

Faiz Forever / Kanika Aurora



Gulon mein rang bhare

Baad-e-naubahaar chale

Chale bhi aao ki

Gulshan ka karobaar chale

Come bahaar or spring and we all end up quoting Faiz Ahmed Faiz conjuring up evocative and tantalizing images of a riot of flowers bursting with a million hues beseeching your beloved to come so the garden can get on with its business of blossoming.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz , the romantic, revolutionary poet extraordinaire was born in Sialkot a hundred and ten years ago on February 13th, 1911 . He shared his hometown with Pakistan's national poet, Allama Muhammad Iqbal.

Linguistically, and culturally he belonged to Urdu, but Faiz Saheb was also well-acquainted with Punjabi and English; he composed some poetry in Punjabi and earned a Master's degree in English literature as well as served as a lecturer of English and British Literature for a time at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Amritsar (in present-day Punjab, India). An uncle of mine was recently speaking about the junoon he caused when he came to visit.

Interestingly, during his time in Amritsar, Faiz also met his future wife Alys in 1938 at the house of a colleague at the college. Faiz and Alys shared the ideals of freedom and love for humanity and justice, and even though in some ways they had the opposing temperaments, they eventually fell in love. They married in Srinagar in October 1941 and their nikah was performed by Sher-i-Kashmir, Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, the leader of the National Conference. It is a little known fact that Alys had been christened Kulsoom, by Faiz's mother and 'Dast e Saba' which was written during his imprisonment with the above mentioned ghazal was dedicated to her making everyone wonder about the identity of this mystery woman.

Ishq dil mein rahe to rusva ho

Lab pe aye to raaz ho jaaye

Typical Faiz. Once an emotion or an idea is rendered into poetic expression, it perhaps acquires a multiplicity of meanings and gets shrouded in ambiguities,

During his lifetime, he was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature and even received the Lenin Peace Prize, awarded by the Soviet Union, in 1962. Posthumously, he was conferred his nation's highest civil award, Nishan-e-Imtiaz, in 1990 although during his lifetime he remained in conflict with the Pakistani government.

Faiz's early poems had been fairly conventional, romantic treatises on beauty and love, but while in Lahore he began to

expand into politics and community concerns. In 1942, he left teaching to join the British Indian Army, for which he received a British Empire Medal for his service during World War II. After the partition of India in 1947, Faiz resigned from the army and became the editor of The Pakistan Times, a socialist English-language newspaper.

Poetry has the ability to rouse and soothe, lull and awaken our weary souls. Faiz's poems especially, have a remarkable ability and the potential to transcend borders, religions, language and culture. They are an important thread that attempts to suture the hopes and beliefs of peace seeking souls of the sub-continent helping us imagine how to create new futures.

Yeh daagh daagh ujaalaa, yeh shab gazidaa seher
Woh intezaar tha jiska, yeh woh seher to nahin
Yeh woh seher to nahin, jis ki aarzoo lekar
Chale the yaar ki mil jaayegi kahin na kahin
Falak ke dasht mein taaron ki aakhri manzil
Kahin to hogaa shab-e-sust mauj ka saahil
Kahin to jaa ke rukega safinaa-e-gham-e-dil

These immortal lines expressed his anguish and dismay at the colossal cost the Indian subcontinent had to pay for freedom from the British Empire in 1947. The poem is entitled *Subh-e-Azaadi*.

This stained blemished light—this dawn
Surely this wasn't what we've all been longing for.
Not the morning we had set out to find
In the wilderness of the skies, the stars final resting place

Somewhere there was hope that weary waves will find their shore
Our sorrow laden ship would at last come home to anchor...
Faiz ended the poem with these lines:
Abhi giraani-e shab mein kami nahin aai

Nijaat -e-deeda o dil ki ghadi nahin aai
Chaley chalo ke wo manzil abhi nahin aai.

The Night's heaviness has not yet lessened
The moment of salvation for our hearts and eyes has not yet
arrived;
So let us go on, that destination is yet to come....

He was imprisoned twice (1951-1955, then for over 5 months in
1958-1959) for his support of leftist politics in Pakistan. He
eventually fled to Moscow and spent some of his last years in
Beirut.

Woh baat saaray fasanaay mein jis kaa zikr na tha...
Woh baat unko bahut na-gawar guzri hai...

