there was an individualistic painter among the few notable exceptions who refused to be influenced by this trend, as the cosmopolitanism of the modern painters had been distasteful to them. They respected rusticity and a home-grown nationalism (Mukhtar 2001)

Iqbal's scholarship primarily focuses on aesthetics, neglecting postcolonial social and political aspects, leaving a significant gap in interpretation due to his landscape use as a response to contemporary events.

Between 1952 and 1990, there were authoritarian regimes, military law and cultural censorship that affected freedom of expression in Pakistan (Jalal, 1995). Iqbal's realism in documenting rural Punjab's everyday realities during this period exemplified an inactive resistance against militarisation, environmental squalor, and feudalism in Pakistan

(Quddus: 2003). Iqbal's landscapes, often seen as descriptive, serve as a record of silenced histories, challenge state narratives, and an apparatus of cultural survival, highlighting the importance of low-level resistance in art. drawing on Homi Bhabha's hybridity (1994), Gayatri Spivak's subaltern (1988) and Frantz Fanon's decolonization through culture (1961).

while European landscape painters like Pissarro have been analysed through Marxist and socio-political lenses (Herbert 1991), The study of Khalid Iqbal's art in global art histories lacks comprehensive analysis, focusing on his realism as an aesthetic and

political practice, and his landscapes as messages of postcolonial resistance and environmental awareness.

Khalid Iqbal, 1929 — 2014; has widely been acclaimed to be The Father of contemporary landscape painting in Pakistan; his technical virtuosity, silent adherence to realism and poetic portrayal of rural Punjab (Hasan 1998) Iqbal Iqbal's non-political work, despite being non-political, reflects resistance against militarisation, environmental squalor, and feudalism. His landscapes challenge state narratives and serve as coded messages against authoritarianism, valuing rusticity and home-grown nationalism (Mukhtar, 2001).

While Mirza (1997) and Hasan (1999) have documented Iqbal's biographical details, their analyses lack theoretical engagement with postcolonialism. Similarly, Masood's (2006) formalist reading overlooks the political dimensions this paper addresses. The most significant gap remains connecting Iqbal's practice to global discourses of postcolonial landscape representation, (Mathur, 2007) or Nalini Malani (Sutton, 2012).

Literature Review

Postcolonial scholarship has reviewed widely how the visual arts are implicated in various forms of resistance to colonial and neocolonial domination. Although Hashmi (1997) and Dadi (2010), in a Pakistani context, have looked at how modernism is transferred by Cold War geopolitics- landscape painting has been addressed within post-colonial frameworks. This gap requires revisiting Khalid Iqbal's work through three intersecting theoretical strands.

Postcolonial Aesthetics and Landscape Art

The representation of land in postcolonial art often represents what Said (1993) called "imaginative geographies" contested spaces where power and memory intersect. Mitchell's (2002) concept of "landscape as imperialism" proves particularly relevant to Iqbal's Punjab, where British canal colonies had literally reshaped the land. Iqbal's focus on marginal rural spaces reverberates Guha's (1983) secondary studies framework, which prioritizes "history from below" by documenting farmer experiences excluded from official narratives.

Recent scholarship by Mitter (2008) and Weheliye (2014) has expanded our understanding of how postcolonial artists employ realism. Where Mitter (2008) argues that "realism became a radical choice against modernist abstraction in decolonizing contexts" Weheliye's (2014) notion of "habeas viscus" the right to have one's body (and land) recognized - illuminates Iqbal's particular documentation of Punjab's environmental changes. This line up with Nixon's (2011) theory of "slow violence" where environmental squalor represents prolonged colonial outcome.

Art Under Authoritarian Regimes

The political function of art during Pakistan's military dictatorships has been analyzed by Ahmed (2013) and Akbar (2018). Ahmed's (2013) concept of "aesthetic dissent" explains how artists developed coded visual languages under Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization policies (1977-1988). Akbar's (2018) archival work reveals that "landscape painting was deliberately depoliticized in state exhibitions" making Iqbal's delicate critiques particularly significant.

Comparative studies provide useful frameworks. Ramazani's (2009) analysis of Iranian art under censorship demonstrates how "banal imagery could become politically charged" while Flores's (2015) work on Filipino modernism shows how "rural scenes

encoded anti-Marcos sentiment". These studies contextualize Iqbal's strategy of depicting seemingly apolitical rural subjects to bypass state censors.

Materiality and Postcolonial Resistance

The material aspects of Iqbal's practice demand attention. Thompson's (2017) theory of "palimpsestic memory" in postcolonial art explains Iqbal's layered brushwork as embodying historical deposit. His use of thin oil washes resonates with Yusoff's (2018) concept of "a geology of representation" where medium itself carries colonial histories of extraction.

