

## Arts & Leisure

# A Dreamlike Melding Of Human, Beast and Steel

By NANCY PRINCENTHAL

**I** WILL never — please quote me on this — I will never take on a project this size again.” For a moment Rona Pondick sounds daunted. She has just returned from Polich Art Works in Rock Tavern, N.Y., in Orange County, where her latest sculptures, a remarkable group of animal-human hybrids, are being cast. The work has been in gestation for nearly five years, mostly in Ms. Pondick’s Manhattan studio. At the end, the staff at the foundry worked seven days a week, right through the winter holidays.

A little nerve-racking, too, is the new work’s emotional candor. For two decades, Ms. Pondick has made sculpture that addresses the most intimate reaches of experience: the needs of infancy, the promptings of desire. “It has been about self-portraiture from the beginning,” she says. But these recent works involve a different kind of exposure.

The last sculpture finished, and biggest troublemaker by far, is “Monkeys.” Most of the new work involves single figures, but “Monkeys” is a swarming cluster of eight composite primates, which clamber around one another with a muscular agility that extends to the very tips of their tails. As in all the recent sculptures, some heads and hands are life casts of Ms. Pondick, in which the finest details of facial features and skin texture are preserved. The monkey bodies, by contrast, are polished to a mirror finish, sleek and fluid as mercury. Managing the technical, formal and conceptual relationships among these figures required the skills of a military tactician.

But for all its complexity, what may be most confounding about Ms. Pondick’s new work (10 pieces are currently on view at the Sonnabend Gallery in Chelsea) is its perfect composure. Whenever a human face appears, it is rapt, stern; while the closed eyes and



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tense features are results of the casting process, which is long and uncomfortable for the subject, they also form a crucial expressive constant. The animal bodies, on the other hand, tend to be engaged, open, even suggestively exposed. So simple does the arrangement seem — heads are mindful, bodies bestial — that the perversity of it takes a moment to sink in. These hybrids have the irrefutability of dreams, and the same power to disturb.

Svelte and sphinx-like, “Dog” is the first sculpture in the series that was finished, and the most iconic. Its human head is proudly erect, its arms thrust forward, palms down, with near ritualistic deliberation. “Fox,” on the other hand, is bowed down with a head that is, like an infant’s, disproportionately big and heavy. The small, slippery, large-handed “Pine Marten” bears its little frowning face aloft in something like an embodied afterthought. A regal “Ram’s Head,” crowned with an opulent set of horns, is also adorned with earrings made of graduated beads, each, close inspection shows, a cast of Ms. Pondick’s head. The smaller her head gets, the more unnerving is its spell.

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“I will never — please quote me on this — I will never take on a project this size again.” For a moment Rona Pondick sounds daunted. She has just returned from Polich Art Works in Rock Tavern, N.Y., in Orange County, where her latest sculptures, a remarkable group of animal-human hybrids, are being cast. The work has been in gestation for nearly five years, mostly in Ms. Pondick’s Manhattan studio. At the end, the staff at the foundry worked seven days a week, right through the winter holidays.

「我永遠不會 — 請引用我的話 — 我永遠不會再接手這麼大的項目了。」羅娜·龐迪克的話在一剎那聽起來有點難以置信。她剛從位於紐約州奧蘭治縣Rock Tavern的Polich Art Works歸來。她最新的動物人類混合雕塑正是在此地鑄造。這項創作已經醞釀了近五年，主要在龐迪克位於曼哈頓的工作室進行。最後，在鑄造廠的工作人員整個冬季連續工作七天，甚至在假期期間都沒有停歇，才得以完成。

A little nerve-racking, too, is the new work’s emotional candor. For two decades, Ms. Pondick has made sculpture that addresses the most intimate reaches of experience: the needs of infancy, the promptings of desire. “It has been about self-portraiture from the beginning,” she says. But these recent works involve a different kind of exposure.

新作品在情感上的坦率也令人有點緊張。在過去的二十年裡，龐迪克女士一直製作著觸及經歷最私密範疇的雕塑：嬰兒期的需求、慾望的驅使。「從一開始就是有關自畫

像的，」她說。但是這些最近的作品牽涉到不同類型的暴露。

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最後完成的雕塑，也是迄今為止最麻煩的一個，是〈猴子〉。大多數新作品都以單一的人物形象，但〈猴子〉則是一群由八隻蜂擁聚集的猴子所構成，它們相互攀爬，展現肌肉的靈活性，一直延伸到尾巴的末端。與所有最近的雕塑一樣，一些頭部和手部是龐迪克女士的真實模型，保留面部特徵和皮膚紋理的最細節。相比之下，猴子的身體被磨光至鏡面光潔，像水銀一樣光滑而流動。運用這些人物之間的技術、形式和概念著實需要軍事策略家的技能。

But for all its complexity, what may be most confounding about Ms. Pondick’s new work (10 pieces are currently on view at the Sonnabend Gallery in Chelsea) is its perfect composure. Whenever a human face appears, it is rapt, stern; while the closed eyes and tense features are results of the casting process, which is long and uncomfortable for the subject, they also form a crucial expressive constant. The animal bodies, on the other hand, tend to be engaged, open, even suggestively exposed. So simple does the arrangement seem – heads are mindful, bodies bestial – that the perversity of it takes a moment to sink in. These hybrids have the irrefutability of dreams, and the same power to disturb.

