

Agnes Scherer

Three Wicked Games

23.05.-12.07.2026

A society can be described by what it desires. By what it rubs into its skin, swallows, injects, uploads, gambles with, monetizes, disciplines, tracks on its wrist. By the little rituals by which it tries to remain alive.

Agnes Scherer's exhibition *Three Wicked Games* departs from an inventory of contemporary obsessions and lets it drift backwards, or sideways, into two so-called tapestry cartoons by Francisco Goya: *Blind Man's Bluff* (1789) and *The Straw Manikin* (1791). Both depict folk games. In the first, a blindfolded figure stands at the center of a circle, trying to strike one of the surrounding players with a spoon. Traditionally, the game could be read as an allegory of love's blindness: desire that moves without sight. In the second, a straw man is tossed into the air by women, a carnivalesque inversion of gendered power. They belong to a period before the most explicit darkness of his later work, yet they are already troubled.

Scherer recognizes in these games a structure that feels uncannily contemporary. What caught her attention is their structure. In both compositions, a powerless figure occupies the center. Around it, society arranges itself as choreography. Someone is blind, someone is thrown, someone laughs, and someone waits for their turn. Goya undoubtedly lived in wicked times: under the long shadow of the Inquisition, amid courtly structures of patronage, during the convulsions of Enlightenment, reaction, imperial violence and war. He was inside the system and besides it; commissioned by power, yet increasingly capable of showing power's grotesque underside. In his work, the surface of social life often remains intact for just long enough to reveal its instability.

For *Three Wicked Games* the artist translated *Blind Man's Bluff* (1789) and *El pelele* (1791) into a ghostly puppet-theatre. She



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dokumentation.com

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Hours: Tue-Sun 12-7pm
Hours Bistro Frida:
Tue-Fri 10:10 – 20:20

quotes the compositions almost one-to-one yet empties the figures of their bodily fullness. Scherer has spoken of no longer wanting to make whole figures. The intact body no longer feels right. It belongs to a fantasy of coherence that the present cannot support. What interests the artist more than the body is life under conditions of late capitalism that is defined by a loop of for-profit transactions and ongoing dependencies.

To Scherer, the contemporary society is “undead.” Not dead, because it keeps moving. Not alive, because movement alone is not life. It consumes, optimizes, self-documents, gambles, disciplines, performs. It goes to Pilates. It measures sleep. It counts protein. It looks at its own face through the machine. It waits for likes. It buys a face cream. It speculates on bitcoins. It asks for delivery. It mistakes feedback for recognition, exposure for intimacy, and self-control for freedom. *Three Wicked Games* can therefore also be considered sadomasochistic structures (not in the narrow sense of sexual subculture, but as a broader grammar of power and disempowerment). Domination and submission here are folded into one another. The subject wants to be seen, ranked, measured, improved, punished, rewarded. The subject participates in the system that exhausts it because the system also gives it an illusion of agency.

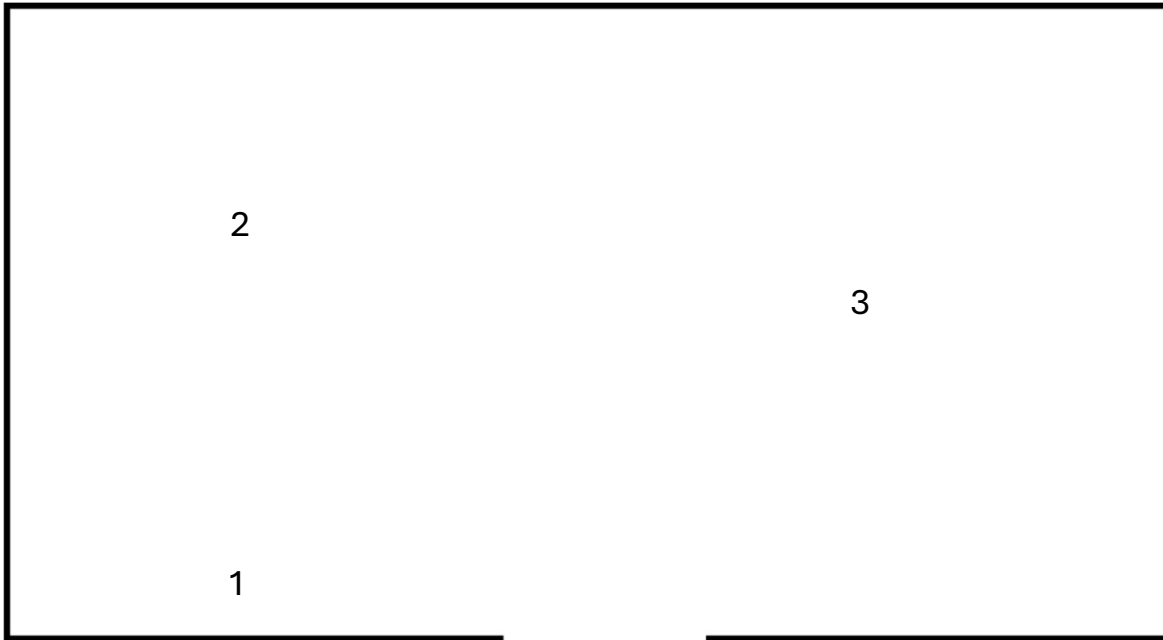
The three wicked games of the exhibition are diagrams of social relations: circles of pleasure and punishment, theatres of dependence, and/or economies of thrill. The blindfolded player, the tossed puppet, the laughing crowd; each return as a figure of the present, where agency is promised precisely at the moment it is withdrawn. Scherer’s hollowed figures and suspended from the ceiling do not ask who holds power and who suffers it, but how power becomes ornamental.

What appears at first as play becomes a model of social life: a choreography in which everyone is implicated, or in which everyone is waiting to be thrown. This, too, is the logic of the capitalist system: a set of rules we did not write yet continue to perform.

Curated by Mirela Baciak.

Commissioned and produced by Salzburger Kunstverein.

Floorplan & List of Works



1

Untitled, 2026

Paper, ink marker, gouache paint, organza

2

The Findom Foulard (El Pelele), 2026

Paper, ink marker, gouache paint, organza, wire

3

La Gallina Ciega (Can You Manipulate My Glasses...), 2026

Paper, ink marker, gouache paint, organza and other synthetic fabric, wire



Francisco de Goya
El Pelele (The Straw Manikin)
1791
Oil on canvas
267 x 160 cm
Museo del Prado



Francisco de Goya
La Gallina Ciega (Blind Man's Bluff)
1789
Oil on canvas
269 x 350 cm
Museo del Prado

Biography

Agnes Scherer's (b. 1985, Lohr am Main, DE) work addresses power relations and their psychosocial foundations, female experience, the uncanny afterlife of historical systems of order in the present, as well as inner states shaped by capitalist realities. Combining sculpture, painting, and collage, she creates narrative installations and forms of performative object theatre in which a central role is often played by the marionette: as a real or conceptual figure of entanglement, it brings complex interrelations into view that would otherwise remain beyond immediate perception. Scherer's holistic arrangements require the audience's active engagement: only through the interpretive assembling of all elements does the actual image emerge in the mind's eye. Her explorations of format draw on art-historical and anthropological studies, as well as a particular interest in popular art forms of the early modern period, especially within the context of showmanship and fairground artistry. The artist lives and works between Franconia, Germany and Salzburg, Austria, where she teaches as Professor of Painting at the Mozarteum University.