

Title Thukral & Tagra Open Window into the Dreams and Realities of Indian Diaspora
Publication Blouin Artinfo
Date 28 March 2013
Source <http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/884719/thukral-tagra-open-window-into-the-dreams-and-realities-of>



BLOUINARTINFO

by Sonia Kolesnikov-Jessop
Published: March 28, 2013



SINGAPORE – The dynamic artistic duo **Jiten Thukral** and **Sumir Tagra**, aka **Thukral & Tagra**, have made a name for themselves on the contemporary art scene in recent years with their ability to fuse graphic design, candy colors, and international pop culture references in works that humorously address the aspirations and fantasies of the rising Indian middle class, while also underlying the harsh realities the people face.

“Thukral & Tagra: Windows of Opportunity,” a solo exhibition running until May 25 at **Art Plural Gallery** features their latest works along with a couple of previous series, and reprises a theme close to their hearts: migration of the Punjabi youth in search of a better life but doing so at great personal cost.

“We’ve been working on this “escape” project for a while now looking at the idea of leaving the country for a better life, with people juggling their new lives with carrying on keeping in touch with their families, sending money. We come from Punjab and the majority of people there identify success with the idea of migration, going to Canada or New York in search of a better life. However, the reality is not always what they had hoped for,” explains Tagra.

The new series of 15 new works, titled *Pinball*, follows up on a series of small portraits executed in 2009 for the **Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art** that presented a series of portraits of youths behind airplane windows, uncharacteristically realistic for the duo. The new *Pinball* series is partly inspired by their time spent in Tokyo’s many game arcades playing on Pachinko (a mechanical game), and returns to their usual colorful and graphic style, this time exploring what has actually happened to the young migrants after their arrival in their promised lands. Young Sikh men have cut their hair while their wardrobe

alters dramatically, and to underline these changes, the artists offer a play of mix-and-match portraits like one would find in children's book with half the portrait in the "before" style and half "after". Wittily, the portraits look to be encased in pinball machines as the artists liken the process of getting a visa or living abroad to a never-ending game where one is thrown back and forth, jostled between reality and fantasy. For an added element of fun that is characteristic of Thukral and Tagra, a site-specific installation of a running track meanders through all four stories of the gallery, appearing and disappearing from its walls.

Beyond the fun element, subtler clues in the works show that as the youth of India escape to Europe or America to live out their fantasies, the reality is that they often remain full of anxiety and insecurity. ARTINFO sat down with the duo for a quick chat when they also answered some rapid-fire questions:

What other projects are you working on now?

We did a residency with the art campus of Meissen in Germany last year and we're still working on some of those pieces. Some are now showing at the residence of the German ambassador in Delhi. We're planning to have a solo show in Bomaby this year and there are a couple of galleries interested, but we haven't decided with whom yet.

What's the most indispensable item in your studio?

Our laptop and Bumblebee backpacks, because we travel so much

Where are you finding ideas for your work these days?

Right across the road.

What's your favorite place to experience art?

Japan

What's your favorite post-gallery watering hole or restaurant?

The Olive Bar & Kitchen in Dehli. We go there quite often.

What's the last show that you saw?

Bharti Kher's solo exhibition in Dehli at Nature Morte. We know her very well and she's fantastically hard working.

What's the last show that surprised you?

Anish Kapoor's work at the Grand Palais (in 2011) which was phenomenal, mind blowing. It was an experience of a lifetime.

What's the strangest thing you've seen happened in an art gallery?

Someone peeing on the work in a museum. I don't want to say which museum, but it was in India.

Do you collect anything?

We collect toys.

Do you collect art work?

No, we kind of get obsessed with our own work (laugh).

But if you were to buy something, what work of art would you like to own?

Something to do with Anish Kapoor.

What would you do to get it?

Make art and barter.

What's your art-world pet peeve?

Seeing the same people all the time

What international art destination do you most want to visit?

Berlin

Who's your favorite living artist?

Too many to name

An under-appreciated artist?

Anita Dube