儘管龐迪克女士的新作品（目前在切爾西的索那本德畫廊展出的有10件）充滿著複雜性，但或許最令人困惑的是它的完美沈著。每當一張人類臉孔出現時，它都是專注而嚴厲的；雖然閉著的眼睛和緊繃的面部是鑄造過程的結果，因為對於受鑄造者來說是長時間且不舒服的，但它們也形成至關重要的恆定表現。另一方面，動物的身體往往是參與、開放，甚至是具有挑逗性的裸露。安排顯得如此簡單 — 頭部注視、身體野性 — 以至於這種變態需要一點時間才能理解。這些混種具有夢幻般的不可否認性，也同樣引起不安的力量。

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〈狗〉纖瘦而像人面獅身像，是該系列中第一個完成的雕塑，也是最具標誌性的。它

的人類頭部自豪地挺直，雙臂向前伸展，手掌向下，近似儀式性的謹慎。另一方面，〈狐狸〉則低頭，頭部像嬰兒一樣過大而沈重。小巧、滑溜、手掌巨大的〈松鼠〉將它微微皺著的小臉高高舉起，有點像具現的事後思考。一個優雅的〈山羊頭〉冠以華麗的一對角，還飾有由龐迪克女士的頭製成的耳環。她的頭愈小，它的魅力就變得更加令人不安。



Suzanne DeChillo/The New York Times  
Rona Pondick with "Dog" at the Polich Art Works in Rock Tavern, N.Y. Above left, "Ram's Head." Both are part of a series of animal-human hybrids.

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seemingly natural transitions between human and animal that are at the crux of this work. The material's associations with precision instruments, and with applications both clinical and sinister, also matter greatly. Exceptions vividly demonstrate the rule. "Marmot" was cast in dark gray silicone rubber, enhancing the apparent heaviness of a small splayed form that is slack as a sleeping child.

Even more revealingly, "Untitled Animal" was cast in both stainless steel and carbon steel. The latter produces velvety orange rust, which lends a fleshy sensuality to the figure's outstretched leg and tenderly wrinkled foot. At the narrow junction between thigh and body, smooth human flesh gives way to an animal torso that is tough and leathery in rusted carbon steel, cruelly shiny in stainless.

These surface details are the end of a long story. Initially, Ms. Pondick worked the figures by hand, using a synthetic modeling material that can be carved when dry. The sizing down of her head — as in the earrings of "Ram's Head" — involved a computer, but this process, too, was labor intensive: composing a satisfactory three-dimensional digital image took a full year, because the quantity of data required kept making the program crash. At the foundry, several more steps preceded the final casting. And then the real work began. Stainless steel is three times harder than bronze, and bringing its surface to a mirror finish is vastly time consuming: 80 hours for finishing a single ram's head, for instance.

Dick Polich, the foundry's owner, says "stainless is fierce." Using it for sculpture is unconventional; making it yield surface color when cast is unprecedented. The subtle tints of yellow ("Dog") and blue ("Ram's Head") are achieved through a process Mr. Polich guards closely, saying only that the effects are mostly thermal. "It's a useful thing, making the color uniform and repeatable," he says. But flashy effects aren't the

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Rona Pondick seamlessly fuses human heads and hands with animal bodies in sculptures that take their cue from Kafka.

羅娜·龐迪克無縫地將人類的頭部和手部與動物的身體融合在一起，這些雕塑受到卡夫卡的啟發。

Most of the new sculptures are cast in stainless steel, which can be made to flow seamlessly from a silky shine to a minutely textured surface, providing the seemingly natural transitions between human and animal that are at the crux of this work. The material's associations with precision instruments, and with applications both clinical and sinister, also matter greatly. Exceptions vividly demonstrate the rule. "Marmot" was cast in dark gray silicone rubber, enhancing the apparent heaviness of a small splayed form that is slack as a sleeping child.

