



RONA PONDICK

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Works From the 1990s

Art|Basel

Miami Beach, Booth #S12

Steven Zevitas Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts



Detail: Red Head and Loafer, 1991

FUNNY GAMES by Pac Pobric

Let me open with a joke. What’s more frightening than a woman with a sense of humor? Perhaps you know this one, but allow me a bit of fun, won’t you? Take a look at Rona Pondick’s *Red Bowl (37)* from 1993. Begin with a list of associations. What word comes to mind before this ill-tempered pack of mouths? I have hostile, but in the manner of Wile E. Coyote, slapstick and teeming, like unexploded ACME dynamite. The teeth are uneven, janky, misaligned, edgy. The caked palate this mouth comes from is wrinkled like a deflated wet tire. That palate, in fact, is modeled on Pondick’s own, but the impressions come only from the top of her mouth, which explains the perverse and utterly confounding meeting of top to bottom teeth. (Which begs the question—my goodness, which is the bottom row of teeth, exactly?) Cast and repeated 37 times in red epoxy and dumped into a simple wooden bowl, this rotten red fruit salad is the deepest corruption I can imagine of Paul Cézanne’s overflowing baskets of apples.

Red Bowl (37) is special. It was finished in 1993 to mark a sharp point in an especially productive era beginning in 1990, the year Pondick—presiding over her Cooper Square studio in Manhattan, where she continues to live with her partner, the painter Robert Feintuch—spotched together a pair of kids’ shoes with a darkened mass of wax, black plastic, and wire, and named it *Baby*. A lot happened from here on out, and not only inside the immediate confines of Pondick’s studio. In 1990, she agreed to representation with art dealer Thaddaeus Ropac in Salzburg, spinning off a series of successful East Village solo shows in New York at fiction/nonfiction (gallerist José Freier’s first venture) into international visibility. Critics and curators rushed to catch up. In 1990, John Yau included Pondick in “Diverse Representations 1990,” a subtle and important exhibition at the Morris Museum in Morristown, New Jersey that included Judy Pfaff, Mel Chin, Ursula von Rydingsvard, and eight other artists. (Pondick’s work, he wrote in the catalogue,

“suggests that society is something we must learn to accommodate.” He wasn’t kidding!) In the next three years, Pondick was included in the Whitney Biennial (1991), won a coveted Guggenheim Fellowship (1992), and showed in the Venice Biennale (1993).

And all the while Pondick was laughing her way along. In 1991, she finished *Red Head and Loafer (1991)*. Hanging at the bottom of this absolute scream of a sculpture is a pair of chattering toy teeth, encased in red epoxy modeling compound. Are these teeth... smiling? (Can teeth smile?) There is something strained about them, like a salesman’s swagger. It’s like a light kick in the mouth, the way the teeth are set so far below the shoe—and the shoe is a riot in itself. Look at those tassels! Everything about this worn-out loafer suggests a loiterer’s idea of refinement. How perfect that this...man (creature?) has no head to speak of, thus neither hopes nor dreams nor thoughts in any sense. When I look at *Red Head and Loafer* all I can hear is the nervous tap tap tap of a jumpy grifter just trying to make it to the next day.

What is it with Pondick and shoes, anyway? By 1991, when she made *Ballerina with Teeth*, they were kicking up dirt and stirring trouble everywhere, showing up as sinister props in important and related works like *Chairman* from 1990 and *Loveseat* from the next year. The latter sculpture’s joke is a bit too grim to mention, but *Chairman*, on the other hand, wears its comedy lightly, papered over, as it is entirely, in printed Spider-Man comic strips. (Spider-Man really is the goofiest of all superheroes, isn’t he?) The chair wears a pair of buckled white shoes, squarish and stout with a slight heel and black sole, good for a night at the disco, even if they are a little scuffed. That’s the difference, by the way, between Robert Gober’s shoes and Pondick’s, for all their important similarities: hers are worn, not studio-crafted, and carry with them the tarry residue of whoever wore them in whatever way. Meaning, they have a history. (She and

Gober both showed at the 1991 Whitney Biennial alongside Kiki Smith, another important reference point for Pondick’s work.)

