

## Video Walkthrough | Rochelle Goldberg: Sun Moon Stars

Rochelle Goldberg gives a virtual tour of her ongoing solo exhibition, Sun Moon Stars. Speaking to the mythos of the exhibition's central figure, Mary of Egypt, Goldberg expands on the exciting sculptural possibilities provided by the lesser-known saint.

Watch the walkthrough on Mercer Union's website:

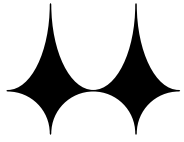
<https://www.mercerunion.org/exhibitions/goldberg-sun-moon-stars>

Rochelle Goldberg: An idea cast in bronze only lasts as long as that idea has legibility and that legibility is valued. A sculpture can be taken down, it can be melted, it can be recast, it can host a different idea.

Mary of Egypt is a lesser known saint. She held my fascination for a long time because she is the final appendage of the composite Mary. Composite Mary is a trope that started in 600 A.D. initiated by the Catholic Church because there wasn't enough space for multiple Mary's. So, the Pope decided that there would just be one Mary, all under the umbrella of the Mary Magdalene figure. We understand her as someone who lived autonomously from the moral dictates of her time. She had a lot of agency and she goes into the desert to find herself, you know, to reform from her previous life of a nymphomaniac in Alexandria. According to the mythology, after spending some time in the desert, she becomes indistinguishable from her environment. She's become an animal. If you spend that much time in your own environment to the point that you are indistinguishable from it, there's been some kind of microbial event, somehow the border of self has expanded. And within that, the mythology states that she's floating, that she's post-decay, and she ascends into heaven in bodily entirety. And from a sculptural perspective, this is really exciting. I mean, what does it mean that a body is completely enmeshed within its own environment and is post-decay.

These figures here obviously are expressive in terms of where the source for their contour came from, and that's quite obviously a pin-up doll, which is different than previous works of mine where I've used real bodies. This pin-up is associated with a Marilyn Monroe doll, and so I wanted to play with that and ask, what does it mean if Marilyn is playing Mary, is playing Mary, is playing Mary?

I wanted to play with the absurdity of spectacular abundance. There's a point in the Mary of Egypt mythology where miraculously three loaves of bread appear at the cave's entrance. So, she's never without food. There's fairly loaded motifs that are also shifting our read of that environment, not only bread, but also aluminum cans which contain unknown contents but speak to a sort of cheap preservation or a cheap act of holding. That act of holding is what's supporting the bodies, or one could almost interpret the bodies as guarding these contents.



And of course, there's a distribution of wands that are also instructing this landscape and clearly stating that things are not as they appear. Somehow there's a device that has the you know, magical capacity to cause some sort of shift, change, transformation. And I think that if you're going to go as far as to put celestial wands in a, in an art exhibition, it does become a question of belief, what one is willing to believe, and that art is made in an act of faith. It's a, you know, faith in an attempt to secure meaning.

I think that we value the idea of things that last, but in using metal, especially metals like bronze or aluminum, they're not necessarily stable, they can be melted down. So, for me, including ephemeral materials in my work alongside materials that have an indication, or a false indication of monumentality and perseverance has been to throw them both into jeopardy. I'm not trying to pin anything down. Things are just barely tethered to reality. Nothing is beholden to how we know it, it should always suggest just the possibility of what else it could be.