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Survey sector highlights: Tackling the body in 20th century art

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'OVR: Miami Beach'

From the erotic to the evanescent, the body as both form and lived experience was a focus of 20th-century artists

Artists throughout history have grappled with the question of what it means to be a body wandering in the world. From the monuments testifying to the ancient Egyptians' belief in the afterlife to the French Impressionists' fascination with our perception of light, to the identity politics informing so much of performance art in the 20th century, we seem to have always grappled with what it means to have limbs that ground us, eyes that see outward, and an interior life that feels deeply. The paradox of 'being' is that we are at once both subject and object. The artists presented in the Survey sector of 'OVR: Miami Beach', dedicated to works produced before the year 2000, make this abundantly clear, underlining how the socio-political, geographic, and gendered contexts into which we are born define how the world responds to our bodies. Discover some of the themes relating to the embodied experiences expressed in the sector below.



Rona Pondick, *Untitled Shoe*, 1995. Courtesy of the artist and Steven Zevitas Gallery, Boston.

Body Fragments

The American artist **Rona Pondick**, on show at **Steven Zevitas Gallery**, has used fragments of bodies in her work since 1986 – either casts of her own body or others' teeth. Theatricality pervades her oeuvre, the body seemingly acting out fantasies of mutilation with comedic aggression. Take, for example, *Untitled Shoe* (1995), a suspended sculpture of a leg with multiple mouths that are seemingly consuming their own flesh. The absurdity of the gnawing black gums and teeth is emphasized by the aggressive point of the high-heeled shoe. Simultaneously threatening and humorous, Pondick's approach to sculpture expresses the ambiguities of our psychological space and the physical register of our inner lives, which can often have a self-destructive capacity.

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