大多數新雕塑都是用不鏽鋼鑄造的，它可以從絲滑的光澤到微細的紋理表面無縫過渡，成為創作的核心，即人類和動物之間看似自然的過渡。這種材料與精密儀器的聯繫，以及與臨床和邪惡應用的聯繫，也非常重要。有一些例外生動地證明這個規則。〈土撥鼠〉以深灰色的矽膠鑄造，增強小而展開的形態，以及明顯沈重感，就像熟睡的孩子般懶散。

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更有啟發性的是，〈無題動物〉同時以不鏽鋼和碳鋼鑄造。後者產生絲絨般的橙色鏽斑，使人物伸展的腿部和溫柔皺褶的腳部帶有肉感的感性。在大腿和身體之間的狹窄交接處，光滑的人類肌膚轉變為碳鋼上堅硬且皮質的動物軀幹，在生鏽的碳鋼中顯得殘酷而閃亮。

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這些表面細節是漫長故事的結局。最初，龐迪克女士用合成造型材料，手工製作這些人物，該材料在乾燥時可以雕刻。她頭部的縮小，比如〈山羊頭〉上的耳環，製作上牽涉到使用電腦，但這個過程也是需要密集的勞動：創建滿意的立體數位影像就花了整整一年，因為所需的數據量不斷使程式崩潰。在鑄造廠，最終鑄造之前還有幾個步驟。接著真正的工作開始了。不鏽鋼比青銅硬三倍，將其表面磨成鏡面光滑非常耗時：例如，為完成單個公羊頭需要80個小時。



## A Melding of Human, Beast and Steel

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point. "No one," Mr. Polich concludes, "should know where we've been."

Eliciting unexpected reactions from fabricators — and viewers — is not new for Ms. Pondick. A lifelong New Yorker who turns 50 this spring, she early on made fecal-looking objects that were displayed like jewels on satin pillows. Other provocations have included an elongated bed lashed with rope that is threaded through baby bottles, and a beachball-shaped assemblage of spike-heeled black pumps. Perhaps best known is a series of installations involving hundreds of little round objects, some smooth and pink, others matted with dark hair, and all featuring, rather horrifically, cramped mouthfuls of what look like human teeth.

Surrealism is the rubric under which Ms. Pondick's work has most often been discussed, and psychoanalysis of one variety or another is the tool most widely employed to interpret it. "Pondick all but speaks the name Melanie Klein," one critic wrote, referring to the early-20th-century British psychoanalyst. "Freudian vaudeville acts," wrote another. A third said, "Reading the massive pile of critical literature on Rona Pondick is like crawling naked through psychoanalytic razor wire."

Not surprisingly, Ms. Pondick responds to the reviews skeptically. "I have never felt the connection to Surrealism that others have," she says. Instead, she cites Egyptian art — "the one thing that has always been fundamental" — and particularly the sphinx, a hybrid with a long



Sonnabend Gallery

Eight composite primates: For "Monkeys" (1998-2001) Rona Pondick used her face on animal bodies.

historical reach. The dark dreams of Goya and Redon are important to her, and for the new work she also studied two masters of Renaissance and Baroque sculpture: Donatello and Bernini. More recent artists with whom she feels affinities range from Philip Guston to Bruce Nauman. The morphed creatures of Hollywood come into her new work, too, and the brave new beings made possible (or at least imaginable) by genetic manipulation.

And instead of stream-of-consciousness Surrealist literature, it is the grim comedy of Kafka's fiction that appeals to her. It's not hard to see why. The adamancy of Kafka's

imagery can be found in Ms. Pondick's as well. She shares Kafka's taste for symbolism so replete, so clear and full, that it can scarcely be called metaphorical.

Most of all, she shares Kafka's view of logic's tyranny. What is most chilling about Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis into a beetle is the matter-

of-factness with which it is achieved and, even worse, the perfect sanity with which he considers his predicament. The nightmare, under the circumstances, is not that Gregor loses his head, but rather that he keeps his wits about him. It is a predicament to which Ms. Pondick gives flawless physical form. □

Dick Polich, the foundry's owner, says "stainless is fierce." Using it for sculpture is unconventional; making it yield surface color when cast is unprecedented. The subtle tints of yellow ("Dog") and blue ("Ram's Head") are achieved through a process Mr. Polich guards closely, saying only that the effects are mostly thermal. "It's a useful thing, making the color uniform and repeatable," he says. But flashy effects aren't the point. "No one," Mr. Polich concludes, "should know where we've been."

鑄造廠的老闆迪克·波利奇表示，「不鏽鋼是強大的。」將其用於雕塑是不尋常的；在鑄造時要使其表面呈現顏色是前所未有的。黃色（〈狗〉）和藍色（〈山羊頭〉）的微妙色調是通過波利奇先生嚴守的製作過程中實現的。他僅表示效果主要是熱性的。「使顏色均勻且可重複是有用的，」他說。但華麗的效果不是重點。「沒有人，」波利奇先生總結道，「應該知道我們怎麼做到的。」

### A Melding of Human, Beast and Steel

#### 人類、野獸和鋼鐵的融合

Eliciting unexpected reactions from fabricators — and viewers — is not new for Ms. Pondick. A lifelong New Yorker who turns 50 this spring, she early on made fecal-looking objects that were displayed like jewels on satin pillows. Other provocations have included an elongated bed lashed with rope that is threaded through baby bottles, and a beachball-shaped assemblage of spike-heeled black pumps. Perhaps best known is a series of installations

involving hundreds of little round objects, some smooth and pink, others matted with dark hair, and all featuring, rather horrifically, cramped mouthfuls of what look like human teeth.