Recent technical analyses by Khan (2021) of Iqbal's material choices reveal how he "modified British academic techniques using local pigments" enacting what Bhabha (1994) would call "colonial mimicry with subversive difference". This material hybridity complements Chakrabarty's (2000) notion of "provincializing Europe" through artistic practice.

This literature review demonstrates that while Pakistani modernism has been studied through postcolonial frameworks (Dadi, 2010; Kapur, 2000).

Post-postcolonialism and Khalid Iqbal's Landscapes

Khalid Iqbal's post-postcolonial works explore themes of ecology, silence, stamina, and transcultural resonance. These works are pushing against settled postcolonial interpretations and providing new, alternative interpretations. They affirm Iqbal's muted landscapes as dissent against authoritarian censorship and archives of ecological memory, addressing global anxieties about fragility and survival. Deriving mode of contemplative possibilities from landscape painting, the experience of Iqbal's work with transnational artists such as Camille Pissarro establish active landscapes that are decoupled from national borders, and resituate Iqbal's work against layered interpretations and subtle critiques of power, identity, and environment in the here and now.

Material and Methods

This qualitative and interpretive study will analyze and make theoretical interpretations of Khalid Iqbal's landscape paintings of rural Punjab. The analysis of the selected works will include formal analysis -considerations of color, composition, and subject matter- and the socio-political context of Zia-ul-Haq's regime (1977-1988). The study will be governed by postcolonial frameworks (Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 1988; Fanon, 1961/2004; Said, 1993, as well as examining contemporary post-postcolonial frameworks; Huggan, 2013; Lionnet, 2011, with an emphasis on ecological memory, silence, and transnational echoes). Further, comparative analysis will be drawn between Iqbal's realist landscapes and a politically inflected Impressionist treatment of landscape from Camille Pissarro to demonstrate how landscapes across very contrasting geographic and political contexts can be a means of soft dissent and resistance. Data sources consist of archival texts, critical texts, and critical contextualized analysis of paintings comprising a multi-disciplinary approach which will include art history, politics, and cultural studies.

Theoretical Framework: Postcolonial Aesthetics

Khalid Iqbal's work in a post-postcolonial framework, but needs to be distinguished.

Usually Postcolonial criticism focuses on (Bhabha, Spivak, Fanon) hybridity/cultural resistance/recovery of subaltern voices, although it may shift toward the questions of resistance to colonial power, Globalization and transnationalism. as well as ecological and

environmental concerns. Identity beyond nation-state boundaries. The resolve of neo-colonial structures after formal independence.

Today's when reread Iqbal's work in these contexts, does not only resist colonial/authoritarian authority but also **archives ecological memory** and reflects the **psychological impact of living in fragmented national narratives**. That allows a post-postcolonial interpretation.

For the first time in Pakistan's history, an eminent Painter, Khalid Iqbal, unveils the real picture of rural Punjab. His landscape painting is neither the cold, factual statement of Corot nor the sad, socially and morally significant views of farmers and farm life that Millet paints, nor is it the mysterious, imaginative, close-up views of interwoven branches and an otherworldly atmosphere

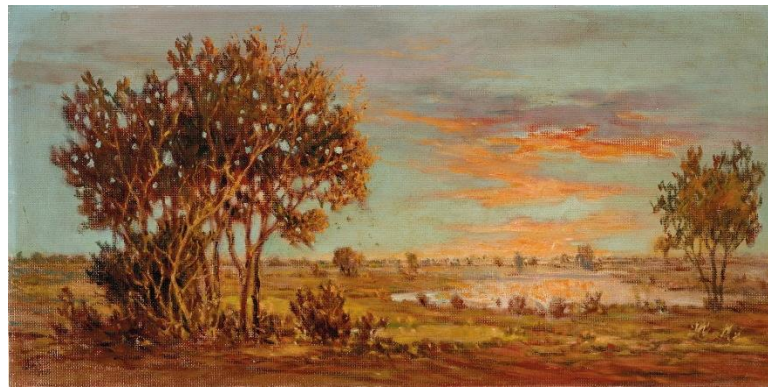


figure # 1

Ustad Allah Bukhsh, Landscape figure # 1 Untitled, Oil on board, 61.5 x 75.5cm, 1976.that Allah Bukhsh paints. Neither does he explore the world of dreams, fancy, and imagination in order to discover a new reality,



figure # 2

Abdur Rehman Chughtai, In the Rain, figure # 2 Etching on Paper, 16.8 x 19.6cm, 1976 as Abdur Rahman Chughtai does, nor does he experiment with the juxtaposition of thick layers of Impressionistic colours,

