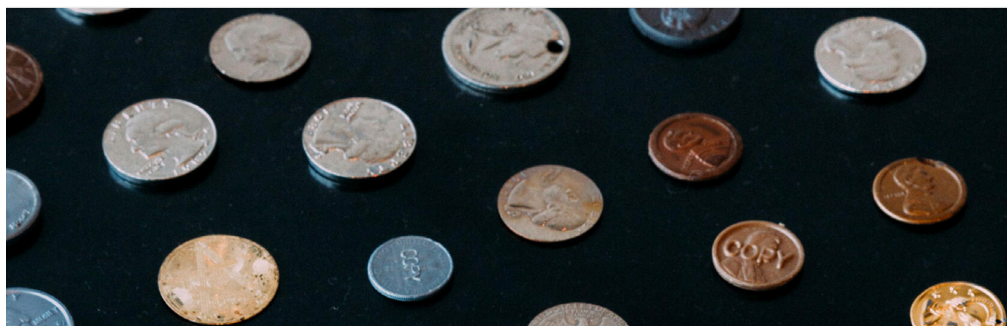


Rose Salane's Glittering Investigation of NYC Bus Riders

On the occasion of Salane's inclusion in the Whitney Biennial, Marko Gluhaich considers the artist's new installation *64,000 Attempts at Circulation*



BY MARKO GLUHAICH IN ONE TAKES | 28 APR 22



It's hard not to think about physical currency's impending obsolescence while looking at Rose Salane's sculptural installation, *64,000 Attempts at Circulation* (2022), now on view at the Whitney Biennial. The work's title describes the number of counterfeit coins that Salane bought at an auction for the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) in early 2020, and is now presenting as part of her artwork. They're a type of dummy called a slug – the kind in common circulation rather than those ripping off rare antiques. The ones purchased by Salane were used between 2017 and 2019 to skirt bus fees, and also in other ticketing machines. (The coin-slot sensors on New York buses are frequently faulty.) So, it will come as no surprise that more and more buses are being outfitted with 'tap to pay' technologies – at the expense of those who may not have a smartphone or a bank account.



Rose Salane, *64,000 Attempts at Circulation*, 2022. Courtesy: the artist; photograph: Daniel Terna



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'Five distinct categories of slug coins kept appearing across the contents I acquired,' reads the wall label. The installation is made up of five tables on which sit five piles of coins, each designated a category: faith, imitation, place, chance and blank. Behind each table is a screen-printed list, which reads like an absurdist poem, describing what's on either side of some of the coins. The items people have repurposed as slugs make for a funny assemblage: guitar picks, hotel key tags, porn theatre tokens and souvenir coins imprinted with the face of Pope Francis. Salane's description of her categorization understates its elegance: *64,000 Attempts* demonstrates a keen attention to both the patterns and the intimacies found within the anonymizing cityscape of New York. And it's a revealing investigation of these bus riders: 'imitation' and 'blank' (the former containing counterfeits; the latter containing washers, the original slugs) hold the fewest coins, while 'faith' and 'chance' are piled high (mostly medallions adorned with angels and Bible verses, casino and arcade tokens). Centred on the 'faith' table is a coin by artist duo Claire Fontaine, taken from a Jewish Museum group show in 2016. It reads: 'PLEASE GOD MAKE TOMORROW BETTER.'

That Salane purchased these at auction is a dark irony underscoring the work: a coin with the phrase 'No Cash Value' acquires its value in the hands of the MTA. And, as public transportation begins using more virtual technologies like Apple Pay, we're watching the MTA strip legal tender of its value. Salane presents her work humorously and beautifully but, when the appreciation diminishes, we're simply reminded of the ever-increasing barriers to getting from place to place.

Main Image: Rose Salane, 64,000 Attempts at Circulation, 2022. Courtesy: the artist; photograph:

Daniel Terna