

PATRON

ART / CULTURE / DESIGN



Making Waves: Becky Kolsrud

TACA Silver Cup Awards
At Home With Nino Mier
Marfa Invitational
Rona Pondick's Human/Tree

CONTENTS 1



56



68



52

FEATURES

48 SPRING INTO ACTION

Two hardworking arts patrons, Sam Self and Donna Wilhelm, receive this year's Silver Cup from TACA.
By Lee Cullum

52 HEAD FOR THE TREES

Rona Pondick's tree/human sculpture combines ancient wisdom with the supernatural in *Nasher Mixtape*.
By Catherine Craft

56 NINO MIER MAKES HIS MOVES

Newly married, a new house, and a new gallery in Brussels, this Dallas Art Fair exhibitor is anything but idle, and we love it.
Interview by Claire Gogel

64 THE LITTLE ART FAIR THAT COULD

All roads lead to Marfa for Michael Phelan's Marfa Invitational, taking wing in April for edition two.
By Steve Carter

68 SEA LEGS

Becky Kolsrud's commissioned paintings make waves at the Karpidas Collection.
Photography by Elizabeth Lavin; Creative direction by Elaine Raffel

On the cover: Becky Kolsrud, *Figure, I* (detail), 2020, oil on canvas, 84.25 x 60.12; ETRO scarf-print shirt, maxi skirt, print scarf, and rope etc. detachable shoulder strap, all at ETRO, Highland Park Village.



STEVE CARTER invites readers on a road trip. No better time, no better destination than the Marfa Invitational, a human-size art fair experience enjoying its second iteration April 22-25. In this issue, Carter takes a look at the intentionally small-scale fair and the man behind it all, artist/founder Michael Phelan. "I really enjoyed getting to talk to Michael about the upcoming fair," Carter says. "He's every bit as singular as the town of Marfa and the art fair itself."



NANCY COHEN ISRAEL is a Dallas-based writer, art historian, and educator at the Meadows Museum. For the current issue, she enjoyed writing about exciting and refreshing local openings, from Erin Cluley's much-anticipated new space, Cluley Projects, to the bouquet of collections featured in *Fossils to Film*. Looking ahead, she is also delighted to preview the work of Ignasi Aballi, whose exhibition as the first MAS: Meadows/ARCO Artist will be next spring.



LAUREN CHRISTENSEN has over two decades of experience in advertising and marketing. As a principal with L+S Creative Group, she consults with a wide variety of nonprofit organizations and businesses in many sectors, including retail, real estate, and hospitality. Lauren is a Dallas native and a graduate of SMU with a BA in advertising. Her clean, contemporary aesthetic and generous spirit make Lauren the perfect choice to art direct *Patron*.



LEE CULLUM is a Dallas journalist who has worked in radio, television, newspapers, and magazines. She was a regular commentator on what is now called the *PBS NewsHour* as well as *All Things Considered* on NPR, and, more recently, has interviewed CEOs for the public TV affiliate in Dallas-Fort Worth. For the current issue she talked with Donna Wilhelm and Sam Self, faithful, indefatigable supporters of the arts and winners of this year's TACA Silver Cup Award.



CATHERINE CRAFT is curator at Nasher Sculpture Center who curated the acclaimed exhibitions *Melvin Edwards: Five Decades* and *The Nature of Dada*. She is a scholar of Dada, surrealism, abstract expressionism, and Neo-Dada. She is the author of *An Audience of Artists: Dada, Neo-Dada, and the Emergence of Abstract Expressionism* (University of Chicago 2012) and *Robert Rauschenberg* (Phaidon, 2013). For *Patron*, she interviewed Rona Pondick, whose *Head in Tree* is among the work she selected for *Nasher Mixtape*.

CHRIS BYRNE

is the author of *The Original Print* (Guild Publishing) and the graphic novel *The Magician* (Marquand Books), included in the Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University; Rare Book/Special Collections Division, Library of Congress; Ryerson and Burnham Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago; Thomas J. Watson Library; and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. He is co-authoring the "Best Of" Frank Johnson's comics for Fantagraphics with Keith Mayerson and co-founded the Dallas Art Fair.