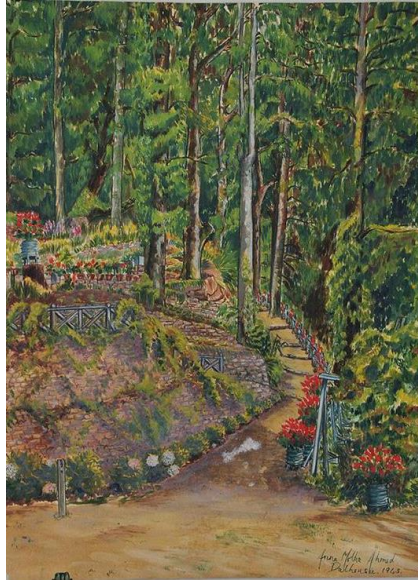


figure # 3

Anna Molika Ahmed, Landscape figure # 3 Untitled, Acrylic on Paper, 1968. as Anna Molka Ahmed does (Mukhtar 2001).

Landscape painting in Punjab, influenced by English tradition, became a link to rural sensibility. Khalid aimed to fill this gap by recording atmospheric history of a place. Rural areas in the vicinity of Lahore are places that have been depicted for their own sake for the first time, and it is the artist who can project the image of their country to the world better than the foreign office (Mukhtar 2001).

Subaltern Landscapes

Iqbal's focus on rural Punjab aligns with Spivak's "subaltern" (1988) the voiceless peasantry displaced by state narratives. His Landscape (1990), depicting a lone tree amid electric poles, mirrors Fanon's observation that colonialism "twists the very landscape" (Fanon, 1961). The barren fields symbolize what Said termed "geographies of silence" (1993), where land bears witness to unspoken trauma.

Hybridity as Resistance

Bhabha's hybridity (1994) explains Iqbal's fusion of British academic realism (from Slade School training) with Punjabi language. Unlike Allah Bakhsh's romanticism, Iqbal's Clothesline (1976) with its muted colonial-era architecture embodies the "ambivalence" (Bhabha, 1994) of postcolonial identity.

Ecological Imperialism

Rob Nixon's slow violence (2011) frames Iqbal's withered trees as casualties of postcolonial militarization. The brick kilns in Landscape (1984) critique resource extraction echoing Arundhati Roy's "capitalist imperialism" (2017).

Political Context: Art Under Authoritarianism

Cultural amnesia following the dictatorships, 1952–1990 in Pakistan (Ahmed, 2013). Here, Iqbal's rejection of a state-endorsed Islamic iconography (e.g. Sadequain's calligraphy) parallels Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o rejections of by "colonial linguistic hegemony"

(1986). *Misty Fields* (2008) captures that repression under Zia-ul-Haq's regime during 1977–1988, with his horizon lines stippled out.

Political and Social Context (1952–1990)

Post-Independence (1952-1990) in Pakistan, political chaos and limited artistic expression were evident due to military dictatorship. Cultural expression that undermined politics was strictly forbidden. The concept of Pakistani nationalism was enforced, encouraging artists to create art that instilled pride and identity. Islamic identity became more prominent, with many artists incorporating Islamic symbols and themes. The diverse regional cultures of Pakistan also influenced art, contributing to the development of a rich visual culture. The political atmosphere in Pakistan between 1952 and 1990 also heavily influenced the Art in the region. Under the influence of Censorship, nationalism, and regional influence, all played a significant role in the establishment of Art (Imran 2017).

It also frames Iqbal's realist portrayals of the rural Punjab landscape not only as an aesthetic medium but as a veiled socio-political commentary on the period of political repression under military and quasi-military rule and cultural censorship.

Picture on **postcolonial theory**, particularly the works of **Homi K. Bhabha** and **Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**, the paper argues that Iqbal's realist style functions as **form as protest against an enduring legacy** of colonial authority and its aftershocks. His landscapes, rather than offering passive visual pleasure, subtly negotiate the trauma and residue of colonial rule, engaging in a silent but potent counter-discourse.

At a time when contemporary artists were exploring abstraction and global modernist currents, Iqbal's devotion to realism and his interest in capturing the mundane the often ignored was something of a gentle dissent: of stillness, of desolation, and of endurance. This gentle dissent echoes **Bhabha's concept of hybridity**, where cultural forms take on subversive meanings in postcolonial contexts (Bhabha 112).

The paper explores how landscapes, in the works of Renoir and Pissarro, can convey philosophical and emotional truths, influenced by historical and cultural forces. It highlights Iqbal's realist mode as a protest against a legacy, highlighting resistance and resilience.

