

The Alchemical Forest

Der alchemistische Wald

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Rona Pondick has long worked in uncomfortable territory. Fragmentation, separation, and disjuncture have been perennial themes in her sculpture and installations since the 1980s. Using techniques of repetition, accumulation, and scatter she has managed to provoke physical and psychological unease, redefining the polite relationship between object and the social. While such preoccupations may stem partly from Minimalist concerns with expanding the sculptural field, her corporeal imagery sprang from somewhere more personal, focusing on the very points of connection between our internal and external worlds, predominantly orifices and excrement. Such visceral extensions of the private body into the very public and politically charged realm of the gallery space laid bare myriad urges and fears buried deep within each of us.

羅娜·龐迪克長期以來，一直在尋找令人不適的領域，進行藝術創作。自1980年代以來，分裂、分離和不連貫一直是她雕塑和裝置藝術作品的主题。通過重複、累積和分散的技巧，她成功地引起身體和心理上的不安，重新定義物體與社會之間的禮貌關係。雖然這些關注點可能部分源於極簡主義對擴大雕塑領域的關注，但她的肉體意象更多來自更加個人的地方，集中在我們內在和外在世界之間的連接點，主要是口和排泄物。將私人身體的內容延伸到藝廊空間這個極富公共性和政治性的領域，揭示我們每個人內心深處的各種慾望和恐懼。

Her most compelling symbol of our pre-conscious wants and needs is the sardonic image of the disembodied mouth that proliferated in constructions and scatter works through the 1990s. At once comical and terrifying, that grimacing protagonist took numerous guises in drawings, objects and even a prop in a performance piece. But perhaps most memorably, it was incarnated in small fist-shaped and bite-sized spheres amassed in works like *Little Bathers* (1990-1991) and *Sour Balls* (1995). Because of their associations with our insatiable appetites, Pondick half jokingly referred to the little mouths as her “forbidden fruits.” They made one of their last appearances in 1997 in a compelling installation titled *Dirt Head*.

她象徵我們無意識的需求和渴望最引人入勝的符號，是在1990年代通過各種建構和分散式作品中，大量出現的戲謔、無頭嘴巴形象。這個扭曲的主角既滑稽又可怕，在繪畫、物品和甚至表演作品的道具中採取多種形式。但或許最令人難忘的是，在〈小浴者〉（1990-1991）和〈酸球〉（1995）等作品中，它被具象化為小拳頭形狀和適合咬合的球體。由於它們與我們無法滿足的食慾有關，龐迪克半開玩笑地稱這些小嘴巴為她的「禁果」。它們最後一次亮相是在1997年一件引人入勝的裝置藝術作品〈塵土頭〉中。

Fashioned from soil, its fetal/fecal mouth forms were partially submerged into an earthen mound as though succumbing to death and decay. Exhibited in Austria, South Africa, and other locations, *Dirt Head* was subject to diverse interpretations from the atrocious to the sublime, informed by local histories and particular cultural perspectives. The narrative potential of the work was a significant shift, one that would extend the reach of the artist's subsequent investigations.

〈塵土頭〉是用土製成的，其胎兒/排泄物狀的口形，部分沉入土丘中，彷彿屈服於死亡和腐敗。在奧地利、南非和其他地方展出，〈塵土頭〉受到從可怕到崇高的各種解讀，這些解讀受到當地歷史和特定文化視角的影響。這件作品的敘事潛力是一個重大的轉變，這將擴大藝術家隨後的研究範疇。



Fig. 52

At about the time Pondick was completing *Dirt Head*, she was invited to conceive a permanent outdoor installation for a private collection of contemporary sculpture sited on acres of bucolic land in upstate New York. No longer working within the critical conventions of the gallery space, she realized that the intimate scale and confrontational installation strategies to which she was accustomed would be overshadowed by the natural surroundings. So she engaged nature on its own terms to create something that could be very much a part of the landscape. The result is *Untitled Tree* (1997), a spectacular sculptural grouping featuring a large barren tree surrounded by scattered “forbidden fruits.”

