

Rochelle Goldberg
Sun Moon Stars

From chemical interaction to the construction of the social body, Rochelle Goldberg's material process and conceptual practice regularly examine the varying scales and properties of extraction, contamination, and instability. Extending on these themes using historical wax-working, organic matter, and metal casting, the artist proposes new grammars and symbolic motifs in a sprawling installation titled, *Sun Moon Stars*. At its cosmic centre is an exploration of the mystique of Mary of Egypt, a composite figure of varied, intersecting histories and narratives of the spiritual, and the extra-mundane.

Canonized or cannibalized, wrestled between phenom and pariah, Mary of Egypt is a paradoxical multiplicity, neither immortal nor undead. Forcibly dislodged from the particularity of history to the effervescence of myth and legend, she is the receiving body for an ever-shifting, and often contradictory accumulation of cultural mores that commodify her identity, and alas deny her a death. Faced with the perplexing task of detangling historical agency from the narratives that reveal and re-possess it, the provocation, *who is Mary of Egypt?* invites a consideration for subjectivity outside of corporeal-time.

Goldberg's propulsion toward mythology moves beyond allegory, taking up its reflexive capacity to build and reshape relations and understanding. At Mercer Union, the artist's distinctive architectural framework of wire ropes performs the exhibition: suspending, disrupting, and pronouncing the tension between a disparate array of objects. Decay ravages through the work: organic matter and pliant wax, give way to scorching metals, contending against time to deliver transformation. Within the ruinous yet unyielding bronze figures grounding the installation, Mary of Egypt emerges through the structured hollows, hosted by shatters of fragmented forms. All around, her seriality is doubled by the mineral copies of mundane objects and their proxies—silvery flotsam ornamenting her arrival. Banks of vanity lights direct the installation, confessing a desire to conjure vision yet overwhelming the seer who seeks to expose her. All remains suspended, bathed in the dazzling glow.