Furthermore, picture on **Spivak's notion of the "subaltern"**, the paper suggests that Iqbal's rural subjects—laborers, farmers, barren fields serve as visual proxies for the silenced majority, offering a layered engagement with the idea of nationhood and marginalized voices (Spivak 70).

Khalid Iqbal's work appears as a powerful amalgam of the visual record, national identity, and symbolic opposition, registering ecological as well as psychological aspects of life under authoritarian governance. In this sense, the visual form becomes a **form as protest against an enduring legacy**, offering not just memory and documentation but a space to **challenge authority and fuel hope** in the shadow of repression.

Khalid Iqbal seeks to depict dry trees, even bushels, and everyday scenes in a non-clichéd manner, under directives similar to those imposed during Martial Law in Pakistan. The credo might be exceeded, or it could be lost in translation, revealing itself only between the lines. Through drawing lifeless trees and bushes, the artist may symbolize the desolation and depletion that prevail under tyrannical rule. It could represent a lack of vitality, stagnation, and a distancing from freedom. In some ways, painting mundane scenes under constraints becomes Khalid's way of expressing hidden resistance and resilience. This could be interpreted as a reflection of the silent suffering of those living under Martial Law, who found beauty, hope, and meaning amid dullness and confinement.

Dry trees and seasoned bushes could be utilized to highlight the combination of the political damage and the environmental damage that conflict and repression cause. The artist may also be drawing our attention to how social unrest and oppressive measures harm the environment, causing ecological rape and depletion of food sources. The description of the withered trees and mundane locations may be perceived as a metaphor for the emotional and psychological effects on people's feelings under Martial Law. It could symbolize loneliness, oppression, and a feeling of being stuck or stagnant.

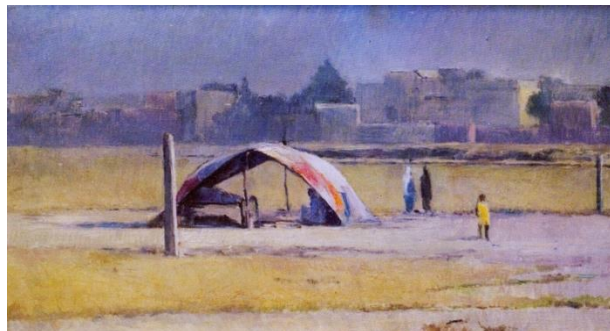
Khalid may very well be employing dry trees and bushes as symbols for wanting a fresh start and renewal. Perhaps it was to signify the desire for change, a brighter future, the strength of the human soul, no matter how difficult the situation.

The Role of Pakistani landscape painter Khalid Iqbal in Academia/Educationist

Khalid Iqbal was born in Shimla on June 23, 1929. He graduated from St Joseph's Academy (Massod 2006). Dhera Dun, Kashmir, in 1945. Soon after Partition, he joined the University of the Punjab, Lahore. He graduated in Economics and Political Science in 1948. He taught art at Aitchison College from 1949 to 1952. Later in 1952, he went to London to attend the Slade School of Fine Arts at University College, where he studied with William Coldstream (1908-1987). a member of the Euston Road Group who "avoided the mannerisms of modern art and painted everyday life with cool objectivity." After graduating, he returned to Lahore in 1955 and was appointed senior lecturer to the first group of male students at the Department of Fine Arts, University of the Punjab in 1956. He remained a teacher at the department from 1956 to 1965. In 1965, he joined the National College of Art (NCA) in Lahore and was promoted to acting principal in 1974 (Massod 2006). In 1979, Khalid, at his own insistence, returned to being a professor. He retired from NCA in 1981 but accepted the position of Professorship. He was awarded the Medal of Quaid-e- Azam in 1976 and the Pride of Performance in 1981. He was an active founding member of the Artists Association of the Punjab). Khalid Iqbal stands as the head of the Punjab Landscape School. He started this movement and became an inspiring force for the artists who came after him. Usually, he works with thin oil paint (sometimes only turpentine) but heavy brush strokes are also used as per requirement (Masood, 2006).

Khalid Iqbal as an Impressionist Pakistani Landscape Painter

In some ways, Khalid Iqbal was Pakistan's own Impressionist, a Pakistani Impressionist, localizing Impressionism taking it from being a transient, inward and politically decorative tool to introspective, domestic and politically relevant. Khalid Iqbal is often referred to as Pakistan's leading landscape painter, but he also has a sly Impressionist spin. Not a follower of their French Impressionist credo, Iqbal's subtle control of light, mood, and atmosphere is in sympathy to the aesthetic that inspired work by Camille Pissarro and others of his circle. And his landscapes, drawn from the everyday life of the countryside brick kilns, lines of trees, misty fields exhibit the Impressionists' fixation on the transitory.