對龐迪克女士來說，引起製造商和觀眾意外的反應並不是什麼新鮮事。這位終身的紐約市民，今年春天將滿50歲，早期製作看起來像糞便的物體，這些物體被像珠寶一樣展示在緞面枕頭上。其他具挑釁意外的作品還包括用繩子捆綁的拉長床、穿過奶瓶的繩子，以及由尖頭黑色高跟鞋組成的沙灘球形裝置藝術。也許最著名的是一系列裝置藝術作品，其中包括數百顆小圓物體，有些光滑且粉紅，有些混有深色頭髮，而所有這些物體都可怕地充滿看似人類牙齒的擁擠口腔。

Surrealism is the rubric under which Ms. Pondick's work has most often been discussed, and psychoanalysis of one variety or another is the tool most widely employed to interpret it. "Pondick all but speaks the name Melanie Klein," one critic wrote, referring to the early-20th-century British psychoanalyst. "Freudian vaudeville acts," wrote another. A third said, "Reading the massive pile of critical literature on Rona Pondick is like crawling naked through psychoanalytic razor wire."

超現實主義是龐迪克女士的作品最常被討論的範疇，而心理分析是最廣泛用來解釋它的工具之一。「龐迪克幾乎直言不諱地提到梅蘭妮·克萊因 (Melanie Klein) 的名字，」一位評論家寫道，指的是20世紀初的英國心理分析家。「弗洛伊德式的雜耍表演，」另一位寫道。第三位評論者說：「閱讀有關羅娜·龐迪克的龐大評論文獻就像是裸體爬過心理分析的刀刃。」

Not surprisingly, Ms. Pondick responds to the reviews skeptically. "I have never felt the connection to surrealism that others have," she says. Instead, she cites Egyptian art – "the one thing that has always been fundamental" – and particularly the sphinx, a hybrid with a long historical reach. The dark dreams of Goya and Redon are important to her, and for the new work she also studied two masters of Renaissance and Baroque sculpture: Donatello and Bernini. More recent artists with whom she feels affinities range from Philip Guston to Bruce Nauman. The morphed creatures of Hollywood come into her new work, too, and the brave new beings made possible (or at least imaginable) by genetic manipulation.

毫不奇怪，龐迪克女士對評論持懷疑態度。「我從未像其他人那樣感受到與超現實主義的連結，」她說。相反的，她引用埃及藝術 — 「一直以來都是根本的事物」 — 特別是歷史悠久的混合生物，人面獅身像。戈雅和勒東的黑暗夢境對她也很重要，對於新作品，她還研究文藝復興和巴洛克雕塑的兩位大師：多納泰羅和伯尼尼。她還感到親近的有更近期的藝術家包括菲利普·古斯頓和布魯斯·諾曼。好萊塢的變異生物也出現在她的新作中，以及通過基因操控可能（或至少是可想像的）產生的全新生物。

And instead of stream-of-consciousness Surrealist literature, it is the grim comedy of Kafka's fiction that appeals to her. It's not hard to see why. The adamancy of Kafka's imagery can be found in Ms. Pondick's as well. She shares Kafka's taste for symbolism so replete, so clear and full, that it can scarcely be called metaphorical.

與意識流的超現實主義文學不同，她更喜歡卡夫卡小說中的黑暗喜劇。這並不難理解。卡夫卡形象的堅定性在龐迪克女士的作品中也可以找到。她與卡夫卡一樣鐘愛那種象徵主義，如此豐富、清晰而充實，幾乎無法稱之為隱喻。

Most of all, she shares Kafka's view of logic's tyranny. What is most chilling about Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis into a beetle is the matter-of-factness with which it is achieved and, even worse, the perfect sanity with which he considers his predicament. The nightmare, under the circumstances, is not that Gregor loses his head, but rather that he keeps his wits about him. It is a predicament to which Ms. Pondick gives flawless physical form.

最重要的是，她與卡夫卡對於邏輯暴政的看法相同。格雷戈爾·桑薩變成甲殼蟲最可怕的地方在於實現這一變化的事實和更糟糕的是他對自己困境的完美理智看待。在這種情況下，噩夢不是格雷戈爾失去了頭腦，而是他保持了頭腦的清醒。龐迪克女士將這種困境賦予了完美的物理形式。