In his poem Intesab, he writes:
Aaj ke naam
Aur Aaj ke gham ke naam
Aaj ka gham ki hai zindagi ke bhare gulistaan se khafaa
Zard patton ka ban
Zard patton ka ban jo mera desh hai
Dard ki anjuman jo mera desh hai

Let me write a poem for this day
This day and the anguish of this day
The sorrow that does not acknowledge life's beauty
For the wilderness of dying. dry leaves which is my homeland
For the carnival of suffering which is my homeland....

Some of his finest work, however was written during his
imprisonment.

"Aaj bazaar mein pa ba jaulan chalo" ("Let us walk with
fetters in the street") which has a rather fascinating
incident associated with it.

It is said that when Faiz was being taken from the jail in
Lahore, in chains, to a dentist's office in a horse cart
(tonga) through the familiar streets, people recognized him
and began following his tonga.

Chashm e nam jaan e shorida kaafi nahin
Tohmat e ishq e poshida kaafi nahin..
Tearful eyes and a restless soul are sadly not enough. Being
charged for concealing love is also not enough, he wrote.

Another glittering gem of a poem, Zindaan ki Ek Shaam has been
exquisitely translated by Agha Shahid Ali.

Shaam ke pecho-kham sitaron se
Zeena-zeena utar rahi hai raat
Yun saba paas se guzarti hai
Jaise keh di kisi ne pyaar ki baat.
Sahne-zindan ke be-vatan ashjar

Sar-nigun mahw hain banane mein
Daman-e-aasman pe naqsh-o-nigaar.
Shaan-e-baam par damakta hai
Meherban chandni ka dast-e-jameel
Khaak mein dhul gayi hai aab-e-nujoom
Noor mein dhul gaya hai arsh ka neel
Sabz goshon mein nil-gun saaye
Lahlahate hain jis tarah dil mein
Mauj-e-dard-e-firaq-e-yaar aaye.

Dil se paiham khayal kahta hai
Itni shireen hai zindagi is pal
Zulm ka zahar gholne wale
Kamran ho sakenge aaj na kal
Jalva gaah e-visaal ki shamein
Vo bujha bhi chuke agar to kya
Chand ko gul karen to hum jaane.

A Prison Evening trancreated by Agha Shahid Ali proceeds as
follows:

Stars spiral into the evening –
staircase the night descends –
and the wind comes near, then passes,
as though someone spoke of love.

In the courtyard, the trees are exiles
who keep themselves busy
embroidering the sky.

The roof shines; the moon
scatters light with generous hands;

the glory of the stars mingles with dust
and light polishes the blue sky silver.

In every corner shadows ebb and advance,
as though the heart were lifted

by a wave of separation.

This is the thought the heart returns to:
that life, in this moment, is sweet.

Let tyrants prepare their poisons,
they will never succeed.

They may snuff out the lamps
in the rooms of lovers,
but can they extinguish the moon?

“Going to Jail”, Faiz once famously said, “was like falling in
love once again”.

And lest we forget, very few poets express love in its myriad
mysterious, mystical and mesmerizing moods as Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

Raat yun dil mein teri khoyi hui yaad aayi
Jaise veerane mein chupke se bahaar aa jaaye
Jaise saharaon mein haule se chale baad e naseem

Jaise beemar ko bewajah qaraar aa jaaye

Translated by Vikram Seth it reads:

Last night your faded memory came to me
As in the wilderness spring comes quietly,
As, slowly, in the desert, moves the breeze,
As, to a sick man, without cause, comes peace.

Other iconic poems such as Raqib se, Rang Dil Ka Hai Mere and
Mujh se pehli si mohabbat Mere Mehboob na Maang have attained

almost cult status in the hearts and minds of his followers.

Faiz shall continue to be celebrated for his poetry, his ideology and his unmatched talent to include political and social issues within the traditional frameworks of ghazals and nazms brimming with passion and rebellion.

Words that can galvanize us into action and wake us up from our complacent stupor. Words matter. Words that ought to be spoken in defence of the downtrodden. Words that heal, words that nurture, words that continue to inspire and encourage us to speak up.

Bol ke Lab Azaad Hain Tere, said Faiz.

Speak up – for your lips are free!

Viva la Love. Viva La Revolution. Viva La Faiz.