Khalid Iqbal, figure # 4 Landscape, Oil on Board, 30 x 54cm, 1976.

But unlike Monet and Pissarro, who used loose brushstrokes and active colors to express the changing light, Iqbal chose a calm, technique-driven brush stroke, and warm, earthy colors. His practice lends itself to a far more introverted and meditative experience where the Impressionist tradition becomes a silent protest under the tyranny of a politically-mediated space. figure #4 Thus, making Khalid Iqbal not just a realist but a regional impressionist who altered the style to fit the socio-political context of Pakistan's Impressionism.

Analysis of Khalid Iqbal's Works: The Crucial Role of Light

Khalid Iqbal 1929-2005 was certainly the grandfather of our landscape painters. His mastery on the other hand to convey atmosphere, light, colour, & the majesty of seasonal and climactic change... nothing comes close. Answering the call for a so-called reality, and shooting mainly from within such doors, he committed himself to images that simply were – usually in non-places of the Punjab countryside. His attention to light, in all its manifestations, translated into singular moods: the chill of winter or sultriness of high summer; hardness or softness. He preserved the silent dignity of rural Punjab through this study (Hasan,1999). Iqbal, a renowned Pakistani landscape painter, excelled in capturing the atmosphere, light, color, and beauty of seasons and weather changes. He primarily studied rural Punjab, focusing on overlooked aspects, and his delicate light manipulation emotionally enriched his works. He captured the subdued grace of rural Punjab for posterity in this all-encompassing study (Hasan 1999).

Light and Atmosphere as Artistic Foundations

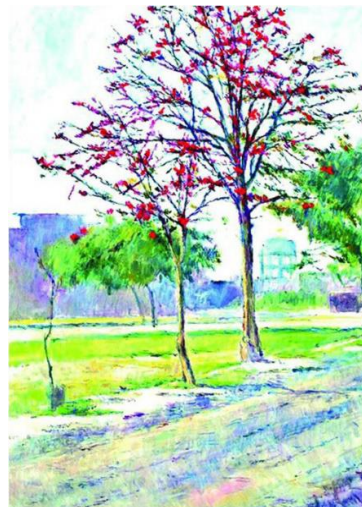
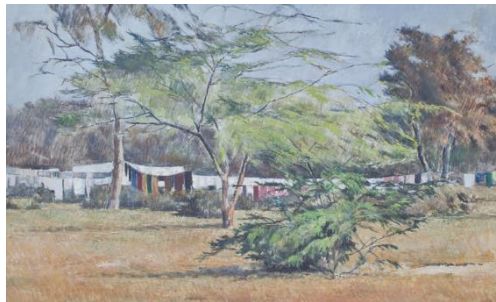


figure # 5

Growing up in Model Town, Lahore, Iqbal favored painting peaceful locations free from city life. He visited the same location daily and used light conditions to create scene moods. Iqbal demonstrated the interaction between climate and environment in remarkable ways, capturing the harsh midday heat and ethereal dawns. An early landscape by Creemade while studying at the Slade School of Fine Art (1953–55) also expressed a sensitivity to light, though without the refinement of his mature style (Hasan 1999). Iqbal, a renowned artist, painted in secluded areas in Model Town, Lahore, focusing on light as a character in his stories. He skillfully handled climate themes, such as the stifling midday sun and long shadows, and first light through mountain mist. Iqbal's early landscape painting, during his studies at the Slade School of Fine Art (1953-55), figure #5 showcases his mastery of light and its impact on his work, gives an early indication of this responsiveness to light, although not as acute and accomplished as it would become later on (Hasan 1999).

Early Work: Emerging Sensibilities

In these formative works, trees appear static, their foliage rendered almost as if printed by ink rather than painted in oils. Diagonal lines particularly in trees and fences dominate the composition. The sky receives minimal attention, as the artist's primary focus remains the landscape. While the use of perspective through lightened distant vistas is evident, the absence of his later meticulous treatment of foliage and nuanced light-handling is notable. figure # 6 Works such as *Clothesline* exemplify his ability to transform mundane rural scenes drying clothes strung between trees, or a fallen branch in the foreground into elements of socio-cultural memory (Hasan 1999).



