

AFRUZ AMIGHI: SOUNDING SHELL

In these works, Afruz Amighi (born in 1974, Tehran; lives and works in Brooklyn) pays homage to a cast of mythological characters drawn from religions and cultures around the world. Amighi's primary material—strongly associated with industry—is steel. In this installation, she adds alabaster, a medium that has been used for centuries to produce refined decorative and religious objects. Luminous, soft, and veined with iron oxide, the stone seems both uncannily lifelike and palpably linked to the earth; Amighi points out that steel, too, is derived from nature. Here the two materials are juxtaposed to suggest a continuum of human intervention that never fully severs either material from its point of origin.

Each of the figures on view here is fragmentary: *The Virgin's* milky white breast rests at her feet, while *The Urchin's* teeth nestle among the sprawling tendrils of her hair. Reliquaries like the ones on view in the exhibition *Sacred Splendor*, on the museum's second floor, also enshrine fragments, asserting that something broken and abject can possess the same spiritual power as something whole.

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Artists Respond to Sacred Splendor: Jewish Ritual Art and Christian Treasures from St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague

Sacred Splendor: Jewish Ritual Art and Christian Treasures from St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague is made possible by Lilly Endowment Inc. Leadership support of *Sacred Splendor: Jewish Ritual Art and Christian Treasures from St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague*, and Jewish Museum exhibitions, is provided by Jan Barta and the Knapp Family Foundation. Major support is provided by the Achelis and Bodman Foundation, the David Berg Foundation, the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, Jane and Reuben Leibowitz, the New York Medieval Society, and other generous donors.

Sacred Splendor: Jewish Ritual Art and Christian Treasures from St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague has been organized in collaboration with the Metropolitan Chapter of St. Vitus in Prague, represented by Vladimír Kelnar, Chancellor and Curator of the Metropolitan Chapter of St. Vitus in Prague.

Curators: Claudia J. Nahson, Morris and Eva Feld Senior Curator, and Abigail Rapoport, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Curator of Judaica; Consulting Curator: Jiří Fajt; Contemporary Curator: Shira Backer, Leon Levy Associate Curator; Assistant Curator: Danny Smith Salfati; Blanksteen Curatorial Interns: Talia Goldman and Isa Rosario-Blake

Sahar's Braid, 2026

Alabaster and lighted base

SUSPENDED AT LEFT

Gemini, 2026

Steel

Rumi's Tears, 2026

Alabaster

Pyramid Head, 2026

Steel, mesh, suspended alabaster element,
alabaster tears, and chain spill

Sounding Shell II, 2026, suspended inside Pyramid Head, 2026

Alabaster in chain cradle with interior lighting
component

The Virgin, the Witness, 2026

Steel, mesh, alabaster, and light element

Isis, 2026

Alabaster and lighted base

Isis is the Greek name for the Egyptian goddess Aset, a healer, protector of women, and bringer of magic. Isis was the sister and wife of the lord of the underworld, Osiris. Representations of Isis nursing her son Horus proliferated from the eighth century BCE onward; Christianity assimilated this imagery over the centuries, using images of Isis to shape the iconography associated with the Virgin Mary and the Infant Christ. In this installation, Isis and the Virgin are conceived as parts of the same fragmented body, suggesting the deep connections among seemingly disparate religions and cultures.

Big Claw, 2026

Alabaster and lighted base

The Urchin, 2026

Steel and mesh

Coyolxāuhqui 1, 2026

Steel and mesh

Coyolxāuhqui is the moon goddess of the Nahuaspeaking Indigenous Mexica people. When her mother, the earth goddess, was mysteriously impregnated (after a white feather fell upon her), Coyolxāuhqui, along with her brothers, attacked their mother to kill her. At that moment a son in their mother's belly, Huitzilopochtli, sprang out and killed Coyolxāuhqui. He threw her body down the side of Coatepec Mountain, and the corpse broke apart as it fell. Huitzilopochtli scattered his brothers in all directions from the top of the mountain, and they became the stars in the sky; in some tellings, Coyolxāuhqui's severed head became the moon. This story of violent transformation suggests the unruly power of fragments, as well as the possibilities incipient in disaster and disequilibrium.

**All works are by Afruz Amighi and
appear courtesy of the artist.**