

## Related Events

### Suicide Moi

Sat, Jan 18, 7pm

Suicide Moi is a collaborative project featuring Isabelle Frances McGuire, Liz Vitlin, and Julian Flavin. Its name is borrowed from an album of poetry by Jean Baudrillard, recorded live at Whiskey Pete's Casino in 1996, on which the French philosopher is backed by an all-star band. This band isn't that band, but it appreciates the slippage between reality and simulacrum no less. For one day only, Suicide Moi occupies McGuire's exhibition, becoming a new animating force, live in the present tense.

### Betsy Ross Talks to the Renaissance Society

Sat, Feb 8, 3pm

Swift Hall, 3rd Floor

Betsy Ross is known for sewing the first American flag and aiding in the design of its original thirteen stars and thirteen stripes, following a visit from George Washington to her upholstery shop in Philadelphia. While this meeting took place in 1776, and didn't leave a paper trail, the story only reached a larger public almost a century later as the country's centennial drew near. Held up as a patriotic role model and a national icon, her legend has only grown over time. For this afternoon event, Betsy Ross joins us in person.

#### THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY

at the University of Chicago  
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Cobb Hall, 4th Floor  
Chicago, IL 60637

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**Isabelle Frances McGuire** (b. 1994, Austin, Texas) lives and works in Chicago. Selected solo and two person presentations include *What Pipeline* (Detroit), *King's Leap* (New York), *Scherben* (Berlin), *Mickey* (Chicago), *Good Weather at Et al.* (San Francisco), *From The Desk of Lucy Bull* (Los Angeles), and *Prairie* (Chicago). Recent group shows include *High Art & Sister* (Seoul, Korea), *Artists Space* (New York), *Petzel Gallery* (New York), *Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago* (Chicago), *Bel Ami* (Los Angeles), *shore* (Vienna), *M. LeBlanc* (Chicago), *In Lieu* (Los Angeles), and *Alyssa Davis Gallery* (New York).

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DEC 7, 2024–FEB 9, 2025

# ISABELLE FRANCES MCGUIRE YEAR ZERO

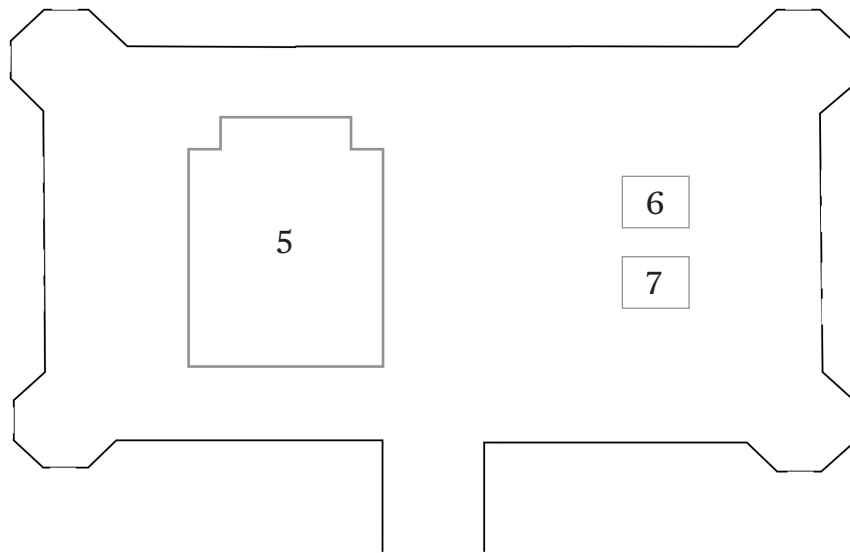
Across a growing body of work, Isabelle Frances McGuire turns to figures that loom large in the cultural imagination or those that keep reappearing over time, sometimes against all odds. In past exhibitions this has included major historical figures, pop culture icons, and recent internet obsessions rising out of online subcultures. In *Year Zero*, they expand the cast of characters to include a U.S. President, vampires, and the fame-destined Hollywood ingénue, among others. McGuire embraces these apparent archetypes and the stories they keep generating while giving them a new uncanny life or a kind of feral energy.

