

July 25, 2013

By Edward Rubin

Like all great artworks that engage mind and soul, the masterworks of Madrid based artist Raquel Monje are deeply personal, as well as mesmerizingly universal. Whether using simple everyday found objects which she magically transforms into art — a table, chair, a pair of shoes, or a sculptured fragment of a human figure, a hanging fiberglass torso filled with leaves, or a pair of legs comprised of feathers, the visually complex creations that Monje gives birth to, whether composed of plaster, resin, iron, wood, glass or grass, are infused with a simple poetry that signals – to those that take the time to read the thousand signs left by the artist’s nubile hand – that what they are looking at is the multifarious face of humanity.

Nowhere are these ‘thousand points of light’ more evident than in Monje’s *Woman Lighthouse*, a beautifully rendered sculpture, which lends itself to a plethora of mindboggling interpretations. Formally speaking what we are seeing is a simple, plaster-based, hollow female torso inlaid in mosaic style with hundreds of shards of jewel-like mirrors. At first glance, the torso taken as a whole, conjures up thoughts of an intergalactic creature turned into crystallized body by a space-age ray gun, the type seen in Sci-Fi films. On closer inspection, as our scanning eye starts to visually deconstruct the figure, we notice, with much thanks to the mirrors that reflect our own image back to us that a dialog with the formidable lady is in full process.

From Monje, whose work tends to embrace a mixture of the psychological, the philosophical, and scientific, we have sculptor’s own story, one of self-healing for the artist, and by extension when you think about it, the viewer as well. “*Woman Lighthouse* describes that moment when it is difficult to stand up but against all means she does,” Monje writes. “The incandescent lady reflects light while giving you back a thousand images of yourself. This allows you to know yourself and to show yourself to others. Her hollow insides enable you to visually access her interior, to meet her, and to know what’s going on in the inside. I pieced these innumerable mirror fragments, broken and glued together, one by one, to “rebuild myself.”