

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

Suellen Rocca: Good Things and Bad Things

March 7 to April 19, 2025

Matthew Marks is pleased to announce **Suellen Rocca: Good Things and Bad Things**, the next exhibition in his gallery at 523 West 24th Street. The exhibition includes twenty paintings, drawings, and objects made between 1964 and 2020, many of which are being shown publicly for the first time. This is the fourth exhibition at the gallery of Rocca's work since 2016 and the first to present works from throughout her career.

Suellen Rocca's work is marked by dream-like ambient landscapes filled with pictograms arranged in loose grids. She drew inspiration from various types of "picture writing," such as ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, advertisements, and children's activity books. Fantastical, witty, and deeply personal, Rocca's unique visual language comprises a collection of images from her life, including 1950s dollhouse furniture, jewelers' catalogs, bodily sensations, and the work of artists such as Marc Chagall and Max Beckmann. Rocca combined these symbols in eccentric compositions. As one critic observed, "Rocca offers up mysterious mystical visions for contemplation."

The exhibition, whose title, **Good Things and Bad Things**, is borrowed from one of Rocca's paintings, includes two large-scale paintings made in 1964. In one painting, palm trees, shoes, and gold rings with gemstones emerge from a turquoise ground. Another painting presents repeating images of Santa Claus, dancing couples, and winter landscapes. Later canvases envision interior worlds in electrifying fields of vibrant color.

Purses were also an important motif for Rocca, which she first developed from images in a 1940s manual on how to crochet purses. For Rocca, they were examples of "the cultural icons of beauty and romance expressed by the media that promised happiness to young women of that generation." In the late 1960s, Rocca expanded this imagery to sculpture and began painting on purses. Describing Rocca's sculpture *Purse Curse* (1968), Dan Nadel has written, "it reminds me of a world of images that did not have double meanings, and of the fantasy of love, pure and simple. But the purse also conceals. What's inside?"

Suellen Rocca (1943–2020) graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1964 and soon began exhibiting with five fellow graduates under the name Hairy Who. The group's exhibitions, which took place in Chicago and other cities between 1966 and 1969, drew national and international attention and went on to influence several generations of artists. In 2016, Matthew Marks Gallery presented Rocca's first one-person exhibition in New York, "Suellen Rocca: Bare Shouldered Beauty, Works from 1965 to 1969," which was followed two years later by a survey of her drawings made between 1981 and 2017. In 2020, the Vienna Secession organized her first one-person exhibition in Europe, which included works completed just before her death.

Suellen Rocca: Good Things and Bad Things is on view at 523 West 24th Street from March 7 to April 19, 2025, Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

For additional information please call 212-243-0200 or email inquiries@matthewmarks.com.