For the Chicago-based artist, *Year Zero* began by thinking about the lasting lionization of Abraham Lincoln and the symbolic relics associated with his birth. It expanded from there to incorporate other origin stories and revivals, along with different forms of re-enactment. Picking up on the looping repetitions in today's culture, McGuire tests out different approaches to revisiting the past, re-animating old models, or re-wilding familiar symbols. Ultimately this effort sweeps up personal biography, political lore, and proliferating movie adaptations.

On a material level, McGuire merges an abiding interest in digital models with a hands-on sculptural sensibility and a DIY approach. With the steady inquisitiveness of an engineer, they consistently seek out new tools to create sculptures, installations, and props for videos, such as 3D printing and computer-controlled milling. Borrowing techniques from gaming culture as readily as from the history of art, McGuire also uses methods like “modding” and “kitbashing,” in which existing 3D models are altered or combined to make new forms.

Rather than trying to crack some hidden cultural code, in the end McGuire is playing a more unscripted game, intent on conjuring up possibilities or following new forking paths. As digital source materials are given embodied form, something unexpected is born. At the Renaissance Society, the artist's work also spills beyond the gallery space, occupying the building's stairwell, the museum's vitrines in the fourth floor hallway, and another display case in the basement. In a way, *Year Zero* asks all of us to join the search.

Curated by Karsten Lund



Other Cobb  
Hall locations:  
Display cases: 1  
Basement: 8

**1. *Depo Provera*, 2024**  
Exhibition poster

Depo Provera, an injected contraceptive, has had a contentious history. Developed in the 1950s, the FDA approved it for use as birth control in 1974 before reversing the decision in 1978, only to re-approve it in 1992. The artist’s mother was taking Depo Provera in 1993 when McGuire was conceived. For this work, the two of them have restaged a found advertising photo of a nurse administering the drug.

Location: Cobb Hall (basement, 1F, 3F, 4F) & Ellis Avenue display cases

**2. *Underworld*, 2024**  
Existing display case, wood box, imitation dirt, thermoplastic, wax, paint, fabric, artificial hair

All the figures in this show – in the display cases, in the gallery, in the video – are bodies printed from medical CT scans of anonymous women; 3D digital models the artist has translated back into sculpture.

**3. *Frankenstein in the Underworld*, 2024**  
Video

Searching and finding, again and again. The monster may not be who you think it is. This video is recorded with the roving style and point-of-view of a first-person shooter video game, along a path that never ends.

**4. *Underworld*, 2024**  
Existing display case, wood box, imitation dirt, thermoplastic, wax, paint, fabric, artificial hair, resin

**5. *Symbolic Birth Cabin Unit*, 2024**  
Imitation logs, mudding, plywood, paint

The cabin where Abraham Lincoln was born has been lost to time, but a “symbolic” version is on display at the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park in Kentucky: a look-alike cabin from the same era standing in for the real thing. Working from a rudimentary digital model after the National Park Service declined access to existing 3D scans, McGuire has resurrected the cabin yet again, at full size, before mudding and painting it by hand.

**6. *Sleeping Vampire*, 2024**  
Thermoplastic, child-size costume, paint, imitation dirt, plywood

**7. *Sleeping Vampire*, 2024**  
Thermoplastic, child-size costume, paint, imitation dirt, plywood

You’ve seen vampires many times before. Some of them might come across as “good men.” All must sleep on their native earth.

**8. *Lincoln’s Hole, Family Bible (Footnotes)*, 2024, (in collaboration with Karsten Lund)**  
Existing display case, vintage postcards

Abraham Lincoln has long been held up as an honest man, a model President, an emancipator, the kind of person who builds a team of rivals. His birth cabin and the relics of his life have been passed around on postcards for decades. “*In Abraham’s infancy, his father built this cabin.*” ... “*This is the Holy Bible owned by Abraham Lincoln. As a child, young Abraham often heard these scriptures read in the Lincoln Household.*” This is the spring on his land.

Location: Cobb Hall basement near elevator