

# Pearl Lam Galleries

Hong Kong SOHO

Bread, Circuses & WiFi

THUKRAL & TAGRA solo exhibition

Exhibition Dates 21 March–28 April, 2017 Monday–Saturday, noon–7pm; Sunday, noon–5pm

Extended Hours 21–25 March, 9am–9pm

Venue Pearl Lam Galleries Hong Kong SOHO  
No. 1, G/F & 1/F, SOHO 189, 189 Queen's Road West, Sheung Wan

Hong Kong—Pearl Lam Galleries is pleased to present *Bread, Circuses & WiFi*, an exhibition by Indian artist duo Thukral & Tagra. Jiten Thukral and Sumir Tagra work collaboratively in a wide variety of media; they blur the lines between fine art and popular culture, product placement and exhibition design, as well as artistic inspiration and media hype.

“Bread and Circuses”, aka “panem et circuses”, refers to the Roman practice of providing free wheat to Roman citizens as well as spectacular games and other forms of entertainment as a strategy for sustaining the political power of the empire. Appropriating this logic to critique the new cultural economy, Thukral & Tagra probe the very authority that curates art in spectacular and repeated regular intervals, reviewing the profundity of the world in a discursive manner.

In this exhibition, Thukral & Tagra present a contradictory situation for us to reflect on politics through spectatorship and to contemplate the issue of survival in a cultural economy that is endowed with symbols, idioms, and ideas. *Bread* is a form of sustenance and in this context implies that the material culture of art is a way of surviving in the new economy. *Circus* alludes to the use of entertainment as a delay tactic for dealing with politics or initiating social changes. The artists claim: “The environment we live in distracts us by performing routines and we are very engrossed in these distractions. The more engrossed we get, the less we care about what the state does in our name.” Applying this to the art world, the staging of spectacular exhibitions and events is intended to offer perpetual entertainment in order to satisfy our curiosity and consumerist desire. *WiFi* refers to a closed and ubiquitous network of people and relationships connected in a dematerialised manner; it also suggests a hierarchical relationship between content and object, and it holds the ideas of survival and the circus together. Using satire and self-mockery, Thukral & Tagra question the notion of survival and expose our ignorance with an authoritarian, knowledge-based economy. By showing a collection of paintings, performance, objects, and games as an installation, this exhibition not only simulates the logic of cultural production, but, more importantly, it engages the public with a performance to propose new alternatives through a diversion from the immediate.

*Baker's Dozen* showcases a series of paintings simulating slices of bread, each representing a phenomenon or object including luxury, masonry and stone mining, technology, fishing, power, transportation, lumber, and grain. *Dominus Aeris* is a series of paintings that presents a dystopian vision of a new native land as articulated by someone living in a diaspora. *Ball Centre* is a real-time performance whereby hundreds of ping-pong balls are fired by a table tennis cannon in a closed interior resembling an Indian call centre. Poking fun at the artists' identity as a service provider, a performer will be answering phone calls via WiFi from audiences, asking the audiences a series of questions related to the issues of hierarchy and power.

As an antidote to *Ball Centre*, *Out of Play* is a series of ball sculptures made with cement, resin and grains that allude to solidarity. This artwork takes reference from the recent protest against the episode of demonetisation in India and explores how this has affected the livelihood of the subaltern class and their survival. This playful work subverts materiality and raises questions about daily survival in today's world, which is constantly changing. *Bread Winner* is an interactive board game with logical rules, which the audience can play. The game encourages people to question the forms of sustenance in their everyday lives and how these things connect every living thing in the universe.

## About Thukral & Tagra

Jiten Thukral (b. 1976, Jalandhar, Punjab, India) and Sumir Tagra (b. 1979, New Delhi, India) are based in Gurgaon, Haryana, a suburb of New Delhi. They work collaboratively in a wide variety of media including painting, sculpture, installation, film, and design.

Thukral & Tagra blur the lines between fine art and popular culture, product placement and exhibition design, as well as artistic inspiration and media hype. With playfulness and humour, their works comment on the globalisation of consumer culture and its repercussions, which are being experienced in India today. They pose thoughtful questions about the nature of Indian identity as articulated by Indians themselves and projected onto India by the rest of the world.

Thukral & Tagra have worked together since 2003 and have held solo exhibitions all over the world, including in Singapore, Japan, Korea, China, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria, and more. Their works have been included in group exhibitions on multiple international platforms such as Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, UCCA Beijing, Lyon Museum of Contemporary Art in France, Pompidou Centre Paris, Arken Museum in Copenhagen, Helsinki Art Museum Tennis Palace in Finland, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in the USA, Nature Morte in Berlin, among many others. Their numerous awards include Creative Minds of the Year, GQ Man of the Year, and 101 Emerging Designers of the World.

## About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. With over 20 years of experience exhibiting Asian and Western art and design, it is one of the leading and most established contemporary art galleries to be launched out of China.

Playing a vital role in stimulating international dialogue on Chinese and Asian contemporary art, the Galleries is dedicated to championing artists who re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice from the region. The Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore collaborate with renowned curators, each presenting distinct programming from major solo exhibitions, special projects, and installations to conceptually rigorous group shows. Based on the philosophy of Chinese Literati where art forms have no hierarchy, Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to breaking down boundaries between different disciplines, with a unique gallery model committed to encouraging cross-cultural exchange.

The four branches of Pearl Lam Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore represent an increasingly influential roster of contemporary artists. Chinese artists Zhu Jinshi and Su Xiaobai, who synthesise Chinese sensibilities with an international visual language, are presented internationally with work now included in major private and public collections worldwide. The Galleries has also introduced leading international artists, such as Jenny Holzer, Leonardo Drew, Carlos Rolón/Dzine and Yinka Shonibare MBE, to markets in the region, providing opportunities for new audiences in Asia to encounter their work. Pearl Lam Galleries encourages international artists to create new work which engages specifically with the region, collaborating to produce thought-provoking, culturally relevant work.

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## Press Enquiries

Oliver Giles / SUTTON  
[oliver@suttonpr.com](mailto:oliver@suttonpr.com) / +852 2528 0792

Doris Chui / Pearl Lam Galleries (Hong Kong SOHO)  
[doris@pearllamgalleries.com](mailto:doris@pearllamgalleries.com) / +852 2857 1328