But back to shoes. *Ballerina with Teeth*, which is included in this presentation, is another example and it is especially—even wildly—hallucinatory. Imagine: teeth—in your shoes! And not nice teeth (as if you could have nice teeth in your shoes). No, these are yellowed, blackened and overflowing out of thin pink ballet slippers, getting about as close to a comic nightmare as I can picture. Pondick makes “Freudian vaudeville acts,” the New York Times art critic Michael Brenson wrote, “designed to make you laugh until you feel something caught in your throat.” He was writing in 1991 reviewing “Foot and Mouth,” Pondick’s final solo show at fiction/nonfiction. Alongside *Loveseat*, the exhibition also included *Little Bathers*, Pondick’s take on a Minimalist scatter work, made of more than 500 mouths (all modeled on her own) littered about in a sickly and unsettling pile. “Foot and Mouth,” Brenson went on, was full of these “sometimes kinky, fetishistic hybrids that contain numerous references to Marcel Duchamp, Surrealism, and African art.”

Yet Surrealism, remember, was still too taboo—too spooky—for most critics in the 1990s. We’re only just now beginning to catch up with Surrealism’s great many artists, with serious museum exhibitions devoted not only to Rene Magritte (MoMA, 2013) but also to Leonara Carrington (Tate Liverpool, 2015), Meret Oppenheim (MoMA, 2022), Dorothea Tanning (Tate Modern 2019), and so many others. Thirty years ago, this kind of art struck the mainstream of the art world as gauche, overwrought, not a little bit embarrassing. It wasn’t serious enough, it was too goofy, too silly, too much. So it was generally passed over in silence, something to be seen but not heard. Even Roberta Smith, who wrote admiringly of Pondick on repeated occasions throughout the decade and

beyond, kept the artist's Surrealism at arm's length. It was simpler, tidier. The writer William Zimmer got a bit closer when he wrote that Pondick's work is "both real and fairy tale-like." But it was exactly Pondick's realness—her dedication to craft and materials, the matter-of-factness of her touch, the overwhelming presentness of her work, from which it's impossible to turn away—that made it harder to fully see the more unruly psychic implications of her work. Confronted by the unnerving presence of a soiled pillow in *First Bed* from 1991, it's easier to keep it at bay with throwaway bits of nervous chatter. Which is what most critics did.

Funny how things change. Curator Cecilia Alwmani's 2022 Venice Biennale, "The Milk of Dreams," is explicitly devoted to the many legacies of Surrealism, which courses through so much of the art of our day. Think of the ceramicist Genesis Belanger's twisted domestic fantasies, or painter Louise Bonnet's deformed grotesqueries, or Julie Curtiss's Pop-inflected nightmares. Like Pondick, these artists are full of spleen. They're freakishly funny, over the top, and deadly serious. Which brings me back to my punchline, at long last. So what is it that's more frightening than a woman with a sense of humor? Why, one with teeth, of course.

Baby
1990, Unique, Mixed media
3.5 x 9 x 16 in (8.89 x 22.86 x 40.64 cm)





Detail: *Baby*, 1990

First Bed
1991, Unique, Mixed media
11 x 59 x 24 inches (27.94 x 146.86 x 60.96 cm)





Ballerina with Teeth
1991, Unique, Mixed media
3.5 x 6.5 x 8.5 inches (8.89 x 16.51 x 21.59 cm)