The X factor of Installation Art/Archana Hebbar Colquhoun

Installation Art

I would like to quote from the **Tate glossary of art terms** a definition of **Installation Art**.

“Mixed-media constructions or assemblages usually designed for a specific place and for a temporary period of time”

This definition is broad, succinct and most suitably describes many of my installation works. One example is the **Altar**, an installation work in which I bring together paintings, sculptural works in wood and brass, bricks, and a temple bell that I displayed at a gallery in New Delhi, **as a single work**.



However, the presentation features of an art installation allow an artist to mix and match artworks and objects and present what might be a *hybrid collection* of works as **one homogenous whole**. The arrangement and display of the works and

objects are designed by the artist (not by a curator) and the completed assemblage would result in a new, **composite work** – an art installation bearing the name of the artist as its creator.

Installation art throws up rich and exciting possibilities for artistic expression.

I would like to present a descriptive analysis of the installation work titled **Altar**. The installation consists of four discrete components: the centrepiece; the pedestal; the paintings; and a temple bell.

The Centrepiece – a Torii gateway with Obstacles

The main component of the installation, **the centrepiece**, is a Torii gateway with chained objects suspended from the top-centre of the gateway; the objects acting as an obstacle to entry.



The main advantage of installation art is that an artist can create multiple works of “installation” using the same set of (art) objects by assembling them in different compositions and playing around with the placements of the objects. The

possibilities for innovation are virtually limitless. The centrepiece of the present installation consists of four detachable pieces: the Torii gateway and three small brass sculptures, connected by chains – acting as **an obstacle**.

The obstacle consists of one main part – a *Z-shaped form* and an auxiliary part – *two forms* resting on the base of the Torii gateway connected on either side by a chain to the suspended Z-shaped form. The *two forms* (not clearly seen in the featured photograph) are sculptural expressions of a slipper and a footprint in 3D form. The three forms (of a hand-held size) are in fact three independent sculptural works, which can be displayed individually or in combination with other related works.

[Note: I made a series of small sculptural works, cast in brass, all of which can be connected to one or more works, interchangeably, using chains. A discussion about these works would form the subject of a separate article.]

The Pedestal

The centrepiece, the Torii gateway, rests on a dry wall of bricks, within which is a niche acting as the sanctum sanctorum of a temple with an architectural feature of a step leading into the small, vertical hollow in the wall.



Sculptural works, unless very large, are always placed on a pedestal in a gallery setting. The use of a brick construction instead of a wooden pedestal box to display the Torii sculpture opens up the meaning of **the work** (consisting of the Torii and the brick wall) since the pedestal becomes a part of the work. The brick wall, on which the Torii gateway is placed, can be seen as depicting **sacred architecture that has a sculptural component**, the Torii. If the Torii was placed on a wooden display pedestal instead of a brick wall it would be seen as a (simple*) work of sculpture.

The brick wall plays a transformative role in terms of meaning and construction within the installation.

* I use the term “simple” not as a qualitative description of the art of sculpture but as a depth of vision employed in reading a work of art.

[Note: The bricks used in this installation are common burnt clay bricks made and used in India for constructing houses and other small buildings. The bricks are **backing bricks** (as opposed to **facing bricks** – used as a veneer) and they require rendering with mortar to hold them in place and need plastering once a wall is built.

The dry brick wall on which the centrepiece of the present installation rests can easily be taken down without damaging the bricks and the bricks put to use for which they were made originally. The bricks in the dry wall in the installation do not sit flush on and against each other as no mortar is used to build the wall.

Paintings of Torii gateways with Obstacles

I explored further the subject of the main (sculptural) component of the (Torii gateway) installation in paintings. The two paintings hanging on the wall, above the centrepiece, one to the left are from a series of paintings the idea for which came to me after I had done a body of Torii sculptural works. The paintings are of a slightly later date.



The main subject of the paintings is the two-part form of an "obstacle." Although the form of the Torii no longer appears in the paintings the top edge of the painting is suggestive of the existence of a Torii gateway.

The paintings are self-explanatory, except that they are titled "*Herbal Paintings*" – an entirely new category of works. As I continued to explore the theme of the "Torii with obstacles" in a 2D medium the principal focus of the works shifted to the pigments I chose to use in making the paintings. The subject matter of a Torii with obstacles that

was the source of the paintings became incidental to the painted works, a mere vestige of an earlier idea.

