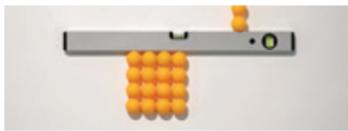


Games People Play is conceived as a playtest — an open invitation for audiences to take part in an exhibition that expands the meaning of games from the artists' perspective, asking who makes



the rules and how we come to understand them within the complexities of the world today. Through works that implicate viewers as both participants and observers.



Venue
Lalit Kala Akademi,
New Delhi

Thukral and Tagra

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY⁰²



Ten days intertwined,
works and emotions shifting
an exhibition.

October 2025

- 07 Vulnerability
- 08 Anxiety
- 09 Belief
- 10 Speculation
- 11 Reverie
- 12 Conjecture
- 13 Adaptivity
- 14 Hope
- 15 Resilience
- 16 Care

and to believe on uncertain grounds.

Thukral and Tagra explore the idea of play as a psychological, social, political, and internal condition shaped by the anxieties of our present moment. Their practice over these two decades has engaged with questions of migration, displacement, and ephemerality through painting, archiving, gaming, and publishing.

Games People Play⁰² at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, is conceived as a playtest in exhibition-making, a curatorial gameboard that unfolds over ten days through ten works. Each day activates a new state, whether emotional (**vulnerability, anxiety, hope, reverie**) or structural/mental (**belief, speculation, conjecture, adaptivity, resilience, care**).

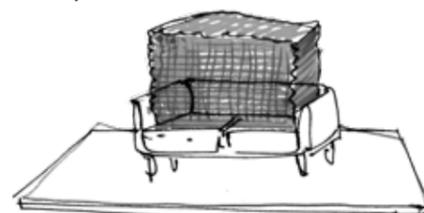
Together, they create a shifting map where artworks are not static objects but move in play, growing with each

day and transforming the rhythm of the exhibition. Visitors are invited to navigate this evolving field, testing how feelings and processes shape one another and how, in turn, we shape the rules of the game.

The first iteration, presented in 2015 at Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Mumbai, was conceived as an institute-as-arena for cultural reflexes, a lens to observe how we perform, negotiate, and perceive cultural matters.

Thukral and Tagra stage new situations by drawing on strategies of relational art: a participatory format of public engagement. Within this space, the viewers are invited to bring forth their hate and redeem it as acts of care. The familiar game of ping pong is transformed from a pastime of competition to a site of reflection.

Another work, 'Assets and Liabilities', reconfigures demonetised Indian currency into the surface of a table-tennis table, inviting viewers to play across the residues of a disrupted economy. Here, the Game of Table Tennis becomes a metaphor for life and death, lullaby and lament.



Thinking through Eric Berne's 1964 book of the same name, Games People Play, extends the idea of unconscious patterns of behaviour, roles, and strategies that shape human interactions. In Berne's terms, these "games" are the subtle, often repetitive scripts people perform in order to negotiate power, attention, intimacy, or survival.



Assets and liabilities:

A table tennis table modded, like a paper plane, its surface patterned with demonetised notes. Still playable at regulation scale, the table is no longer neutral ground. As one side collapses into fragility, the other expands into uneven panels. This skewed arena echoes the volatility of economies, where paper wealth can vanish and rules tilt the game in unexpected ways. Staging a play on a field literally built from invalid money.



Trust and betrayal (by self):

Here, the table turns inward: mirrored panels reflect the player at themselves, while holes swallow the ball mid-rally. The game becomes a dialogue with one's own image, an endless rally of advantage and collapse, presence and absence. In this unstable arena, the rules dissolve into futility. When we play only against ourselves, can trust ever survive betrayal?

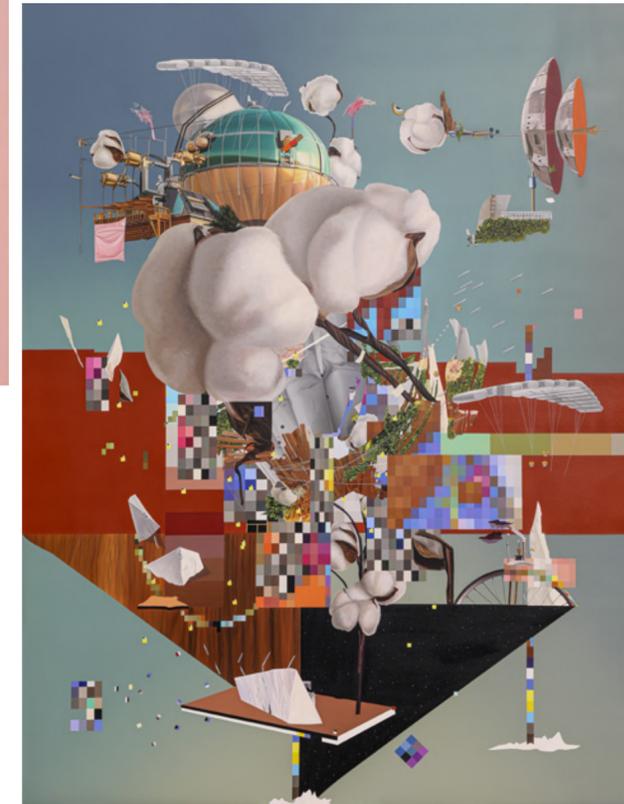


Coniecturas_VI, 2020
Oil On Canvas
72 x 96 x 2.5 in



fig (A) - Designed structure for LKA space

Dominus Aeris Flux VIII, 2025
Oil On Canvas, 96 x 72 in



Ephemeral figures - B, 2021
Oil on Canvas, 10.8 x 14.8 x 2 in

Bubble Under the Table Family discussions about aspirations and the future often unfold around the dining table. They are at once about imagining a plausible future while grounding themselves in the present. Bubble Under the Table was conceived for the solo exhibition Middle Class Dreams at Arario Gallery, Seoul.