Red Head and Loafer
1991, Unique, Mixed media
dimensions variable





Detail: *Red Head and Loafer*, 1991

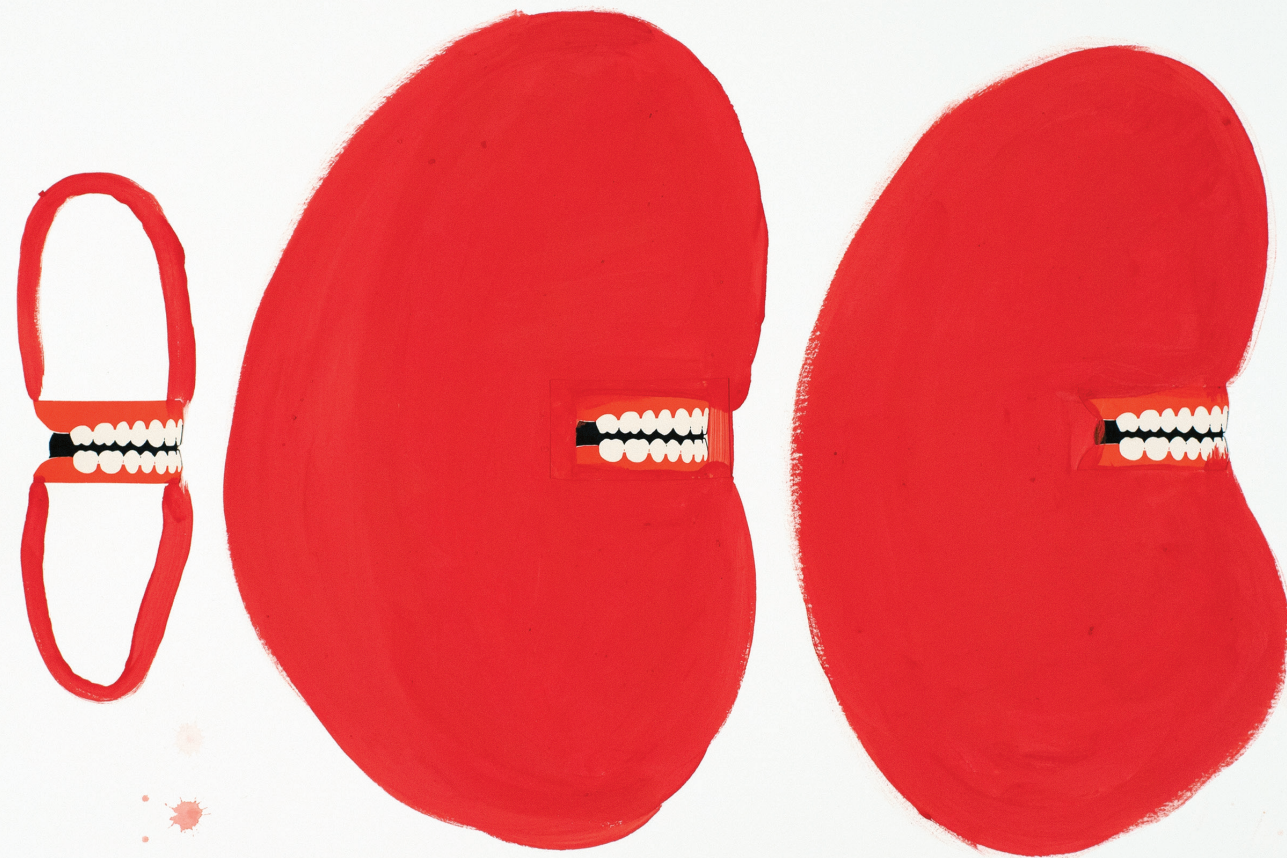
Red Bowl (37)
1993, Unique, Epoxy and wooden bowl
7 x 19 x 19.5 inches (17.78 x 48.26 x 49.53 cm)





