

MAKING GOOD LUCK

Essay by Eleanor Heartney

Making Good Luck focuses on the inescapable role played by luck in any artist's career. Talent is vital, of course, but so are intangible things like timing, friends, and just blind chance. Is there any way for artists to influence the apparently arbitrary workings of fate?

This exhibition of work by fifteen artists, curated by Larry Litt and Cecilia Jurado, presents some of the ways that they try to load the dice. Having immigrated to The City from all over the world, they invoke both personal talismans, cultural symbols and rituals in their quest to 'make it' in New York.

For instance, Ikjoong Kang draws on good luck symbols from around the world with 'Buddha with Lucky Objects,' a curved field of Buddha images topped with various emblems of luck, including a laughing Buddha, a model car, a small statue of a college graduate and a replica of the sacred heart of Jesus.

Ian Laughlin's 'Tiki – Fortune Favors the Bold' playfully blends good luck symbols from indigenous Maori culture with western references and objects to transform an automobile tire into an emblem of fortune. That this is a Good Year tire and that its Fortera label can easily be transformed into the word Fortune, only adds to the mix.

Mario Silva's 'Totem,' a large scale image of a ghostly figure in a skull mask, invokes Mexican celebrations of Day of the Dead, and reminds us that in that culture, skeletons are positive emblems of the continuity of life and contact with the after world.

Luck takes many forms. Orit Ben-Shitrit presents 'Mazal,' an intertwining of the Hebrew letters for luck. She also acknowledges the role played by generosity in any striving for success, offering copies of her talisman for visitors to take with them.

Dirk Vandenberg suggests the ever hopeful mantra of fortune seekers with his photograph of an urban scene. The title says it all: 'Downtown Corner – Luck is Just Around It.'

French fluxus artist Patrice Lerouchereuil believes in lucky numbers. His is '537,' here presented using the actual metal numbers from George Maci□

Luis Francia, a Filipino poet places his hopes in a little fetish, 'The Kibbitzer,' which he keeps on his desk while he writes, reading its open mouth alternately as a gasp of approval and expression of dismay.

Misha and Zhenya, aka Vydavy Sindikat, present a 'Good Luck Keyboard,' in which all letters have been removed save those that spell out the phrase in the title. From this keyboard, only lucky messages can be sent.

For other artists luck is tied up with personal memories and private associations. Charles Mallea weaves a tale of childhood memories of Santeria practices that infiltrated his middle class Miami suburban home. He invokes the nostalgic image of a half full glass of water of the sort set out by Yoruban believers to collect evil. Here in 'Mi Luz de Noche/Night Light,' it has trapped a fly, a milder symbol of the horrors of the world.

Alejandra Villasmil acknowledges the vitality and importance of friendship in 'Never Ending Offering (Hopefully)' where a Chinese dragon, symbol of good luck, is hung with portraits of the artist's friends, all of whom she acknowledges as her personal talismans.

Lina Puerta's 'Tree' offers viewers a place of sanctuary and transformation, in the process reminding us that in many cultures, trees are a symbol and source of good luck.

Aldo Sampieri's fierce looking rooster evokes the feisty spirit required of those who hope to make it in New York's art world. This creature fixes us in his gaze, a graphic illustration of the process of 'Confronting Good Luck.'

Alejandro Almanza Pereda takes a more fatalistic view with his 'Exquisite 21.' This work, featuring a basketball hoop set in front of a mirror, is a reminder that you get one chance to make it. Failure can lead to unfortunate consequences, as the specter of a broken mirror looms for those who miss their shot.

Similarly, Carlos Motta inscribes a simple text 'Ideal City – Invisible (In The) City,' which evokes the ambiguous possibilities which the city offers to those who come to seek their fortune.

Bing Lee's 'Head's and Tails' acknowledges the arbitrary nature of luck by invoking the age old practice of flipping coins to determine a decision. Couched as pictograms, they are part of his ongoing "Pictodiary" an ever expanding vocabulary of emblems composed of personal and cultural symbols.

Good luck remains a mysterious alchemy. But artists, no less than the rest of us, believe that they can lure it out of the shadows and dare it to work for them.