The pigments used in the paintings are turmeric, kumkum, henna, and kaajal (organic eyeliner paste).

[**Note:** Turmeric and the red kumkum powder are indispensable to any ritual performed in a temple, and are considered sacred.]

A Bronze Temple Bell

The presence of the temple bell in the installation not only points to another series of works titled “**Sound Sculptures**” but also transforms the meaning of the installation, just as the brick wall does.

Many of the small sculptural works described earlier in the essay (the obstacles in the Torii) are in fact examples of **sound sculptures**. When the original clay or plaster forms of the sculptural works were cast in brass I asked the artisan to place a tiny stone inside the hollow of the brass works so as to create a sound (as does a child’s rattle) when the object is picked up by a viewer for closer inspection.

The fact that these brass works incorporate the element of sound is not evident unless a viewer is already familiar with the works. The bell acts as a connecting thread to the sound element hidden in the brass sculptures.

The (hybrid) collection of works featured in the installation present a meaning that is *concentric*.

The temple bell with its definitive meaning provides a trajectory through which the viewer comes to see the installation as one that represents **sacred space**.

The temple bell and the bricks are two components of the installation that are obviously **not** made by me. This is one advantage of installation art where works and objects not made by the artist can be presented in a 3D assemblage along with

other works without the artist being accused of misappropriation.

There is no possibility of doubt in the viewer's mind as to the origin and identity of the temple bell and the utilitarian bricks, both of which are integral to the installation.

Conclusion

The works and objects of one installation can be presented in a different combination in another installation and context. In one installation the same set of objects can be displayed in a grouping that is intended to convey one primary meaning but when presented in a different combination (irrespective of the display space) the installation could express a statement that could not be read from a construction of an earlier installation, which consisted of the exact same set of objects.

For example, if the temple bell was not hung above the centrepiece but placed on the floor, upright or on its side, it would change the meaning of the work, almost entirely.

A number of other issues to be discussed and clarified with respect to this installation arise in my mind, although the essay has now come to its end.

No writing on an artwork can and will be conclusive.

The significance of props on stage

Andrew Sofer, in his book, "The Stage life of Props" says that, "the object must be seen as having a sign." The stage

props hence has a strong presence, sometimes as strong as the actor themselves. As Felix Bossonnet sees the props they are much more than the physical presence they hold. Props have to be read between the complex relationship between the actor the text and the audience. It provides a complete whole experience of transmission of the audience into the world of the “ play or krida”. As Sofer sees the distinctions between the props and the characters should become more and more blurred, it should be amalgamated as one whole. The responsibility of this hence is not just within the text but by the directors as well as the actors.

The Dig: A Review by Kanika Aurora

Not for the impatient, watch this movie for the lonely beauty of the blue skies, the nuanced, unhurried, sensitive performances, the appreciation of a collective legacy as well reaffirming your belief that Life is Continuous and “it speaks, the past.”