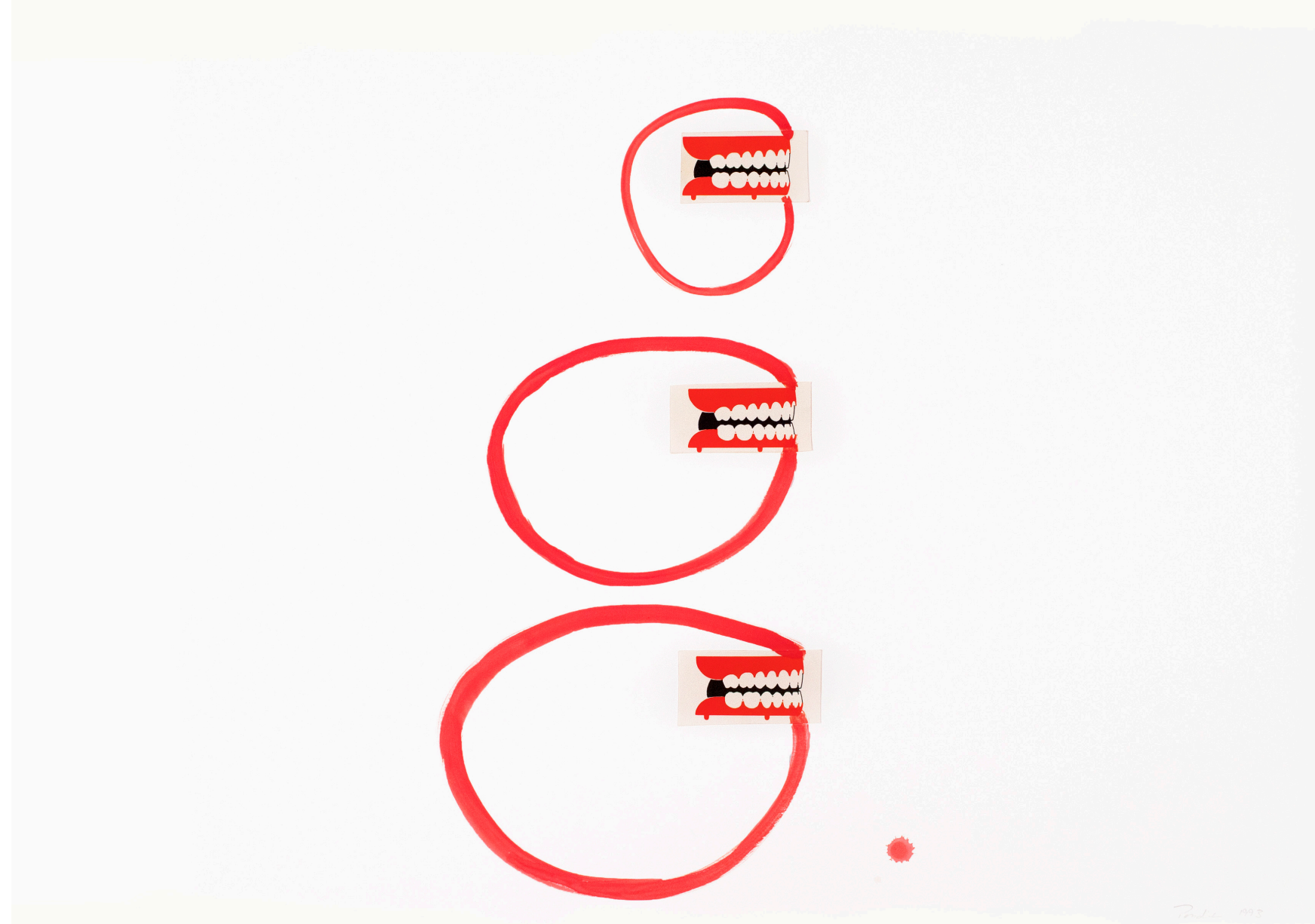
Detail: *Red Bowl (37)*, 1993

Mouth Mouth #5
1993, Unique, Casein and collage on paper
22.5 x 30 inches (57.15 x 76.2 cm)

