

THE SONNABEND COLLECTION



rRemai mModern

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Antonio Homem and Ileana Sonnabend. Courtesy of The Sonnabend Collection Foundation.



Rona Pondick. Photo: Nana Watanabe. Courtesy of The Sonnabend Collection Foundation.

RM With photography, video, painting and sculpture, these next two rooms of the exhibition are perhaps the most diverse in terms of media. What relationships do you see?

AH In various ways and through different themes, these works offer an eccentric vision of real or imaginary worlds.

Richard Artschwager transforms disquietingly ordinary pieces of furniture, Rona Pondick's sculpture is both a self-portrait and the representation of a mythical creature, and the paintings of Carroll Dunham and Terry Winters present peculiar biomorphic forms. Boyd Webb, William Wegman, and Fischli and Weiss deal with reality in a way that is both absurd and mundane.

Robert Feintuch paints self-portraits inspired by classical statuary in a way that is far from the heroic model. Similarly, Philip Haas and Luigi Ontani deal with recreations of the past—a past that Anne and Patrick Poirier try to keep alive in their work and in their memory. Andrea Robbins and Max Becher work with the real world but through the perspective of “transportations of place”—migrations of ideas, traditions and cultures that, displaced, evolve towards a world different from the one where they originated.

Finally, Hiroshi Sugimoto deals with the malleability of time, either as arrested by the camera in the *Theaters* and *Seascapes* series, or already frozen, as in the *Dioramas* and the *Wax Museums*.

RM There is definitely a shared sense of the strange and uncanny, a first impression that gives way to questions and confusion, the unfamiliar. In many ways these works reveal a lot about how we see, and how we process and categorize our impressions. Is this confounding quality something that you and Ileana sought out?

AH I don't think we looked for it necessarily, but clearly it is a quality that interested us. We never looked for something specific, we just reacted to what we saw. It is only when I look back at the choices for the collection that I see trends we were unaware of at the time.

RM There are many serial works and pieces that incorporate grids in this part of the exhibition. How would you characterize the importance of repetition in these works?

AH Thinking in series was very typical of the art in the 1970s, and the grids came as a result. I think that the Wegman piece using his dog, *Man Ray On Stilts*, refers to that in a tongue-in-cheek way.

RONA PONDICK

1952

Rona Pondick studied with Richard Serra at the Yale University School of Art, but she found his Minimalism too tight a frame. She reflected, “There was a strong taboo against any kind of use of metaphor or bodily representation. Anything figurative or historical was forbidden. I felt I had to consciously sever my ties with Minimalism mainly because metaphor was so important to me.”

Metamorphosis and the concept of the human-animal hybrid were, from the beginning, major themes in Pondick’s work. She sees these themes as part of a continuum of artistic cross-fertilization that occurs when art and ideas travel across time and borders. For example the connections between the ancient Egyptian Sphinx and the creatures depicted by Francisco Goya and Odilon Redon, or the connections between Ovid’s mythology, Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* (1915), and the disturbing possibility of genetic manipulation in the future.

Dog is Pondick’s first hybrid sculpture, merging a human head and hands—those of the artist herself—with the torso of a dog. Even though it is easy to compare this morphed figure to the Sphinx, it is far from stylized. Its physicality has a strong psychological impact, provoking an instinctive and visceral response.

Dog, 1998–2001

Stainless steel

