

# Rona Pondick

Patricia Faure Gallery, Santa Monica

The two installations in Rona Pondick's most recent show complement each other very well, despite not having been conceived as a pair. Arriving in the first room, the visitor encounters what could be a stage prop from a fairy tale. *Apple Tree* (2001) is a leafless silver tree that occupies the center of the room. Approximately six feet tall, the trunk is perched on top of real grass that imbues the air with the smell of plant life. Scattered over the grass at its base are twenty-five anthropomorphic objects, in varying shades of silver, which resemble slightly misshapen apples or pears in size and shape. On closer inspection one discovers that this "fruit" has



**Rona Pondick.**  
*Apple Tree*, 2001, cast stainless steel, 259,1 x 137,2 x 147,3 cm; 25 elements 7,6 x 7,6 x 7,6 x 1,3 cm each.

relinquished its passive fairytale role; each piece is now equipped with a full set of teeth.

This motif is clearly a meaningful one for Pondick; the artist has used a model of her own teeth in various projects for over ten years, allowing the original model to slowly degenerate over time.

In the second gallery, one is confronted with *Dirthead* (1997).

This is the first time the piece has been shown in the U.S., and its visceral atmosphere of devastation and decay is even more effective in relation to *Apple Tree*'s relative serenity. *Dirthead* consists of a dirt hill sloping down the corner of the gallery, littered with scores of Pondick's brown and withered toothy objects. The articles themselves are suggestive of dung or of horribly shrunken and malformed human heads of which only the mouths remain. Arranged both in groups and individually, the brown objects are gathered mainly at the base of the dirt pile, as if they had rolled down it over time, or as if they had been tossed there carelessly after some unspeakable massacre occurred at the summit. Nearly-invisible single blades of grass offer the only hint of life in this emotionally charged scene. Together, the two installations look very much like depictions of a "before" and "after." And the strength of Pondick's work lies in the fact that she leaves unresolved the foreboding question—before and after *what?*

**Katie Mondloch Loreto**