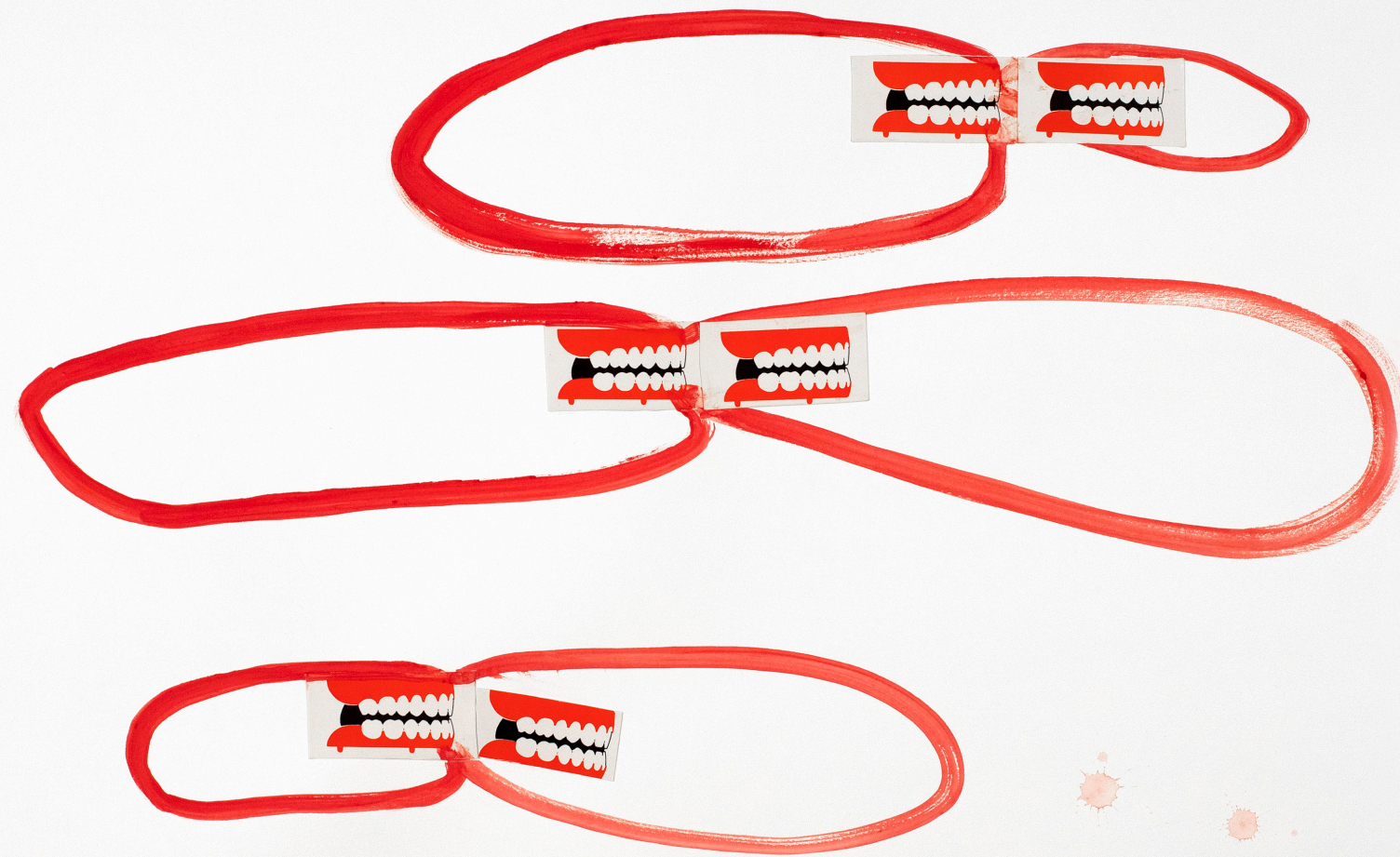


Randall 1993

Mouth Mouth #7
1993, Unique, Casein and collage on paper
22.5 x 30 inches (57.15 x 76.2 cm)



Mouth Mouth #10
1993, Unique, Casein and collage on paper
22.5 x 30 inches (57.15 x 76.2 cm)



RONA PONDICK

(b. 1952) Brooklyn, New York

EDUCATION

1977 M.F.A., Yale University School of Art
1974 B.A., Queens College

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio
Art, Design & Architecture Museum, University of California at Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara
Bates College Museum of Art, Lewiston, Maine
Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh
Centre Pompidou, Paris
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland
DeCordova Sculpture Park + Museum, Lincoln, Massachusetts
Denver Art Museum, Denver
Fogg Museum, Harvard Art Museums, Harvard University, Cambridge
Fondation pour l'art contemporain Claudine et Jean-Marc Salomon, Annecy, France
Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Indiana

High Museum of Art, Atlanta
Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
The Morgan Library & Museum, New York
Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri
New Orleans Museum of Art, Sculpture Garden, New Orleans
New York Public Library, New York
Norton Family Foundation, Santa Monica
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia
Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Maine
The Progressive Art Collection, Cleveland
Rooseum, Malmö, Sweden
The Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco

Savannah College of Art & Design Museum of Art, Savannah, Georgia
Sinai Temple, Los Angeles
Sonnabend Foundation Collection, New York
Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv, Israel
Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo
Trustman Art Gallery, Simmons University, Boston
United States Information Agency, Washington, D.C.
Ursula Blickle Stiftung, Kraichtal, Germany
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts
Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2022 Upper Belvedere, Vienna, Austria, Carlone Contemporary: *Rona Pondick*
2022 Marc Straus Gallery, New York
2021 Nunu Fine Art, Taipei, Taiwan, *Rona Pondick: Sculpture*
2019 Zevitas Marcus, Los Angeles, *Rona Pondick Works: 2013-18*
2018 Marc Straus, New York, *Rona Pondick Works: 2013-2018*
2017 Bates Museum of Art, Lewiston, Maine, *Rona Pondick and Robert Feintuch: Heads, Hands, Feet; Sleeping, Holding, Dreaming, Dying*

