GESTURE & POSTURE

We cannot assume because there are similarities in forms of sculptures from different cultures that they are being made for the same reasons. Whenever I am looking at a piece of art, I realize I am involved with three histories: the object’s history, the history of the time, and my personal history.

There is a long history of representations of the body that use gestures and postures to make symbolic and/or emotional meaning. I think it is impossible to totally understand how a sculpture functions outside of its time or culture. But I’m looking for things that are resonant and useful for me as an object maker.

REPETITION OF IMAGERY

“Repetition shows up constantly in art and nature. When I look at the Kanon figure, the duplicated heads in the crown remind me of the earrings in my Rani’s Head. I try to understand the repetition in the underlying structure of trees so that I can make something unnatural that mimics nature. I see that trees’ branches grow in spiraling patterns and I use that in my work. Repetition is implicit in every structure, natural or manmade.”

PONDICK AND TECHNOLOGY

“I do whatever is necessary to make my work. If it means learning a new technology or using a technology from the past, I will do that. I do not use a specific technology for its own sake and I don’t care whether it is ancient or cutting-edge. I think of technology as a tool, like a hammer or saw, and nothing more.”

REPRESENTATIONS OF HAIR

“Wanted to scan hair using computer technology. I was told it wasn’t technically possible, so I started looking at how sculptors represented hair in the past. I became fascinated by the ways artists made hair feel like hair and I was very interested in the ways it can suggest deep meanings that range from the social, ritualistic, symbolic, and fetishistic to the emotional.”

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Rona Pondick was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1952. After studying at Queens College, she received a Masters of Fine Arts degree at Yale University School of Art in 1977. Pondick gained public recognition in the mid-1980s, and since that time her sculpture and site-specific installations have been shown in important individual and group exhibitions throughout the world. Her work is included in major museum and private collections internationally. Pondick is represented by Sonnabend Gallery, New York and Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris/Galatée and exhibits regularly at Howard Yezerski Gallery, Boston.

ARTIST TALK: RONA PONDICK
September 23, 6:30pm
Free with Museum admission but space is limited.
Reserve by calling 508-793-4333 or 508-793-4334
Catalogue available.

The exhibition is organized by Susan L. Stoops, Curator of Contemporary Art.

This exhibition is supported by the Don and Mary Melville Contemporary Art Fund, the Barbara Lee Family Foundation Fund at The Boston Foundation, and the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne. Additional generous support is provided by Worcester Magazine.

Since achieving international prominence in the early 1990s, Rona Pondick has become one of the most accomplished sculptors of her generation. Over the past decade, she has combined both ancient sculptural methods (carving, modeling, and casting) and the latest 3-D computer technologies to produce a powerful group of hybrid sculptures that fuse human and animal, human and flora forms. Her sculptures are cast in stainless steel or bronze, their human parts originating from life casts of Pondick’s body. She sculpts the animal bodies in an epoxy by hand; for tree forms, she combines parts of real trunks and branches with hand-modeled elements. Pondick’s sculptures are not illusionistic or lifelike so much as they are believable fictions, which help us recognize the ways sculptors from all periods and cultures, using the tools available, constantly navigate between representation and invention.

Unlike other considerations of her sculpture, this exhibition presents Pondick’s art as the lens for looking at centuries of world sculpture from the Museum’s collection that she feels resonate with her own creative process. Juxtaposing her hybrids with a personal selection of historic sculptures illustrates their connections to the past and relations to art’s originating impulses. Pondick has “unlocked” her art and the Museum’s, if only temporarily, from the strictly historical confines in which they are usually placed, creating an alternative way of understanding sculpture. At the heart of this project is Pondick’s captivation with the idea of “metamorphosis,” not only the transformations between animal or tree and human forms but also changes in scale, material, surface, and meaning.

Pondick’s groupings focus on her particular interest in three aspects of sculpture—the communicative capacity of gesture and posture, the treatment of hair, and the effects of repetition.

“I WANT TO LOOK AT HOW SCULPTURE IS PHYSICAL AND HOW THE PHYSICAL MAKES PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT. WHEN THESE DIFFERENT HISTORIC SCULPTURES AND MINE ARE INSTALLED NEXT TO ONE ANOTHER, THERE IS A VISUAL COMMUNICATION SPOKEN IN ‘BODY LANGUAGE’ THAT NEEDS LITTLE EXPLANATION. THE SCULPTURES START LOSING THEIR HISTORICAL PLACE AND TAKE ON MORE PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, AND VISCERAL RELATIONS WITH THE VIEWER.”

RONA PONDICK