Monuments of Time:

The character of a ball is that of an unsettled being, ever moving and evolving. Resting tightly against one another, these forms connect through a shared 'belief' and can be read as social structures held together by compassion and commitment. They may appear as institutions, faith systems, families, clusters of thoughts, or simply as arrangements shaped with care.

The binding of each unit recalls the meditative rhythm of prayer beads, where every ball marks a moment in time. The installation allows forms within a stack of domestic objects, while incorporating furniture and tools from the studio. Together, these elements act as traces of the artist's practice and as extensions of daily life, linking the intimacy of making with the larger rhythms of thought and contemplation.

Installation with table tennis balls and studio objects



In the corner stands a small sculpture, arms stretched out in that all-too-familiar pose from airport security, the great equaliser of our times. Everyone, no matter how noble or nervous, must awkwardly freeze while a stranger waves a beeping wand across their body. This figure recalls our uncle, **Swatantur Singh**, determined to fly abroad in search of a brighter future.

Here, the ice frost creeping over him is not just climate but bureaucracy itself, file by file, scan by scan, reshaping his body, ambitions, and identity into something almost unrecognisable. Just another hopeful passenger, he holds the pose, still stubbornly standing against all odds.

Swatantur Singh B, 2016, Aluminum, refrigerator's compressor, iron structure - 48 inches high

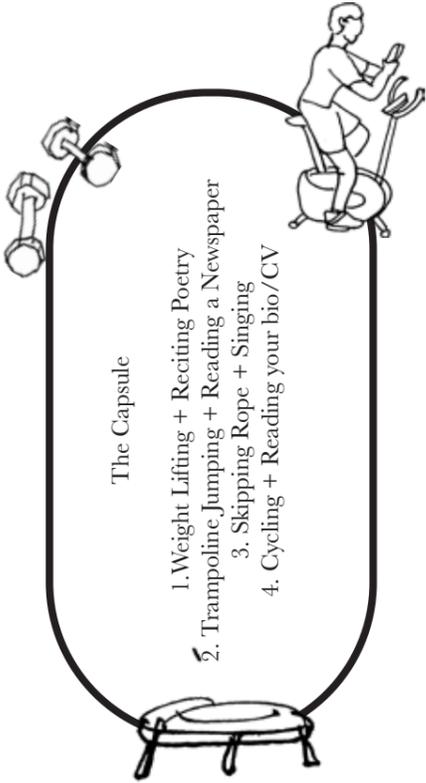


Bubble Under the Table, 2010, fibre glass, wood 6.5 feet x 4.9 feet x 2.8 feet



fig (B) - Designed structure for LKA space

Adaptivity



The Capsule puzzles together two ordinary habits at a time, producing strange new activities for the present condition of multitasking. These absurd pairings transform daily gestures into compressed exercises of body and mind. What begins as play quickly reveals satire a “capsule” of our age, where the demand to juggle, balance, and perform multiple selves at once is constant. Each activity is both a rehearsal and a mirror: a choreography of divided attention, training us to question how much of life has already been scripted into multitasking as survival.

Resilience



Weeping Farm – 40 minutes for survival.

Weeping Farm explores the daily trials and tribulations of women farmers across India. Despite not being legally recognised as farmers, women are equal participants in farm labour. However, with evolving agrarian jurisdictions, privatization, overdue debts, and climate change, farmers face often insurmountable odds in making ends meet. Weeping Farm acts as an intervention to familiarise the players with the realities of rural life. Each player takes on the character of a woman farmer from across India for two farming cycles – or one year. At the end of 40 minutes, the player with the highest amount of debt is out of the game – signaling how every 40 minutes, a farmer commits suicide.

Nafrat Parvah

Pollinator.io

3rd iteration

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STEPS TO FOLLOW

- 1: Bring an object* that you “hate” in exchange for a service
- 2: Provide a supportive reason for submission
- 3: Wait for your turn and Get a service of care

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Nafrat/Parvah (Hate/Concern) is conceived as a space to hold two polarised sentiments that continue to shape our collective consciousness. What began as an experiment in collecting “hate objects” and returning them through gestures of care has since evolved into a sustained practice. Rather than a site of protest, the project offers a safe space to examine the language of hate, its vocabularies, aesthetics, and value systems, while simultaneously reimagining its opposite through acts of exchange. At its centre is Nafrat/Parvah – A Barber-shop, open for the duration of the exhibition, where visitors can book a “free” salon service. Instead of paying with money,

participants barter with an object, service, or sentiment they “hate,” releasing negativity into circulation while receiving care in return. Now in its third edition, the project continues to expand. At the Serendipity Arts Festival last year, it invited both volunteers and audiences to actively participate, transforming the work into a collective practice of reflection, generosity, and learning. In the present climate, marked by volatility and division, Nafrat/Parvah stands as a reminder that we must come together, educate ourselves, and organise. At its core, it is a call to turn hate into concern, and concern into care.

Dominus Aeries Flux VII, 2025, Oil On Canvas 96 x 72 in



Dominus Aeries unfolds as a meditation on reveries of migration, desire, and nostalgia. Each painting is a fragment of this reverie, returning to a landscape now transformed, where the image of home lingers and the hot air balloon of desire pulls and guides the way. In these shifting terrains, we are reminded that change shapes us as much as we shape it. exhibited

here within a temporary structure, the three works converge as a triptych, scenes from a reverie. Resisting the confines of pre-existing categories, they flow into one another, forming a continuum of experience that dissolves boundaries and expands into a shared imaginary.

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