

# JACK HANLEY GALLERY

Maia Ruth Lee

*Access To Tools*

September 6 - October 7, 2018

Opening reception

Thursday, September 6, 6-8pm

Jack Hanley Gallery is excited to present *Access To Tools*, Maia Ruth Lee's first solo exhibition with the gallery. Lee's work addresses the economy of language, new lexicon, alphabets and their transposition into systems of signs and symbols. Like language itself, her work combines structure and practicality with implicit subtleties that shape her own visual vocabulary in a range of mediums.

*Auspicious Glyphs* are a series of wrought iron wall sculptures reconstructed from found scraps that are isolated and combined into a glossary of glyphs. The decorative elements are originally used to embellish structures that secure boundaries, adorning fences and window bars around New York City. In the accompanying chart *Nine Glyph-Tools for Self-Defense*, the lexicographical notion of glyphs is further transformed into a practical set of tools that can activate a mental self-defense to protect oneself against their own fear, sorrow or jealousy.

*Bondage Baggage* is a series of sculptures based on Lee's observation and documentation of luggage at the Kathmandu International Airport in Nepal over the past five years. About a third of Nepal's GDP is generated through Nepalese migrant workers who carry out labor in the Gulf and Malaysia. Upon return to their country, they frequently bring back valuable goods like electronics or clothes with them, disguised in a unique way to protect their newly acquired valuables from possible theft at the airport security. Wrapped and bound with variously colored tarp, rope and tapes, the meticulously packaged luggages combine practicality and creativity while carrying their own personal stories through space and time.

Lee's video projection *The Stranger* shows footage of her father's documentation of Nepal in the late Eighties. His tapes survey the environment that Lee and her family trekked through for his linguistic research of the villagers in the Himalayan area. In the second part of the video, 25 years later, Lee continues his survey, accompanying her father's early contemplations with her own journal entries.

*Maia Ruth Lee (born in Busan, South Korea) lives and work in New York. Lee's first solo exhibition in New York was at Eli Ping Frances Perkins, and she has participated in numerous group exhibitions including CANADA gallery, NY, Salon 94, NY, Roberts & Tilton Gallery, Los Angeles, L'INNCONNUE Gallery, Montreal. She was the recipient of the Rema Hort Mann Grant in 2017. Maia Ruth Lee is the director of non-profit after school art program Wide Rainbow.*

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