

**DUŠKA MALEŠEVIĆ**



**Duška Malešević, *Better Luck | Better Fuck Next Time* (2025), 2 light boxes: aluminium, acrylic, LED light**

**Edition: 1/3 + 1 AP**

**Price: € 3,800 Euro + VAT**

Premiering in *Art from Elsewhere: DEEP THROAT*, Duška Malešević's *Better Luck | Better Fuck Next Time* takes the language of consolation and exposes its emptiness under the neon glare of contemporary life. The twin lightboxes pulse with the hollow fluorescence of consumer culture - their phrases oscillating between comfort and cruelty, intimacy and indifference. "Better Luck Next Time" becomes the tired script of polite society; "Better Fuck Next Time" its unfiltered, flesh-and-blood truth.

In this new commission, Malešević translates the emotional economy of neoliberalism - where empathy is outsourced, resilience commodified, and every failure becomes a performance - into

a luminous anatomy of language. Her glowing words are both billboard and confession, their vulgar honesty mirroring a world where even consolation must sell. In the cold light of the screens that mediate our desires, sex, empathy, and outrage are flattened into the same transactional performance - the same shallow theatre that *Art from Elsewhere: DEEP THROAT* confronts across its many forms.

By replacing “luck” with “fuck,” Malešević collapses the distance between the abstract and the bodily, exposing how politics, intimacy, and commerce share the same obscene vocabulary of performance and power. In a culture addicted to exposure, the work reads like both seduction and indictment - a luminous slogan for an age where every gesture, from the apology of a government to the swipe of a thumb, is scripted, sold, and consumed.

Suspended in their seductive glow, the two phrases flicker between sincerity and cynicism, hope and humiliation - a linguistic striptease that captures the very condition of our time: the obscene theatre of geopolitics and the commodification of desire, empathy, and even failure itself.

#### **ARTIST STATEMENT:**

‘Better Luck Next Time’ is a phrase that has lost its weight. It drips from the mouth as a shallow pat on the back, a disposable condolence for failure. It does not console, nor does it empower. It dismisses. In today’s accelerated, transactional world, this sort of phrase functions as a linguistic bandaid: it covers over disappointment without ever touching the wound.

Where ‘Better Luck Next Time’ dismisses failure with shallow consolation, ‘Better Fuck Next Time’ confronts it through the body — exposing how intimacy, performance, and vulnerability are judged in today’s world. It speaks to a culture where consolation is cheap, success is performative, and even our most intimate failures are commodified. Suspended between cruelty and encouragement, the phrase holds both the sting of dismissal and the strange beauty of persistence.

To say ‘*Better Fuck Next Time*’ is to collapse failure and desire, performance and intimacy, hope and humiliation. It acknowledges not just that someone failed, but that they failed in their flesh, in their performance, in their ability to connect.

The brutality of the phrase mirrors the pressures of contemporary life. We live in a culture that thrives on assessment — of bodies, performances, encounters, even failures. Dating apps rate desirability with swipes. Porn and hookup economies measure sex in terms of satisfaction, efficiency, novelty. Social media counts likes as if they were proof of worth. In this world, ‘*Better Luck Next Time*’ feels out of place — an empty consolation that no longer matches reality. ‘*Better Fuck Next Time*’ feels truer, because it speaks the language of performance, judgment, and relentless self-optimization.

Today’s world often treats relationships, sex, even self-worth as performative and commodified. ‘Better Fuck Next Time’ mirrors that reality more than the hollow optimism of ‘luck’. The phrase reflects a culture obsessed with doing better, being better, performing better — even in the most private spaces. It captures the anxiety of never being ‘enough’.

At its core, the phrase is about cycles: failing, trying again, failing again. In this sense, it echoes the cultural obsession with resilience — the startup mantra of “fail better,” the romantic ideal of persistence, the social demand to keep producing, keep performing. But where those slogans remain abstract and sanitized, *‘Better Fuck Next Time’* is raw. It drags failure into the bedroom, into the body, into the intimate spaces where shame and vulnerability are most acute.

Together, they expose a shift in tone: from civility to cynicism, from care to indifference. *‘Better Luck Next Time’* once offered reassurance, but in today’s world of political corruption, staged empathy, and public disillusionment, it has become meaningless. As governments fumble and citizens protest, the rhetoric of concern feels rehearsed. Power no longer even pretends to console. The shrug has replaced the apology. The smirk has replaced the promise. The subtext might as well read: *Better Fuck Next Time*.

Suspended in a glowing lightbox, it becomes a mirror of language itself — how words can console, dismiss, wound, or seduce, often at the same time. Replacing ‘luck’ with ‘fuck’ moves the phrase from abstraction into flesh — from chance to performance, from shallow optimism to the vulnerability of the body. It captures how intimacy, success, and even failure are now scored, consumed, and commodified.

Together they form a portrait of a culture that confuses cruelty with honesty, and consolation with dismissal. It is a critique of shallow consolation clichés in contemporary society.

Suspended between sarcasm and sincerity, the phrases reveal the tension between how we speak and how we feel — between the desire to care and the temptation to give up. In the end, both still carry that fragile, persistent promise: *Next Time*, the promise — however cynical — that failure is never final.

- Duška Malešević

**ARTIST BIO:** [www.duskamalesevic.com](http://www.duskamalesevic.com)

**DUŠKA MALEŠEVIĆ (born in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia. Lives and works in Valletta, Malta)**

Duška Malešević is an interdisciplinary visual artist. She holds an MA in Psychology of Art from Sapienza University of Rome, Italy.

Malešević has exhibited in Mahala Berlin Art Week (Berlin Germany); Cultural Centre and Academy of Art Gallery Novi Sad (Novi Sad Serbia); Librerria del Viaggiatore (Rome Italy); R Gallery (Malta); Valletta Contemporary (Malta), Gabriel Caruana Foundation (Malta), Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennale (Malta), Lily Agius Gallery (Malta), and many others. Malešević’s work was presented in the Maltese Pavilion Catalogue at the Venice Biennale (2017).

In 2016 Duška published 'Postcards from Paradise', a photography book that was launched in Rome and received an Honorable Mention from International Photography Awards (IPA). The 2nd extended edition of the book was launched in 2019 at Valletta Contemporary, Malta.

Duška is a founder and a creative director of *s e l e k t e d m a l t a*, an independent publisher specialising in photography books and publications.