2017 Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, Salt Lake City, *Rona Pondick and Robert Feintuch: Heads, Hands, Feet; Sleeping, Holding, Dreaming, Dying*
2014 Krampf Gallery, Istanbul
2013 Sonnabend Gallery, New York
2012 Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris
2010 Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn, New York, *Metamorphosis: Rona Pondick*
Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Editions Space, Salzburg, *Rona Pondick: The Metamorphosis of an Object*
2009 Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts, *Rona Pondick: The Metamorphosis of an Object*
Howard Yezerski Gallery, Boston
2008 TR3, Ljubljana, Slovenia, Rona Pondick, *Head in Tree and other works 1999-2008*
Die Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum, Salzburg, *Rona Pondick*
2006 Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Salzburg
Sonnabend Gallery, New York
2004 Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, Cleveland
Akira Ikeda Gallery, Taura, Japan, *Rona Pondick, 1987-2001*
2003 Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, *Sculpture 1992-2003*
2002-03 DeCordova Sculpture Park + Museum, Lincoln, Massachusetts
Groninger Museum, Groningen, Netherlands
2002 Galleria d'Arte Moderna Bologna, Bologna, Italy
Sonnabend Gallery, New York
Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris
2001 Patricia Faure Gallery, Santa Monica
1999 Rupertinum Museum für moderne und zeitgenössische Kunst, Salzburg, Positionenreihe7

1998 Howard Yezerski Gallery, Boston
 1997 Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, *tree head room*
 1996-97 Brooklyn Museum, Lobby Project, Brooklyn, *Mine*
 1996 Brooklyn Academy of Music, *Next Wave Festival* (site: Brooklyn Museum), Brooklyn, *Mine* (conceived and directed by Rona Pondick and Robert Feintuch; collaborators: Sara Rudner, Jennifer Tipton, and William Matthews)
 Susan Inglett, I. C. Editions, New York
 Patricia Faure Gallery, Santa Monica
 Howard Yezerski Gallery, Boston
 1995 Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, *New Art 4*
 Jose Freire Fine Art, New York
 1993 Howard Yezerski Gallery, Boston
 Jose Freire Fine Art, New York
 1992 The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, *Pink and Brown*
 Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris
 Transepoca, Milan
 1991 Beaver College Art Gallery, Glenside, Pennsylvania, *Scrap*, a site-specific installation
 Asher-Faure Gallery, Los Angeles
 fiction/nonfiction, New York, *Foot and Mouth*
 1990 Asher-Faure Gallery, Los Angeles, *mamamamama*
 1989 The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, *Currents*
 fiction/nonfiction, New York, *Bed Milk Shoe*
 Hillman Holland Gallery, Atlanta
 1988 Sculpture Center, New York, *Beds*
 fiction/nonfiction, New York

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2022-23 Lower Belvedere, Vienna, Austria, *Grow. The Tree in Art*
 2021-22 Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, *On the Basis of Art: 150 Years of Women at Yale*
 2021 Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut, *Selections from the Contemporary Collection*
 Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, Texas, *Nasher Mixtape*
 2020-21 Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany, *In aller Munde: Von Pieter Bruegel bis Cindy Sherman*
 High Museum, Atlanta, *Pioneers, Influencers, and Rising Voices: Women in the Collection*
 2020 Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts, *Collections Show: Object Lab*
 American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, *Invitational Exhibition of Visual Arts*
 2019-20 Remai Modern, Saskatoon, Canada, *The Sonnabend Collection*
 Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, *Present Tense: Recent Gifts of Contemporary Art*
 Palais de Beaux-Arts de Lille, Lille, France, *Le rêve d'être artiste*
 2018 Nelson Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri, *Unexpected Encounters*
 2016 Ca'Pesaro, Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna, Venice, Italy, *The Ileana Sonnabend Collection*
 2014 Ca'Pesaro, Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna, Venice, Italy, *From Rauschenberg to Jeff Koons*

