

Ajay Kurian

Peanuts (Deluxe)

February 21–March 22, 2025

I first presented this body of work at Von Ammon Co in Washington D.C. The title of the show was Peanuts. I wanted to present this body of work again, but with a couple of additions and subtractions, so I decided to call it Peanuts (Deluxe). Wishing everyone peace and health. —Ajay Kurian

Our current age, according to Hindu cosmology, is the Kali Yuga. It is considered hell on earth, and it's meant to last for roughly 432,000 years. We are about 5,000 years in, which leaves us with around 426,000 more years to go before the cycle begins again and humanity, or whatever might be alive, lives in a different kind of paradise. For a single generation, perhaps this sounds pessimistic or doom-laden. But it is also possible that it offers a different way of imagining optimism, a kind of *longue durée* of optimism, where revolution is not here tomorrow (or in an election cycle), but within these 400,000 years there will be many revolutions in preparation for an altogether different existence—unimaginable from the one we endure now.

The notion of Yuga could be understood as markers of time, but we can also understand it as time building on itself, where eras are not simply consecutive, but constructive. These 400,000 some years are here to build a future social crystal more beautiful than the one we currently inhabit. When you think of how to make a crystal, it requires seeding. To my mind, the art, culture, and politics of the present are really seeding a social, biological, and existential crystal of the distant future. A 400,000 year time scale introduces a different kind of stamina, and a different way of thinking about how art might participate in shifting a politic and developing a world beyond this one.

Presented here are two new wall sculptures and three hanging egg sculptures. The wall sculptures began with the cosmic snake Shesha. When he uncoils, time and the universe begin, when he recoils, they are destroyed. Past that particular association is the morphic resonance of the snake throughout cultures and times. Each sculpture has an orb which looks somewhat like a smoldering star. The orb is a simple light fixture covered in melted gummy bears, a treacly and seemingly unnatural material made from the boiling of bones. The gelatin provides an ideal surface for its molten appearance. Sometimes, in order to reach

towards enormous questions of existence, I use materials that keep me in my own reality, and embrace the near absurdity of asking such questions.

The hanging eggs, conjuring myths of cosmic eggs and inseparable from birth, are pocked and littered with patterns of holes, sometimes becoming eyes, bones, or thorns. Rattling within each egg are two LED “smiles” illuminating their gold leafed interiors. They are more like grins or sneers. Call it Loki, Wetiko, Kokopelli, Huehucoyotl, or Krishna, the trickster holds a place in nearly all cultures. It is this energy that lives within these eggs. At the beginning of everything is an energy that wants to turn it all upside down.

In the background, you'll hear Steely Dan's studio album, "Gaucho." Steely Dan are so virtuosic that their music feels both alive and dead at once - so good it's exhilarating, so precise that it drains any feeling of incident or the unexpected. This blurring of the living and the dead seems close to what any real beginning must be like, where the two are indistinguishable, as if eternity and finitude collapse into one another.

Ajay Kurian (b. 1984) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Recent solo exhibitions include “Peanuts,” Von Ammon Co., Washington DC (2024); “Missing Home,” 47 Canal, New York (2022); “Polyphemus,” Silber Art Gallery, Goucher College, Baltimore (2020); and “Possessions,” Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf (2019). His work has been exhibited in group exhibitions at Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2024); Harpers, New York (2023); The International Studio & Curatorial Program, New York (2022); and The James Gallery, City University of New York, New York (2021). His work is included in public collections such as the Aishti Foundation Collection, Beirut, Lebanon and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.