SERGIO GARCIA

formerly from Dallas, is a Los Angeles-based photographer and the go-to source in the entertainment industry tasked with capturing the personalities of actors, musicians, and those seeking the unexpected; he keeps his lenses close at hand. Tapping his prowess frequently, Sergio captured the stunning home, art, and furniture collection of international gallerist Nino Mier and his wife Caroline Luce in *Nino Mier Makes His Moves*.



CLAIRE GOGEL

is a Dallas-based investor and former hedge-fund manager of 25 years who, with her husband Brian, passionately collects work by underrepresented artists. She is active in the community and is currently involved in the Contemporary Art Initiative (CAI) at the Dallas Museum of Art. With a brilliant mind and an eye for art, Claire interviewed international gallerist and Dallas Art Fair exhibitor Nino Mier for *Patron*. Drawn to Mier's roster of painters from his native Rhineland and the US, Claire takes readers inside his Los Feliz home.



ELIZABETH LAVIN

moved to Texas in 2004 after graduating from the University of Colorado. An expert storyteller, her internationally renowned work has documented important social and environmental issues. In the past year, she covered protests and showcased the doctors and nurses on the front line in the UT Southwestern COVID Unit. For *Patron*, in concert with creative director Elaine Raffel, she turned her eye to fashion in *Sea Legs*, a feature combining a suite of eight paintings by Becky Kolsrud with spring looks of the season, also shown on this issue's cover.



ELAINE RAFFEL

blames her obsession with designer fashion, opulent jewels, and design on her years as creative head for the crème de la crème of retail: Neiman Marcus, Bergdorf Goodman, and Stanley Korshak. For *Sea Legs*, Elaine teamed up with Dallas photographer Elizabeth Lavin and hair and makeup maven Lisa Martensen to harness spring's high-fashion with paintings by Becky Kolsrud. The newly commissioned paintings for the Karpidas Collection seemingly come out of the frame, washing ashore in an interplay of fashion and art.



JOHN SMITH

flexes his degree in architecture to photograph homes of distinction by the best in the trade. He is also noted for his portrait photography in contemporary spaces. For *Spring Into Action* in this issue, John captured the 2021 TACA Silver Cup Award honorees in architecturally significant institutions: Sam Self at the Meyerson Symphony Center and Donna Wilhelm at the Winsper Opera House. He also connected with visionary Holly Dear, who is rebranding Dear Clark into House of Dear.



Rona Pondick, American, born 1952, *Head in Tree*, 2006–2008, stainless steel, 105 x 42 x 37 in. Nasher Sculpture Center. Gift of Antonio Hamem. Photograph by Kevin Todora.



HEAD FOR THE TREES

Rona Pondick's tree/human sculpture combines ancient wisdom with the supernatural in *Nasher Mixtape*.

INTERVIEW BY CATHERINE CRAFT



Rona Pondick. Courtesy of the artist and Nasher Sculpture Center.

Rather than presenting variations on a single overarching theme, *Nasher Mixtape*, on view at the Nasher Sculpture Center through September 26, offers a compilation of “tracks”—micro-exhibitions focused on the Nasher’s permanent collection installed throughout the museum. In the entrance, *Into the Garden* invites visitors into the Nasher’s sculpture garden with works inspired by nature, including Rona Pondick’s stainless steel sculpture *Head in Tree* (2006–2008). Rona Pondick recently discussed her works with Nasher Sculpture Center Curator Catherine Craft.

Catherine Craft (CC): *Since the late 1990s you’ve been making sculptures that incorporate elements cast from parts of your own body, such as your head,*

as in the Nasher’s sculpture, or your hands. Often you combine these fragments with animals or plants. I’m struck by the range of effects such fusions can create, ranging from confrontational and disturbing to dreamlike and lyrical, and often some combination of all of these. How did you begin incorporating casts of your body into your work?

Rona Pondick (RP): *In the early ‘90s I was using rubber Halloween teeth. Since they were not popular they were discontinued. Pragmatically, I decided to make molds of my own teeth, and began to embed them into handmade ball-like shapes of varying sizes. I modeled these forms—which I referred to as heads—in plastics that were bubble gum pink, red, yellow, or made with brown earth, wax, and plastics, and piled them into mounds or scattered them on the*

floor.