Clothesline (1976) figure # 6

Mature Style: Minimalism, Realism, and Quiet Resistance

By the 1990s, Iqbal had refined his landscapes into quietly orchestrated compositions suggesting political undercurrents beneath all that landscape simplicity. *Landscape*, figure # 7 1990 oil on board No sign of human sustenance around this forlorn tree standing as the only feature in a shadowy field broken only by utility poles traveling overhead en route to an uncertain modernity. The colors in this palette are you know earthy or matted it is mainly for lower colors: a lighther brown faded yellow and mauve shadows. The light is soft, suggesting an overcast morning or evening; thin shadows imply that the piece has been cloaked in a gentle stillness. Yet the hush — and if there are no humans, the reminder of any humanity being absent from these vast plains of scrape ground is a tenacity, an act in defiance against normally assumed norms governing culture writ large. While his contemporaries across the beleaguered world enthusiastically entered an abstract cosmos, Iqbal's realism appeared to be almost a sober resistance, a form of archiving if that might hold an apology for reminding us how this land the size of half-a-dozen planets was coming apart as he painted.



Khalid Iqbal, Landscape, figure # 7 Oil on Board, 52 x 38cm, 1990.

Mastery of Reflection and Subtle Beauty

The timeline, preserved by the collector Dr. Munawar Ahmad, provides a significant insight into Iqbal's ongoing thematic and technical issues throughout his life. This kind of glory can be seen in numerous examples, including his marvelous affinity with the rendering of shimmering water figure # 8 (see for instance the 1982 Irrigation Channel and how the many layered reflections form with sunlight in the most exquisite way). In another instance, the same meticulous rendering of the reflected treeness transforms the ordinary into something that resembles metrical verse, as it shows a stream, with sagging banks, despite being divided in two. Even “aesthetic garbage” as in his 1992 photograph of a busted kiln and layers of slag takes on an epithetic quality layers of slag takes on an epithetic quality.



figure # 8

Late Works: Fog and Dissolution

As he aged, as in a canvas felt intentional for when he was nearly eighty years old (the 2008 canvas), Iqbal withdrew into the ambient elements of uncertainty figure # 9. Trees obscured by mist manifest as indistinct, vague shapes and color is washed down with white to dilate intensity. Forms blur as would when viewed under low-prism sunlight. This whimsical balance of hidden, and made; showcases an element of reflection towards transience in nature (Mirza 1997).



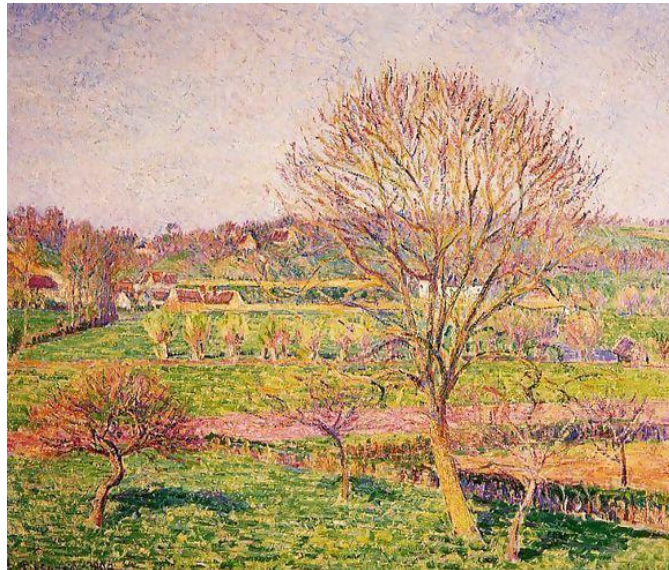
figure # 9

Khalid Iqbal accepted light as not just the aspect of representation, but also the simple existence of landscape. His paper, subdued in realist aspirations and yet nuanced with entirely romantic implications of the effects of atmosphere, turned the commonplace into the extraordinary; the fields and trees and sad old kilns were all sacred. His

photographs represent an aesthetic success and an archive of culture in silence that stands for the Punjab plains, changing yet unchanged.

Camille Pissarro was also a dedicated landscape painter of Neo-Impressionist

Camille Pissarro, a Danish-French Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist artist, was a dedicated landscape painter who believed in the benefits of close contact with nature for human health. He was fascinated by the impact of light and atmosphere on a landscape, figure # 10 particularly how these elements altered its colors and forms. By recording and painting these transformations, Pissarro sought to depict time-sensitive and impermanent natural phenomena (The Art Story Foundation 2023).



Camille Pissarro, Landscape figure # 10 Big Walnut Tree, Oil on Canvas, 1892.

