

# Conjuring the future, tempting fate

Meditation on artistic luck and happenstance falls somewhere between blind faith and skepticism

By Cate McQuaid  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

A large crystal ball sits in the middle of Andrew Mowbray's show, "In Search Of," at LaMontagne Gallery.

## GALLERIES

All right, it's not crystal. It's plastic, as are most of the sculptures here, even a dowsing rod that looks like wood, and a giant wishbone. There's also "Well," a wishing well made entirely of grungy old chunks of Styrofoam, and filled with packing peanuts.

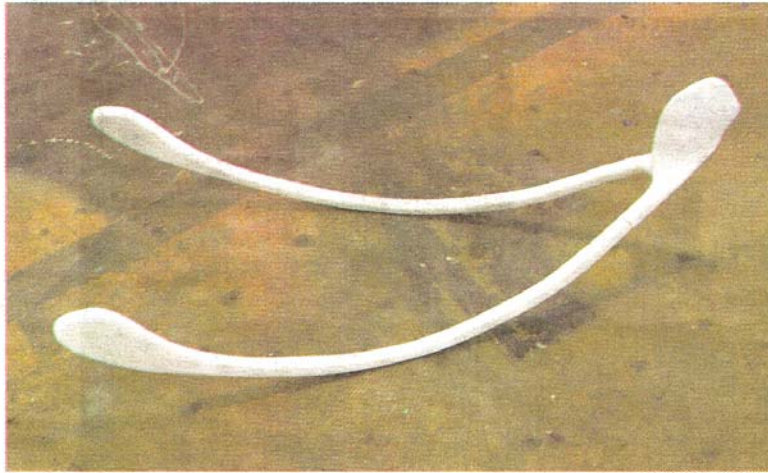
All represent objects people return to again and again to predict or affect the future. Mowbray's plastic versions put a 21st-century spin on the old art of fortune telling. "In Search Of" is a meditation on the luck, happenstance, and alchemy of artistic practice. Artists are no less conjurers than fortune tellers. At their best, they open the vaults of imagination in their viewers and spark responses that have nothing to do with reason or common sense.

The wishbone's title is "Implement for Studio Practice." The dowser is called "The Curator" — and doesn't a good curator sniff out subterranean wellsprings of artistic merit and share them with the public? "Oracle" is a giant Ouija board planchette, sitting low like a coffee table, with a half-empty mug of coffee and an issue of Artforum resting on it.

Mowbray's "Video for In Search Of" shows him pushing (or following?) the planchette over the gallery floor, dowsing with "The Curator," and cracking his wishbone. He's no high priest. He's more a likable doofus, hoping that all his odd rituals will coalesce into magic. In all, his show strikes a balance between blind faith and skepticism, which Mowbray applies to art and fortune telling, but can, and perhaps should, be applied to any belief system to which we hold tightly.

Painter Daniel Heidkamp has a terrific exhibit of portraits and interiors in LaMontagne's project space. The canvases are weirdly democratic. Every spot on the painting holds the same visual weight, pushing a seemingly representative work toward abstraction. In a portrait, that can be unnerving.

Texture, color, and pattern vibrate and shift throughout each



LAMONTAGNE GALLERY

Above: Andrew Mowbray's "Implement for Studio Practice" puts a new spin on the art of fortune telling. Below: In "Who's That Swirl?" Daniel Heidkamp explores texture, color, and pattern.



painting. In "Who's That Swirl?" a woman in a pink-patterned robe sits before a neon green wall and a lace-curtained window. The paint dances in thick, goopy curlicues over the wall, the robe, and the woman's dark hair, a

gesture that repeats in the curtain, but with none of the impasto. Then, the subject's skin is smooth as marble.

The one thing Heidkamp misses is nuanced facial expression. Planes and dollops of color

describe almost cartoonish visages. These pieces are more about the paint than about the sitters. They send your eye on a thrill ride, careering over the canvas. If Heidkamp were a true portraitist, attention would linger on the face, and that's not what he's after.

**ANDREW MOWBRAY: In Search Of  
DANIEL HEIDKAMP:  
Trapped Under Nice**  
At: LaMontagne Gallery,  
555 East 2nd St., South Boston,  
through April 9. 617-464-4640,  
[www.lamontagnegallery.com](http://www.lamontagnegallery.com)