*In 1998 I made a mold from my own head and combined it with a stylized dog’s body that I hand modeled. I had an epiphany: these hybrid animal/human forms go back to Neolithic times and appear through every period in history. At the same time, I began incorporating my hands, arms, and legs in these hybrid forms. Dog was my first animal/human sculpture, and *Pussy Willow Tree* was my first tree/human sculpture (with hundreds of bud-like heads). *Head in Tree* was the first tree/human piece where my head was life-size.*

While I have used the same casting of my head for over two decades, I have altered it endlessly by remodeling sections, removing my ears, hair, and neck, warping its shape radically, and dramatically

changing its scale, to change how viewers physically and emotionally perceive it. I want viewers to feel my work viscerally, in their own bodies.

*Like Kafka, who laughed whenever he read *The Metamorphosis* out loud, I want to combine absurd humor with the darkness in life. I love it when I see viewers respond to a sculpture by laughing, and seconds later others are horrified.*

CC: *When I look at *Head in Tree* it brings to mind many stories and beings from the long tradition of human-animal and human-plant interactions in ancient mythologies, such as the sphinx, or the tale of Daphne, who was transformed into a laurel tree to escape Apollo’s pursuit. At the same time, *Head in Tree* seems very much in conversation with modern sculpture, such as Brancusi’s *Sleeping Muse*. How important is an engagement with art of the past to your work?*

RP: *My biological family was so damaged and painful that I replaced it with an adopted art historical family. My art roots go way back and move in a lot of different directions, from Egyptian, Etruscan, Cycladic, Medieval, Gothic, and pre-Columbian, to African art. I look closely at Donatello, Bellini, and Bosch, and at Messerschmidt, who is an idiosyncratic artist in a class of his own. Then there are Brancusi and Giacometti... All are tremendous loves of mine. It is interesting that you bring up Daphne; Bernini’s sculpture *Apollo and Daphne* was a big influence on *Head in Tree*, in its metaphors and materiality. Both *Saint Teresa* and *Apollo and Daphne* are made in stone, but they look as though they are quivering, moving, and metamorphosing right in front of you—an amazing transformation of inert material. I remember the first time I saw *Apollo and Daphne*, someone turned to me saying, “Holy shit, what the f... is that?” and I thought that isn’t a bad reaction to a work of art; I would love a response like that! Bernini’s sculptures inspired both *Head in Tree* and *Monkeys*, two seminal pieces of mine that will be shown together for the first time, in London in 2022 at Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac.*

CC: *This sculpture is in stainless steel, yet you work in a wide variety of other materials. What is appealing to you about stainless steel as a material?*

RP: *I am a materialaholic. There isn’t a material I haven’t used at some point to make a sculpture: cloth, lace, newspaper, comics, wax, clay, wood, stone, bronze, sheet lead, poured lead, shoes, baby bottles, chattering teeth...*

Stainless steel looks fluid—it feels like it is constantly in motion. In my animal/human hybrid pieces, I merge mirror-finished animal bodies with my skin-textured body parts. In my tree/human pieces, the matte and rough surfaces of the bark make a contrast with my smooth, shiny head. Playing on the concept of narcissism, the mirrored surfaces draw viewers into looking at themselves. I like the way these contrasting, contradictory surfaces come together and make metaphorical meanings. I have moved recently to working with acrylics and resins, introducing brilliant colors, playing light and translucency against opacity, and I am excited to find new visual and emotional contrasts.

CC: *At the Nasher we’ve installed *Head in Tree* near the entry to our sculpture garden. Is it important to you to have contact with nature as you make art? What role, if any, does nature play in your artistic practice?*

RP: *When I was commissioned to make my first outdoor sculpture, I felt intimidated by nature—I never saw a sculpture compete with nature and win. I thought, “If you can’t beat them, why not join them?” I decided to engage nature directly and make it part of my subject. I love seeing my tree sculptures engage materially with daily light and seasonal changes, and as nature changes the context around them, that feels like magic. P*



Mixtape: Into the Garden, installation view. Left to right: Raoul Hague, American, born Turkey, 1904–1993, *Untitled*, 1972, wood 66 x 54 x 41 in. Nasher Sculpture Center. Gift of The Raoul Hague Foundation; Rona Pondick, American, born 1952, *Head in Tree*, 2006–2008, stainless steel, 105 x 42 x 37 in. Nasher Sculpture Center. Gift of Antonio Homem. Photograph by Kevin Todora.