

# 1 Art and Artist in Asif Currimbhoy's Thorns on a Canvas

2 Anshika<sup>1</sup>

3 <sup>1</sup> PDM College of Engineering, Bahadurgarh, Haryana, 124507

4 *Received: 12 December 2012 Accepted: 3 January 2013 Published: 15 January 2013*

5

---

## 6 **Abstract**

7 In this play Thorns on a Canvas Asif Currimbhoy tries to show the relationship between an  
8 elite patron of the Art academy and the poor artists like Yakoob and Nafisa. He also depicts  
9 the pathetic condition of the artists, especially of those who are true and honest in their work.  
10 Through some characters he reveals the same. He has also written about the Art academies  
11 which are alike a shop now a day. Through this play he shows the relationship is a variation of  
12 colonizers/ colonized syndrome.

13

---

14 **Index terms**— art and artist.

## 15 **1 Introduction**

16 The present play Thorns on a canvas is a reaction against the banning of the play The Doldrums. This play  
17 is a satire on Art academies, which were basically established by the government support, nurture and promote  
18 real artists but these art academies have become the centre of favouritism, nepotism and corruption.

19 The Patrons of the Art academies themselves do not have the knowledge of art. They are appointed as Patron  
20 on the basis of their political contacts. They have not even touch the surface of the art.

21 In this play the Patron of the Art academy, where the action is centered, is an old leader wearing Gandhi cap  
22 and who is terribly short sighted. He thinks that he is the Badshah of the Art academy who doles out charity  
23 to those artists who obey his will and those who have become his slaves. He himself describes the method of  
24 subduing the artists.

25 Bukay is one of those artists who have been trained like a dog by the patron. Having lost his artistic soul  
26 he works as a secretary to the Patron of society. He is mechanical like a robot, totally under the control of the  
27 Patron. But these fake artists are conferred medals and honors. He shows the medal and says; " Ah! Don't they  
28 glitter like diamonds? This one is Padma Shri award, and here the Sangeet Natak award... this one came from  
29 Sahitya Academe and... and that one was given by the lalit Kala Academic..." (30-31).

30 Another important aspect of the play is favouritism. Malti, the daughter of the Patron. She is being offered a  
31 tour. No doubt her paintings are technically correct but they lack soul and life. The Patron arranged exhibition  
32 for her with the help of Bukay both of them are commercially political:

33 The exhibition, set for January the 10th, a propitious day for travel, marriage and money will be inaugurated  
34 by the minister of culture and cultural affairs. After seven minutes of fruit juice drinks and several toasts, he  
35 will introduce. His excellency, the Ambassador from France who will speak of your daughter's many splendored  
36 careers at the Ecole de Beaux Arts. The occasion will be graced by dignitaries from all walks of life. There will  
37 be congress men, patrons, critics, editors, art-dealers and the...The twenty families... ( ??7).

38 Asif Currimbhoy spots at the way in which these types of art exhibitions are organized. He also spots at the  
39 commercial purpose of these exhibitions. These exhibitions generally have the high society people and cocktail.  
40 He says these Art exhibitions help the Patrons to make their contacts with politicians. The influential people,  
41 who hardly understand the Art, take the honours of Art academies also have been exposed by Currimbhoy. It  
42 raves falsity, fakery and ignorance Art.

43 Asif Currimbhoy highlights in this play, the very ignorance of patron towards art and artists. Currimbhoy  
44 reveals the patron's ignorance when he praises Malti's paintings unknowingly and says that she produces different  
45 kinds of paintings and many paintings.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

---

46 Yakub watches all this show and knows the real purpose of these exhibitions. He accuses the establishment of  
47 not recognizing his talent because he did not sell his soul to the devils of the establishment of the Art academy.  
48 He says;

49 Come! Come with me. Come to where Art speaks for itself. Where it is not wound like a mechanical clock  
50 nor dances like a puppet on strings... I'll show you cooler and line... forms that betray truth... for master pieces  
51 can only be fashioned... within themselves!(47).

52 Role of the Art critics is also satirized by Currimbhoy. According to Currimbhoy, they also possess shallow  
53 knowledge of Art but try to show off their knowledge. The critic's thinking is very important because he can  
54 make or mar an Artist's career through his criticism. Interestingly enough the (father) patron drops indirect  
55 hints of his close connection with the crop writers of the Art magazine for which he works just to influence him.

56 The way he starts trembling like a dry leaf just on the mention of the name of crop writer is ironic. Yakub  
57 exposes the real meaning of Art and the kind of Art which these Art academies serve:

58 Art for the sake of saints above art for the sake of sinners below act for the sake of... sweet fanny Adams act  
59 for the sake of the beauteous virgin. Act for the social security act for the she of posthumous fame act for the  
60 sake of grandiose uniformity. ??46) But in his Art of Arts Malti can still be saved from the clutches of the devils,  
61 she has a pure heart full of true feelings. Yakub drags Malti to teach her what real Art constitutes.

62 "Yakub almost drags Malti into a sort of nether world to obtain of and show her the true definition of art.  
63 This is the world of reality."(48).

64 The place where he takes Malti is the world of poverty squalor, dirt and disease. This world, however, ugly it  
65 may seem to Malti, who has never experienced this kind of world is the place where true Artists grow. Because  
66 according to Yakub, and suffering constitute the very basics of Arts. Here, there is an old man playing music on  
67 an empty cistern, and Hunk dancing beautifully. In such an atmosphere, Yakub the real Artist cannot control  
68 his feelings and emotions and starts singing in his own way. He sings as artistically as does a Nightingale late  
69 into the night. Besides being a protest against the mindless censoring of works of Art by the establishment. The  
70 play is a clear statement of Asif Currimbhoy's artistic vision. He is against all kind of fakery and artificiality in  
the realm of Art. The play diagnoses the ills afflicting the world of Art in India.

Figure 1:

---

72 [Currimbhoy ()] *Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop*, Asif Currimbhoy . 1962. p. . (Print)

73 [Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop ()] *Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop*, 1962. p. 27. (Print)

74 [Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop ()] *Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop*, 1962. p. 47. (Print)

75 [Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop ()] *Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop*, 1962. 46. (Print)

76 [Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop ()] *Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop*, 1962. p. 48. (Print)

77 [Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop ()] *Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop*, 1962. 56. (Print)

78 [Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop ()] *Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop*, 1962. p. 60. (Print)

79 [Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop ()] *Thorns on a Canvas: Writers Workshop*, 1962. p. 68. (Print)