



ERICA VAN ZON
Casino Dice and Chips 2013
Clay, acrylic and gouache
Courtesy of Melanie Roger Gallery and the artist

10. OSCAR ENBERG
Silk Road Community Chest 2015
Ebony, ivory, stainless steel, sterling silver, receipt for Hong Kong Community Chest donation
Courtesy of Jan Warburton

11a-d. **left to right:**
Talk About the Weather (Deepwater Horizon) 2010
NICHOLAS MANGAN
Talk About the Weather (Subtraction Problems) 2010
Talk About the Weather (Additional Subtraction Problems) 2010
Talk About the Weather (Still Life / Frozen Assets) 2010
All photographic Gicléé print
Courtesy the artist and Hopkinson Mossman

12. TIM WAGG
1991 2016
Single channel HD video
12.00 mins
Courtesy of the artist

7. OSCAR ENBERG
Cut No. 10 or According to the laws of chance 2015
Hand dyed linen tapestry, iron nails, carved swamp kauri, stain, wax, framed archival digital print and ink on paper, passe partout
Courtesy of Jan Warburton

8. JOHN WARD KNOX
Small change 2011
Documentation of action
Courtesy of the artist

9a. UNKNOWN British
Folding Regency Card Table c.1810-20
Mahogany with oak strut supporting top, brass castors
Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.
Purchased 1958 with funds donated by Miss Agnes Mill.

9b. ERICA VAN ZON
Casino Dice and Chips 2013
Clay, acrylic and gouache
Courtesy of Melanie Roger Gallery and the artist

3. UNKNOWN Japanese
Netsuke: Daikoku [the god of wealth]; Netsuke in the form of a man, with a bundle on his back, fan in one hand 1630-1867
Ivory
Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.
Bequeathed 1970 by Mrs Sophia Jane St. Clair Meek of Dunedin.

4. JOSEPH PERRY
Joseph Perry's views of Otago (Gabriel's Gully) c.1865
Albumen print in paper leaved album with leather cover P1910-004
Courtesy of Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago

5. RYUZO NISHIDA
Unlucky cat II 2008
Acrylic and metal
Courtesy of the artist

6. OSCAR ENBERG
Goodluck for Thomas, Antoine and Louis 2014
Ash, kauri, mahogany, Aladdin Casino gaming token, brass fitting
Courtesy of the artist and Hopkinson Mossman

LIST OF WORKS

1. TE PEEKE O AOTEAROA
[Bank of New Zealand]
Blank cheque c.1880s
Printed paper
Courtesy of Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago

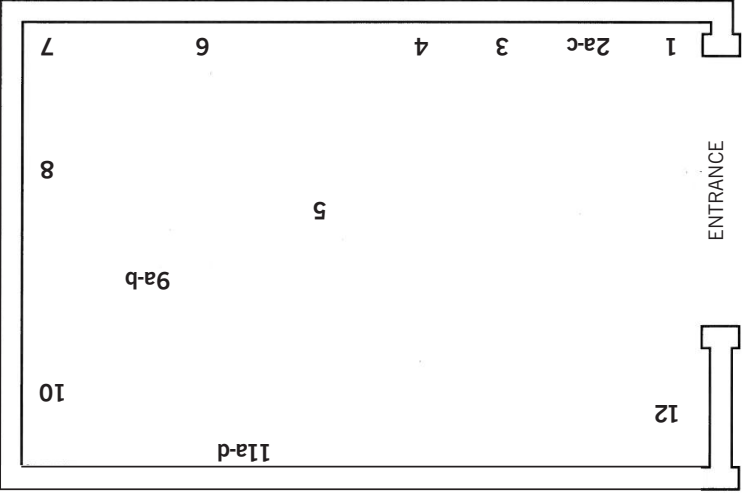
2a. H M CLARK New Zealand
Small, glass sided display case c.1900
Mahogany and glass
Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

2b. UNKNOWN Japanese
Two Small Scarlet & Gold Lacquer Bowls with goldfish
Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.
Bequeathed 1970 by Miss Margaret L Benson.

2c. UNKNOWN Chinese
Chinese Song Dynasty period pottery ginger jar c.1300
Porcelain
Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.
Bequeathed 1958 by Mr Frank Barron.

BY THE LAWS OF CHANCE
Curated by Andrea Bell
10 December 2016 – 19 February 2017

COVER IMAGE: JOSEPH PERRY **Joseph Perry's views of Otago (Gabriel's Gully)** c. 1865
Albumen print in paper leaved album with leather cover P1910-004
Courtesy of Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago



GALLERY FLOOR PLAN

The definition of chance varies according to philosophical, religious, mystical, and cultural contexts. Chance represents the possibility of something happening — it could relate to luck or fortune, an opportunity, a loss of control, risk, or fate. Some attribute luck or chance to faith or superstition, while others look for answers in logic, the laws of physics or mathematical probability.

Present-day Dunedin owes itself to a chance encounter by prospector Gabriel Read, who in May 1861 discovered gold in the town of Lawrence, 92km southwest of Dunedin.¹ In the years that followed, Dunedin was transformed from a small settlement into the commercial capital of New Zealand.² Although the Otago gold rush was short-lived, the wealth it generated was invested back into the city and Dunedin Public Art Gallery was established in 1884 as a repository for the city’s cultural riches.

