

In her debut monograph, Cromwell expresses a deep and complex view of Havana.

El Libro Supremo de la Suerte gathers photographs from Cromwell's largest body of work to date, made in Havana over a span of seven years. The title translates as "The Supreme Book of Luck" and refers to photocopied booklets used to navigate the covert lottery in Havana. Cubans refer to these booklets, or charadas, to match everyday objects and experiences to numbers; these meanings are by turns straightforward (85 is "clock"), mystical (60 refers to "dark sun"), and idiosyncratic (98 is "old prostitute"). Cromwell found parallels between this intentional look at everyday things and the way she makes pictures. "A turtle on the sidewalk, a can of red paint — these were simple moments that by the act of photographing were made more meaningful and monumental. It was a similar gesture to what people did when they picked lottery numbers," she says.

Not unlike the way a lottery system attempts to harness the fickle concept of luck, this book organizes Cromwell's richly colored and affective images through a design that conveys the chaotic, multisensorial, and disorienting character of Havana. Developed in collaboration with designer Ben Salesse, *El Libro Supremo de la Suerte* reflects the nonlinear narrative of Cromwell's experience and suggests the randomness inherent not only to the lottery but also to life in this Caribbean city. "I came of age in Havana, not only as a person, but also an artist. This work is an homage to my experience of a specific geography. I am honoring the symbols and occurrences that have shaped my understanding of a place and time. I documented my relentless search for intimacy and spirituality, while navigating the politics of my presence in Cuba, as photographer and ultimately an outsider."

This debut publication conveys the photographer's distinctive practice of describing a place by enmeshing herself in its culture. Cromwell disavows any sense of objectivity, guided by a lucid understanding that the photographer is as much part of what she depicts as the elements or people in front of the lens. As Paula Kupfer writes: "In exploring the visual connections between numbers — exact and absolute units of measurements — and the mystical, wayward ways of luck, as embodied by friends and family performing for her camera, Cromwell offers a lyric homage to Cuba, the place that's shaped her practice and that, moreover, continues defying expectations and interpretations."

El Libro Supremo de la Suerte is co-published by Light Work, which bestowed the book with the Light Work Photobook Award 2018. The Award is given each year to an artistic project that deserves international attention. As with all of Light Work's programs, in selecting the artists to receive this recognition an emphasis is made to highlight emerging and underrepresented artists of diverse backgrounds.

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