Pissarro often painted views of the countryside, including scenes of farmland and small villages. He wished to film country life, the labor of peasants and plowmen, and man in abundance with nature. Pissarro's landscapes were an effort to capture the tranquility and simplicity of the life of the peasants who populated the backcountry. A leading light of the Impressionist movement, which upended the art world in the late 19th century, he created mythic tableaux and intense encounters that found new ways of combining people and places, gods and men, life and art. Impressionists were concerned with capturing the fleeting impression of a particular scene and how light, color, and the artist's imprint exited on a canvas. Pissarro had landscape painting, which was the perfect subject Matter to analyze and experiment with these techniques, which meant giving an interpretation based on his own personal and individualistic output. Pissarro's landscapes often had meaning and represented philosophical view: they embodied and did not merely represent reality, hence representing a radical turn from the conceptions of nature of his predecessors. He pondered nature as a metaphor of human life and the waxing and waning inherent to human life moving through life, growth, evolution and decay. Pissarro expresses in his art thoughts on the human condition, on the passage of time and the unity of all things (Britannica 2023).

Comparative Analysis: Camille Pissarro and Khalid Iqbal

While Pissarro's *Apple Tree* (1892) celebrates agrarian labor, Iqbal's *Landscape* (1990) mourns its displacement. Pissarro's anarchist vibrancy (Clark, 1999) contrasts with Iqbal's "passive resistance" (Nandy, 1983). Both, however, deploy landscapes to critique hegemony—Pissarro against industrialization, Iqbal against neocolonialism.

Despite different eras and locations, Camille Pissarro and Khalid Iqbal share an affinity for nature and rural life. Pissarro, a foundational figure in French Impressionism, often painted farmers and villages, using light and brushstroke to emphasize immediacy and impermanence. Similarly, Iqbal depicted village life with sincerity and depth, though with greater restraint and realism.



Camille Pissarro, Landscape figure # 11 Apple Tree in a Field, Oil on Canvas, 1892.

An apple orchard during the early spring. In the middle ground, a woman kneels in the grass, engaged in the activities of everyday rural life. The brushwork is short, evident and broken, typical for Impressionism. This style of brushwork results in a sparkling effect and reminds us of the play of light and life in the subject figure # 11. The layering of these colors results in the color palette of the land growing. The mixture of the colors gives the field the sensation of a sparkling, busy color. There is light everywhere in the painting, producing softened edges and emphasizing atmosphere rather than form. The pencil figure is a distinct lead and still second to nature but has a distinct energy of its own. Trees bend here, bend there, and even bend the other way, it has a sense of rhythm in the composition and a natural feeling of energy. Pissarro was very engaged representing rural working lives, but primarily, the human pyramid was always placed on the organic one. The agrarian aspects of human life are not romanticized in his work, but they are dignified and celebrated within the cyclical beauty of agrarian life. In this piece, check your vitals, the apple trees, which represent growth and ripeness, loom tall but bend gently, providing cues to both the endurance of nature and the fragility of human labor.

Painted in 1892, this too is quietly political. A radical and anarchist, Pissarro made use of the bucolic views herders and farmhouses, shimmering heat and glistening fields to quietly celebrate rural working-class life that he contrasted with the mechanization and industrial upset then altering the late 19th-century France.



Khalid Iqbal, Landscape figure # 12, Oil on Canvas, 61.5 x 75.5cm, 1990.

The scene is bathed in the light of a bright sun, under which the clothes are drying. The presence of clothes and wires has not spoiled the beauty of nature. We may accept them, as in our culture, we have so much evidence of such parts. The light of the sun has turned everything yellow, and even the sky has a little touch of it figure # 13. The sunlight creates a balance between the clothes and the sky. It provides perspective, as the part of the sky peeping out through the foliage recedes due to its color. If it were painted in more yellow or ochre tones, it might have merged with the foliage, and the sense of distance would have been lost. Upon examining this painting closely, we may notice some unnecessary greens at the edges of the branches. However, we must recognize that Khalid Iqbal has created a painting, not a photograph. So, the originality of the colours of the trees and the repetition of colors is acceptable. Also in 1976, he made a miniature painting of a gypsy encampment near the Ravi. This is one of the few paintings by Khalid to include human figures; we have also seen figures in a student's work from 1961 (Hasan 1999).