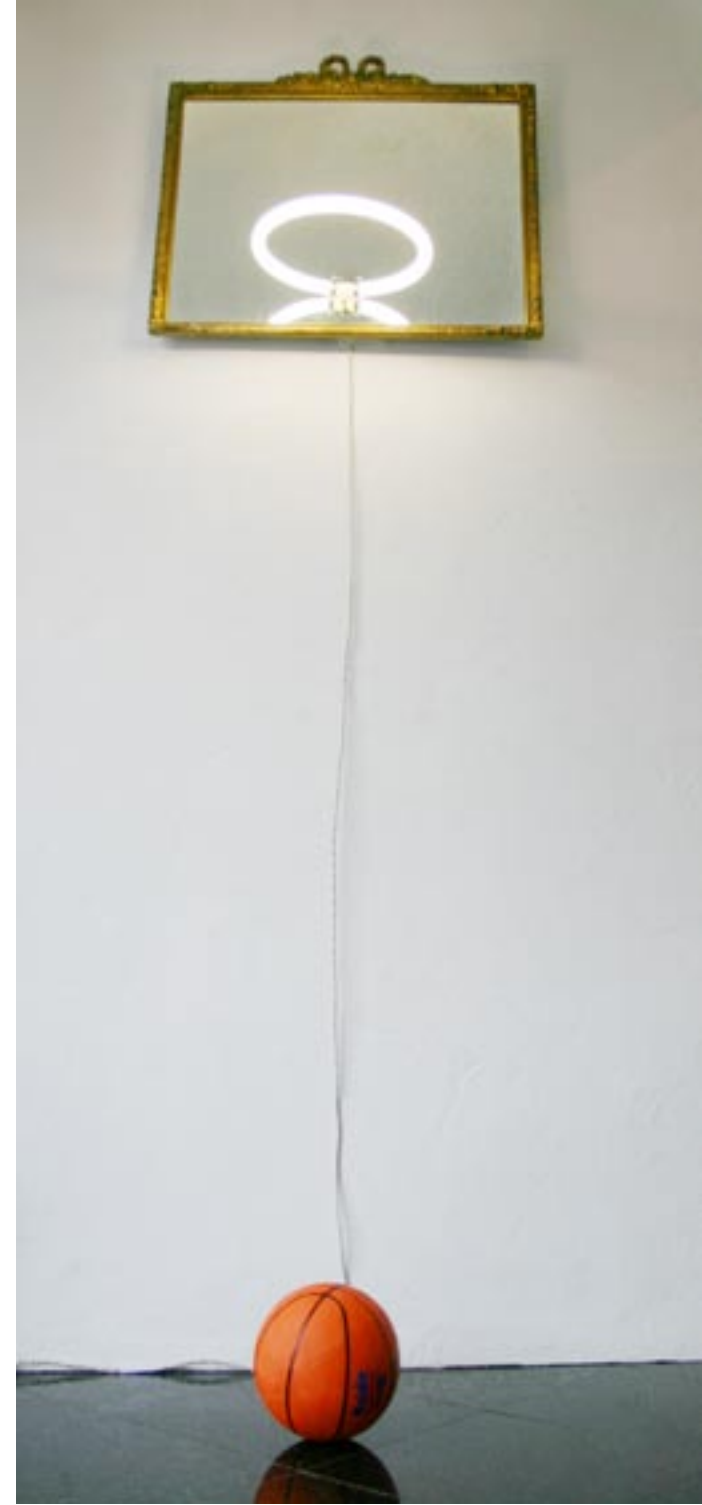
making GOOD LUCK

Curated by Larry Litt and Cecilia Jurado

AUGUSTO YAYIKO



Mario Silva
Totem / Digital C- Print / 44" x 70"



Alejandro Almanza Pereda
Exquisite Twenty-one / Installation / 9' x 3'



Carlos Motta

Ideal City, Invisible (in the) City / Vinyl letters on gallery's front door / 26" x 5"



Patrice Lerouchereuil

537 / Steel letters on wood box / 31" x 17"



Vydavy Sindikat

Good Luck Keyboard / 18" x 6"

Lina Puerta
Tree/ Installation / 9 1/2 ' x 4'



Aldo Sampieri
Confronting Good Luck / Acrylic on Canvas / 24" x 20"



Alejandra Villasmil

Never Ending Offering (Hopefully) / Drawing with portraits / 6' x 3'



Charles Mallea

Night Light / Digital Print on light box / 24" x 36"





Dirk Vandenberg

Downtown Corner (Luck is Just Around It) / Silver Print / 16" x 16"



Orit Ben-Shitrit

Mazal / Digital Print / 11" x 11"



Bing Lee

Excerpts from Pictodiary: Remix / Drawings / 8" x 8" each



Luis Francia

The Kibbitzer / Ceramic / 6" x 2" x 2"



Ian Laughlin
Tiki: Fortune Favors The Bold / Sculpture / 48" diameter



Ikjoong Kang

Budda with Lucky Objects /Painting on tails and objects
30" x 36"