

THE LINEAGE OF STONES

Luciana Rondolini

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THE MISSION

Veering into the middle ground between appropriations of pop culture and shiny kitsch, artist Luciana Rondolini creates a new breed of popular art by fleshing out the space between consumption and desire. The artist skates on these edges, creating drawings of flattened pop stars, molding diamond-studs onto the rinds of rotting fruit, and excerpting various iterations of Miley Cyrus' gyrating tongue. Her graphite-on-paper drawings and throwaway sculptures produce an overwhelming desire to possess these celebrity renditions and rotting status symbols, all of which will eventually decompose, mature, or just plain disappear. Instead we're left always wanting more from objects and images that specifically designed to never satisfy.

Miley Cyrus and Justin Bieber stand before the viewer, covered with diamonds and studs until they are nearly unrecognizable save for their signature sexually suggestive poses. An exploration of the adolescent-flavored pop commodity form, Bieber and Miley are vessels for others to project themselves on and into so that one eventually losing themselves in this pop house of mirrors. Rondolini makes a diamond deposit into this thin skin layer of pop until its market value is revealed. When the mirrors break, we're left with this shell, this form, this shiny, blingy thingy that is the social construction of celebrity and commodity fetishism.

The diamonds in Bieber's eye sockets look like the lenses of oversized pilot goggles, simultaneously transforming his face into something closer to a skull, a symbol of death, an object hanging from kitschy necklaces, and tattoo flash embedded into skin. Many pop stars fade if first realized in adolescence or as children; some may live again in a matured iteration of themselves while others die off, only their youthful faces fondly remembered on screens.

Bieber's teenage heart hardens. Rondolini poses him in various glamour moments — with his collar popped up, his diamond eyes gazing at the viewer, his look mischievous and dreamy. In another, Justin sports a slick white vest and a chain necklace and bends slightly forward, his bangs resting on his studded forehead. He exists for the gaze of others.

Rondolini renders Miley Cyrus as a feminine robotic non-human. She is covered in diamonds — a "girl's best friend." Diamonds are the only rock that a "real woman" would wear on her wedding day. Miley is a girl on a wrecking ball, her heart flying through the air bleeding money. She can't wear diamonds right now, but she can be worth their weight. As Miley's market value skyrockets, her real live tongue drops out. Rondolini draws it over and over again, a meditation on the mouthpiece itself.

—*Alicia Eler*