2013 Centre Pompidou, Paris, *Donation Florence et Daniel Guerlain*
 Armory Art Gallery at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia, *Two Trees: Rona Pondick and Jennifer Steinkamp*
 2011-12 Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, *Everyday Disturbances*
 2011 The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Venice, Italy, *Ileana Sonnabend: An Italian Portrait*
 Pera Museum, Istanbul, *Fundamentally Yours: Visual Art and Neuroscience*
 Macao Museum of Art, Macao, China, *Speaking with Hands*
 Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts, *The Museum's Collection of Art Since the Mid-20th Century*
 2010 Royal Institution of Australia, The Science Exchange, Adelaide, Australia, *The Uncanny Valley*
 Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina, *Odd Bodies: Selections from the Permanent Collection*
 2009-11 Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, *Speaking with Hands*
 2009-10 Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan, *Medicine and Art: Imagining a Future for Life and Love*
 2009 Fundament Foundation, park De Oude Warande, Tilburg, The Netherlands, *Stardust*
 2008 Sonsbeek 2008, Arnhem, Netherlands, *Sonsbeek 2008: Grandeur*
 Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille, Lille, France, Goya. *Les Caprices & Chapman, Morimura, Pondick, Schutte*
 2007 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *Uncontained*
 2003 DaimlerChrysler, Berlin, *A Dialogue of Two Collections: Ileana Sonnabend, New York and Daimler*

Chrysler
 Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany, Triennial 9 Form and Contents: *Corporal Identity—Body Language* (traveled to Museum of Arts and Design, New York)
 2002 Tang Museum, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York, *From Pop to Now: Selections from the Sonnabend Collection* (traveled to Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio)
 2001 Yale University School of Art, New Haven, *Alumni Choice*
 2000 Biennale d'art contemporain de Lyon, Lyon, France, *Sharing Exoticism*
 Koldo Mitxelena Cultural Centre, Donostia-San Sebastian, Spain, *Acts of Resistance*
 1999 Kunsthaus Mürzzuschlag, Mürzzuschlag, Austria, *Der Anagrammatische Körper* (in cooperation with Neue Galerie Landesmuseum Joanneum Graz; traveled to Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe, Germany)
 Center for Curatorial Studies Museum, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, *Calendar 2000*
 Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky, *The Body in Question: Tracing, Displacing and Remaking the Human Figure in Contemporary Art*
 1998 The Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, *Contemporary Sculpture and Sculptors' Drawings*
 Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, *Art on Paper*
 Groninger Museum, Groningen, Netherlands, *What*

	<i>Remains MCMLXXXVII</i> Landesgalerie Oberösterreich Landesmuseum, Linz, Austria, <i>Sculpture Figure Women: Forms of Representation of the Female Body</i> (traveled to Kunstsammlungen, Chemnitz, Germany) MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, <i>Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation</i> (traveled to Miami Art Museum, Miami, Florida; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco) Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, <i>From Head to Toe: Concepts of the Body in Twentieth- Century Art</i>	1994	Stedelijk Museum Bureau, Amsterdam, Netherlands, <i>Puber Alles (Why Am I Who I Am?)</i> UCLA Wight Gallery, Los Angeles, <i>Bad Girls</i> The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, Connecticut, <i>In the Lineage of Eva Hesse</i>
1997	2nd Johannesburg Biennale, Johannesburg, South Africa, <i>Alternating Currents</i>	1993	Palazzo della Stelline, Milan, <i>Normality as Art</i> Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, Germany, <i>Über-Leben</i> Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy, <i>"I Love You More Than My Own Death: A Melodrama in Parts by Pedro Almodovar"</i> Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, <i>Yale Collects Yale</i>
1996	Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, <i>Millennium Eve Dress</i> (traveled to Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, Ohio) UCLA at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, Los Angeles, <i>Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History</i>	1992	MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, <i>Corporal Politics</i> Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, <i>Effected Desire</i> Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany, <i>Spielholle, Aesthetics and Violence</i>
1995	Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, <i>Altered and Irrational</i> The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, <i>Intersections: The Personal and the Social in the Permanent Collection</i> The South Bank Centre, London, <i>Fetishism: Visualizing Power and Desire</i> (traveled to Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, Brighton; Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery, Nottingham; The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, Norwich) Configura 2, Erfurt, Germany, <i>Dialog der Kulturen</i>	1991	Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, <i>1991 Whitney Biennial</i>
		1988	New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, <i>Girls Night Out (Femininity as Masquerade)</i>

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