**Torii gateways and
shadows/Archana Hebbar**

Colquhoun

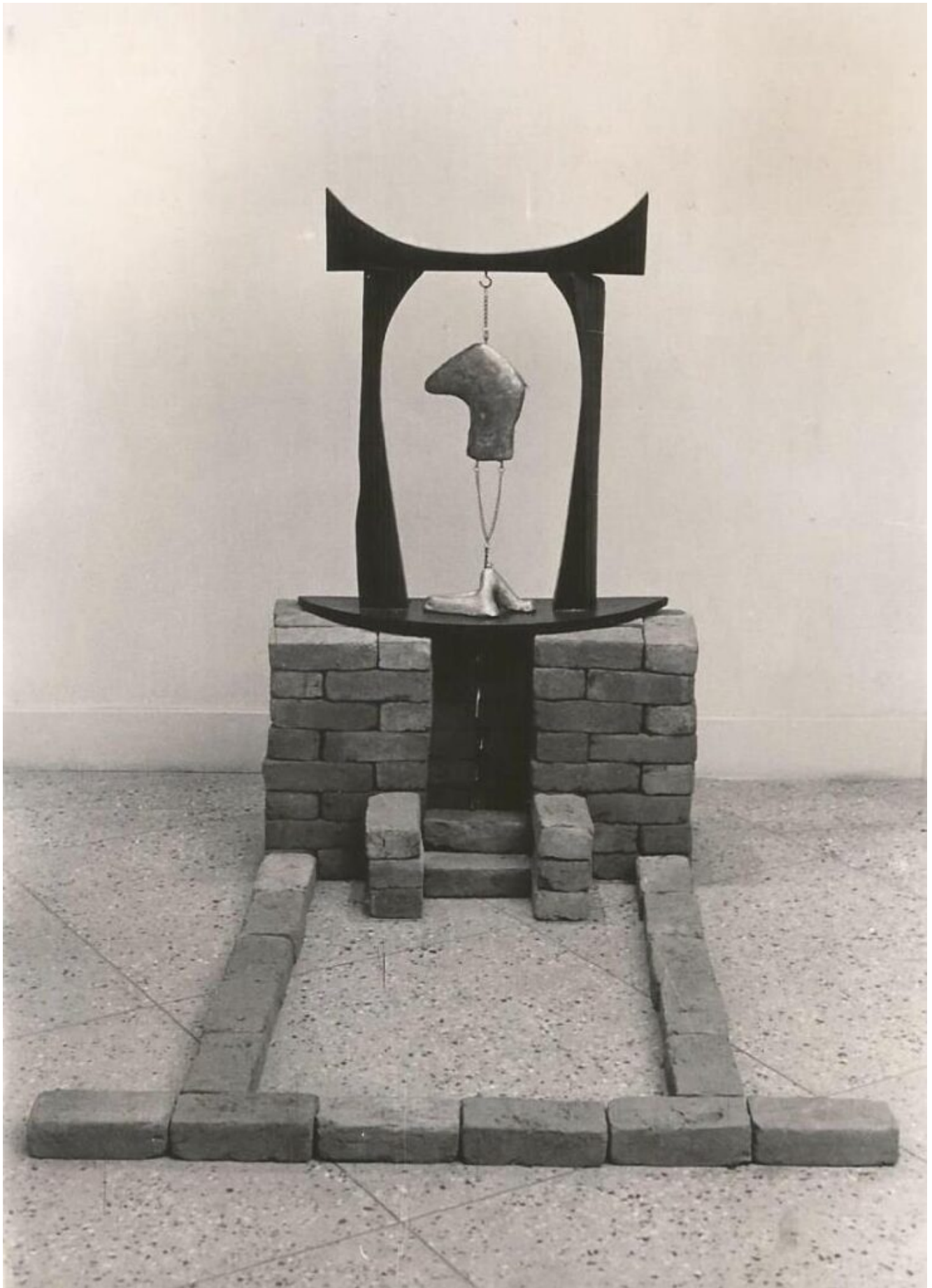
Depicting the ephemeral shadow through three-dimensional form – Torii sculptures and Installations

Innovations in visual language that surfaced from my subconscious, which I discuss in this write-up relate to the play of light and shadows. In two-dimensional artworks, we can see how shadows are painted and how they form an integral part of the composition of the work. Pigments are used to delineate the space occupied by the shadow and the presence of the shadow in an artwork is invested with special meaning; namely, the dark shadow self lurking within and around an entity.

I was curious to find newer methods to depict a shadow using three dimensional form, by placing objects that have formal resemblance to the main object in the work in arrangements that are both playful as well as carefully considered so as to act as a novel visual device.

Below are two works of Torii installations in which I have tried to demonstrate alternative ways of depicting shadows.

Torii with a line of bricks constituting a shadow



When in the presence of light each solid object throws out a shadow.

The shadow is just a visual echo of the object and represents only the outer boundary of the form of the object. Within the flat, linear shape of the shadow no formal details are seen of the actual object.

The shadow is errant by its very nature. Presenting an object as a simple outline the shadow entirely erases the object's rich surface content and replaces the textures of the object by the texture of the ground on which the shadow falls.

Torii sculpture displayed in a tent with a framed drawing acting as a shadow of the Torii sculpture



In each of the two works of the Torii gateway (shown above) the capricious shadow is embodied in material form. In one work the shadow is represented as a line of bricks imitating the form of the Torii displayed on a dry wall of bricks and in the other work (displayed inside a tent) the shadow is a framed drawing of a Torii lying flat on the floor, face up, at the foot of the tori sculpture. The shadows of the tori gateways in both works deviate from the form of the actual art object.

A shadow is an illusion with a life form of its own.