In this exhibition, historical photography and decorative arts sit alongside contemporary investigations into chance events relating to the attainment of wealth, whether through gambling, random social exchanges, the stock market, or economic reform. Symbols of luck and fortune have become popular consumer products across cultures. Ginger (linked to prosperity), has been traded for centuries, and in feng shui, goldfish are known to symbolise the preservation of wealth and success. Daikoku (the god of wealth and commerce) is one of seven Japanese gods of fortune, often appearing in the form of an engraved netsuke, to be worn as a good luck charm. With roots in Japanese folklore the maneki-neko (welcoming or beckoning cat) is said to attract customers, bringing good luck to businesses. **Ryuzo Nishida’s *Unlucky Cat II*** assembles multiple maneki-neko as a readymade form turned upside down – signalling bad luck for business, or the economy taking a dive.

The role of chance in our economic systems can reveal the instability of the market and our own cognitive biases. In 1886 the Māori King Tāwhiao established Ko Te Peeke o Aotearoa (the Bank of Aotearoa/New Zealand), as an expression of Māori sovereignty — although little is known of its operations until its closure in 1905.³ Eighty years later the New Zealand dollar was first floated on the foreign exchange and its value has fluctuated ever since. **Nicholas Mangan’s *Talk About the Weather*** series alludes to the role of chance in relation to the unpredictable nature of the free market, overlaying images of primary products (such as oil and gold) against the share price index. The impact of free trade, deregulation and the removal of economic protections is highlighted in **Tim Wagg’s *1991*** — in which former Finance Minister Ruth Richardson recalls her infamous ‘mother of all budgets’ — a market reform which was viewed at the time as a huge gamble, despite being based on extremely calculated and controlled measures.

Tales of chance, risk and speculation intersect historical events and cultural narratives in the work of **Oscar Enberg**. ***Silk Road Community Chest*** documents a donation made by the artist to the Hong Kong Community Chest (a social welfare NGO), to parallel Grand Lisbon Casino Macau proprietor Stanley Ho’s annual donation to the same cause. Enberg’s signature ‘ball and claw’ form is repeated in ***Goodluck for Thomas, Antoine and Louis*** — a nod to the visual language of

cabinet maker Thomas Chippendale and Louis XV furniture, with their appropriation of the ‘oriental’ motif. A token from Aladdin’s Casino pressed into a kauri wishbone sculpture references Antoine Galland, whose 18th century French translation of *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights* was the first edition to include the tale of Aladdin, as told by a Syrian storyteller. While ***Cut No. 10 or According to the laws of chance*** relays the plight of ‘Genie’, a young American girl with a linguistic impairment, who in the 1970s became known as a failed case study for the theory of language acquisition. Acting against methods of logic, Jean (Hans) Arp’s 1933 random compositional paper collage is recreated as a tapestry and displayed alongside an Arp’s automatic poem, translated phonetically by Enberg as a propositional language learning tool. A single mooncake, usually regarded as a symbol of celebration, here represents a history of secret messages, which, imprinted as a simple puzzle or mosaic on the cake surface can be cut into pieces and arranged to decode a hidden meaning.

Gambling and card playing have shared the table for centuries. By the Regency period of the 1800s, the design and fine craftsmanship of purpose-built folding card tables reached its height, often made with mahogany and decorated with ornate inlays to symbolise of wealth and status (whether hard-earned or otherwise). Today many New Zealand art galleries and non-profits are dependent on public funding generated by gambling losses via the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board, which contributes ‘15% of its available funding to Creative New Zealand under section 279 of the Gambling Act 2003’.⁴ Following a decline in gambling revenue earlier this year, New Zealanders were urged by the arts council to buy a lotto ticket, in support of the arts.⁵ The gambler’s fallacy — also known as the Monte Carlo fallacy — is the mistaken belief that an accumulated series of chance events (such as winning or losing) can be balanced out over time. The more losses incurred, the greater the chance of a future win. This optimism is typical of addicted gamblers and in **Erica van Zon’s *Casino dice and chips*** (2013) risking it all on the toss of a dice becomes a metaphor for a way of life.⁶

There is a risk that chance events will slip by unnoticed due to the distractions of everyday life. For **John Ward Knox’s** small change the artist produced a dollar coin in solid gold and gave it to the first person that asked for money. In this modest act, a small fortune was imparted without expectation — reinvesting hope in the possibility of a chance encounter with undiscovered gold.

Andrea Bell

References

1. T. J. Hearn. ‘Read, Thomas Gabriel’, from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 30-Oct-2012 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/1r3/read-thomas-gabriel>
2. Kevin Boon, The Gold Rushes, Auckland: Waiatarua Publishing Company Limited, 2000. p.16
3. Kerry Pollock, ‘Coins and banknotes - Varied coins and banknotes, 1840s to 1930s’, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/object/36385/te-peeke-o-aotearoa-banknote>
4. See: <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/news/decline-in-lotto-revenue-to-affect-the-arts>
5. ibid
6. See: Joan Didion *Play it as it Lays*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971.



Nicholas Mangan
Talk About the Weather (Still Life / Frozen Assets) 2010
(detail) Photographic Giclée print
Courtesy of the artist and Hopkinson Mossman