

LES JEUX SONT FAITS

Gamblers and artists share much in common and, throughout history, numerous artists have also been obsessive gamblers. Fyodor Dostoyevsky played games of chance and endured great trials and privation when his luck ran short. Charles Baudelaire gambled in 19th century Paris, Salvador Dali was fascinated with cards and more recently artist Francis Bacon often sold paintings to pay gambling debts. Gaming has also been a leitmotiv in the work of Fluxus artists including Larry Miller and Yoko Ono.

Marcel Duchamp played chess, the consummate game of strategy on public benches of New York's Washington Square Park but played games of chance in his studio. To fabricate his "3 Standard Stoppages" of 1913 the artist let fall meter-long lengths of thread onto a canvas from the height of one meter and pasted them in the place they had fallen "par hasard." Duchamp also issued a "Monte Carlo Bond" in 1924 to raise money for a gambling system that he wished to test at the roulette tables of Monte Carlo.

Aesthetics and gambling owe their successful moments to the element of chance. Fortune assumes the role of muse and tips the hand of artist and gambler alike, crowning their efforts with success, dooming them to oblivion or still worse.

As an American artist, it is a privilege to exhibit at the Galerie Depardieu in Nice, Yves Klein's hometown, which is moments away from the gambling Mecca of Monte Carlo. On exhibit are photographs of my vessel sculptures taken in the American city of desert wedding chapels, cowboys, Indians and kitsch casinos - Las Vegas. It is an American city with familiar European landmarks. Even the Eifel Tower. Gondolas glide through its waterways beside 18th century pirate galleons, pyramids rise from its sands and ancient Roman palaces share acreage with California gold rush wagon trains.

The vessels, like cards, roulette wheels and gambling chips become more elements of a game in this city of diversions. Before a roulette wheel in the Riviera Casino, in open desert and with a young Elvis impersonator the vessels take on different roles, functions and even "meanings in progress."

Also on view are wall sculptures inspired by the shape of the wheel. Fortune's agent of advancement and hindrance represents the starting point for these forms. Improvisational in nature, they often depart from conventional geometry to explore notions of evolution and growth in the natural world. Like gambling decisions taken before the circular roulette wheel, these shapes develop according intuitive decisions and chance relationships. The photographs and sculptures become offerings to chance, nature and perhaps most importantly Fortune, the capricious arbiter of gamblers and artists.

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