Khalid Iqbal and Camille Pissarro both Center their process on the rural landscape, but their methods and context stand in sharp contrast. The French Impressionist Pissarro captures the beauty of the fields in vivid oil paint accompanied by active brush strokes and depictions of rural work. In his 1892 painting of *Landscape, Apple Tree in a Field* we see an orchard with the bright green freshness of spring and warm light, punctuated by broken brush strokes and the presence of a working figure. This painting captures not only physical space for the viewer, it also captures ephemeral atmosphere an impressionistic quality. Pissarro's art privileges rural life as visually lush, and also socially relevant, in understated harmony with his anarchist tendencies: preoccupying himself with working class themes, and asserting the dignity of manual labor. Khalid Iqbal's painting of a Pakistani village, by contrast, does not celebrate or exclaim. His work has a preference for lackluster earth tones, much like the sun-bleached landscape of Punjab. The parts of Iqbal's picture in a background landscape are rime distant, quiet, unrecognizable, and thus the mood of the painting is contemplative. Where Pissarro's landscape is lively, Iqbal's is restrained and minimal, spacious. His brushstrokes are gentle and blended, and concentrated in light and atmospheric stillness, not so much movement or immediacy. In the post-colonial Pakistani context, Iqbal's art feels like it shuffles into a politics of refusal without raising its voice. At least his canvases are a preservation of the essence of local life and landscape, and in their very stillness quietly reflect a rejection of modernisation and political unrest. Ultimately, both painters engage in a reflection of rural places as meaningful, but where Pissarro confronts life and work, Iqbal confronts silence, experience and memory. Their differences in thinking are shaped not just by stylistic intention but histories of culture: Pissarro's rural experiences in late-19th century France and Iqbal's newly-formulated post-partition Pakistan (masood, 2006).

Discussion

Khalid Iqbal's lauded realism for its ability to scrutinize technique can only be contextualized within relation to Pakistan's authoritarian regimes, not least under General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988). His landscapes, as much as they appear distant from political references, performatively dramatize the need and means to survive - countering the state's official and propaganda rhetoric of progress and control. While complex, this layering of resistance is in pursuit of Homi Bhaba's concept of hybridity, where resistance signifies possible benign and nested meanings rather than overt claims. Iqbal's practice is different from the 'subaltern voice' Gayatri Spivak describes as a voice that can never vanish whilst it is being put to paper.

He located his realism in local soil literally whilst making a symbolic connection to Frantz Fanon's idea of cultural de-colonization. In his art, they have become followers to an aspect of beauty that becomes unsought by most people but has utility for Seher and Amna - interest in these forms rather than others has always had symptomatic meanings. Nostalgic memories can, perhaps only be resurrected, after they have been sufficiently de-composed.

Iqbal's landscapes can also be compared against the generalised space found in the paintings of European artists such as Camille Pissarro, which exposes landscape as a genre to read resistance through different cultural geographies and locations and timestamps where some movements are indebted more by historicisations although not equally.

Read through the contrapuntal lens that Edward Said proposes and Iqbal's works become parallel narratives, visual texts that store away the eclipsed memories of feudal oppression, ecological devastation and authoritarian neglect. The state tried to project an image of great stability and control over people but Iqbal's art humbly just recorded despair and resilience, encapsulating a history of resistance for the coming generations.

Conclusion

Thus, Iqbal's realism is a realism of survival or struggle and not escapist political naturalism. Khalid Iqbal has the same sense of how people in every class walk all over nature that Pissarro did. While Pissarro often show landscapes and rural subjects from a position of an Impressionism style view, Iqbal shows the natural settings on which his portraits depicting landscapes or parts of nature. In the process, they amplify brushwork and texture that expose them making thus visible their craft to deliver a sense of hand (not just mind) from the artist to viewer.

Khalid Iqbal Illustrates the realistic, mundane in his canvas. In his paintings, he seems to paint the things that are around him and schematize one concluded part of the ordinary. Critics have had good things to say about his body of work and fans expressing similar feelings.

The paintings of Khalid Iqbal are a single subject, revealing what is hidden, ignored or neglected. Strokes painting his observations turn normal places into something important, he reproduce what is often neglected. His realism is neither aesthetic, rather it is what can be described as "necropolitical documentation" and necessitates a postcolonial reading of Pakistani art history which de-centers the canonical narrative.

Both artists, as described above have characteristic style of their own and practice on different themes but either through individual personalized approach or the flavour of their social milieu and visual idiom they cultivate identity distinctly. For Iqbal, realism is not only a mode of aesthetics, but also "necropolitical documentation," which needs to be negotiated within a postcolonial framework of Pakistani art history where we are still constrained by the conventional narratives.

Recommendations.

The study suggests that Khalid Iqbal's work should be recast critically within wider global narratives of postcolonial and ecological art histories, to ensure that his understated yet powerful version of realism does not become confined to local or nationalist narratives. By situating his landscapes alongside transnational art histories - especially in relation to the Marxist-aligned Impressionism of Camille Pissarro - it can provide a basis to foreground art's ability to resist authoritarian narratives through acts of quiet endurance and ecological witnessing.

Moreover, recommend that future scholarship should consider where South Asian realism intersects with Western Impressionism, especially why both address marginalization, the everyday, and cultural memory. Such comparative studies will extend the critical language available to think about Iqbal's practice outside the binaries of tradition and modernity, and rehouse his work in a more dialogic and contrapuntal framework.

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