

Five fascinating good luck charms in NYC

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These meaningful good-luck charms watch over some familiar NYC businesses, from restaurants to antique stores

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By Nadia Neophytou

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Photograph: Teddy Wolff

In order to make a small business work in New York, you need all the help that you can get. Luckily, these New York **restaurants** and **stores** have a secret weapon. From **paintings** to Storm Troopers, these five objects bring positive energy to these New Yorkers' place of work, in some cases just by sitting on a shelf.

Papier-mâché Nelson Mandela at the Meatball Shop

Just inside this hip Italian restaurant on the Upper East Side, you can spot a small papier-mâché figure of the first democratically elected president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. The African icon seems a bit out of place in an establishment dedicated to pasta and sauce, but the piece has a special meaning: It was made by chef and co-owner Daniel Holzman's artist mother, Sherry, as a unique guardian to watch over the store and, in a greater sense, the neighborhood. The figure was installed in the restaurant back in 2013, coincidentally, shortly after the former president died. "Humanity can still learn much from him, and some Upper East Siders can tend to be a little insular," says Holzman. "So we put him in as a catalyst to never forget about other things that are going on around the world." Turns out, meatballs can widen your perspective and your waistline.