

Flash Art

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R E V I E W S

RONA PONDICK

FICTION/NONFICTION



RONA PONDICK, SNEAKER, 1991. SNEAKERS, PLASTIC, ALUMINUM WIRE, 42 X 29 X 31", PHOTO: J. KOTTER. COLLECTION ROOSEUM.

Static art is an anomaly in a world based on the recording media; it's not exactly media but it isn't regular life either. Lately, our pluralistic art world seems to lag behind the dominant artifacts of our time, but the movies, in its presentation of certain issues, can also present those issues in more intellectual and ambiguous forms. Rona Pondick's new show embraces areas that have become almost mainstream in popular culture but are only recently reemerging in art: sick, creepy humor and grotesque science fiction, both with a focus on the human body.

Films like *Eating Raoul*, *Polyester*, and *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* exemplify the Sick; *Eraserhead*, the remake of *The Fly*, and the *Alien* series, with their horrific monster births, are the monuments of the Grotesque. The standouts of this show, *Little Bathers*, a rectangular floor arrangement of five hundred softball-sized pink balls with mouths (alluding to de Kooning), and *Mound*, a fused mound of similar toothy balls covered with clippings from *The Village Voice*, could almost be props from one of these films. The Chattering Teeth Novelty Gag, from which these pieces are made, is one of the ancestral paradigms of Sick Humor—"I would be talking to someone and get this tremendous urge to bite them," Pondick says—but alongside the comedy, these works have a horrific mutational tinge, recalling ovarian cysts, those fatherless non-human "abominations" with random teeth.

Pondick's work is usually concerned with personal, primal actions like biting, sucking, and excretion; this show also acknowledges the larger media universe. *Chairman* is a child-sized semi-humanoid chair wearing shoes, covered with a collage from the pages of the comic book *Spider Man*. This chair-child recalls Nazi lampshades, but it also suggests possible future cloned cyborgs that will follow you around waiting for you to sit down on them.

We are at a point where it makes more sense to group art by content than by style. If one needed to postulate a movement encompassing all the recent art dealing with medical issues, torture instruments, cyberpunk angst, deformed babies, and weird humanoids with distressed surfaces, one might call it the anti-nuclear art movement. Pondick's work is one of its more articulate expressions.

Brian D'Amato