大約在龐迪克完成〈塵土頭〉的同時，她受邀為紐約北部佔地數畝田園風光的當代雕塑私人收藏創作一件永久的戶外裝置藝術作品。不再受制於藝廊空間，她意識到她

所習慣的親密尺度和對抗性的裝置藝術策略，將被自然環境所掩蓋。因此，她以大自然的條件來創造可以成為景觀一部分的東西。結果是〈無題樹〉（1997），壯觀的雕塑群中，包括一棵大樹，周圍散佈著無數的「禁果」。

The 15-foot-tall pear tree, modeled from one in a nearby orchard, and 50 small orbs were cast in aluminum, a weatherproof material that imparts an unnatural hue and sheen to the organic forms. Despite its metallic skin, the ensemble was so convincingly detailed and positioned as to lose its identity as art. Absorbed into the environment, it lays in wait for those who may happen upon it and discover the disturbing tooth-lined cavities in the fallen fruit. Going one step further than the elegiac *Dirt Head*, this tableaux evokes the full cycle of birth, death, and renewal, dramatized subversively within the image of nature.

這棵15英尺高的梨樹是根據附近果園的樹模型所製作，還有50顆鋁製的小球。這種防水材料賦予有機體不自然的色調和光澤。儘管具有金屬質感的外皮，但整體的細節和位置是如此逼真，以至於一時分辨不出其為藝術作品。融入環境中，它等待那些經過的人，偶然發現，並察覺墜落的水果中，令人不安的牙齒狀口腔。這個畫面進一步超越〈塵土頭〉，喚起出生、死亡和重生的完整循環，在自然的意象中巧妙地戲劇化地呈現。



The evocative multi-part installations of *Untitled Tree* added a new contextual element to Pondick's psychic projections, auguring a conceptual evolution attended by new images, materials, and processes. That first outdoor project was soon followed by the site-specific *Tree* in 1999 and *Apple Tree*, completed two years later, complex projects made possible by private commission. By 2001, the tree had emerged as a compelling and versatile sign in her work, with resonance in religious symbolism and pagan mythology the world over. *Apple Tree*, in particular, cannot escape the orbit of biblical lore. In this elaborately staged work, a barren stainless steel tree grows from a grassy outcropping, its slender branches appearing particularly vulnerable in their denuded state. The tree has jettisoned itself of its overripe burden, which lies strewn about the grass. Upon close inspection these "apples" also reveal gnashing teeth, evincing a hunger that mirrors our own appetites. *Apple Tree* emblemizes the struggle between desire and consequences, a reading amplified by the oblique reference to the Garden of Eden and its final installation in the garden of a Los Angeles temple.

〈無題樹〉這個引人入勝的多部分裝置藝術作品為龐迪克的心靈投射，增添了一個新的語境元素，伴隨著新的圖像、材料和過程的概念演變。這個戶外作品激發創作另外兩個作品：分別是1999年的〈樹〉，以及兩年後完成的〈蘋果樹〉。這兩件作品皆是由私人委託的複雜創作。2001年，樹木已經成為她作品中引人入勝且多才多藝的特徵，與世界各地的宗教象徵和異教神話都有共鳴。特別是〈蘋果樹〉無法擺脫聖經的脈絡。在這個精心布置的作品中，一棵赤裸、不孕不結果的不銹鋼樹從一塊草地的凸起處生長，它的纖細樹枝在裸露的狀態下，顯得特別脆弱。這棵樹已經拋棄它過熟的負擔，並散落在草地上。仔細檢查這些「蘋果」，它們咬牙切齒，顯示出與我們自己食慾相映的渴望。〈蘋果樹〉象徵欲望與後果之間的鬥爭，透過對伊甸園的暗示，所延伸出的解讀。它最後座落於洛杉磯一座寺廟的花園中，更加強此一解讀。

The specificity of cultural references summoned by Pondick's trees is matched by a level of naturalistic detail that has not yet been seen in her work. Cast in stainless steel and finished with lapidary precision, these trees may be mistaken at first for the real thing, especially when presented out-of-doors. But their stainless steel bark and fruit, carefully modulated into alternately matte and smooth surfaces, catch the light a little too sharply and reflect the sky in an otherworldly way, eventually distinguishing itself from surrounding environs as something artificial and more eternal. Whereas Pondick once spoke of the transient nature of being in transitional objects modeled from wax, cloth, dirt, and other relatively ephemeral materials, her metal trees reinforce endurance and the constancy of cyclic events. The fallen fruit of *Tree* will never rot into the soil, but will continually rage against their own demise. And the parable of the fall of man insinuated by *Apple Tree* will forever be acted out in its garden plot-cum-burial ground. Timelessness is engineered into these arboreal of choice, significant for both visual and conceptual reasons. But it also poses greater technical challenge than traditional sculptural materials, requiring a different kind of aesthetic discipline. The result is a slower, more considered approach to object making and a greater concentration of ideas distilled into far fewer works in the years since.

龐迪克樹木所展現的特定文化淵源，與她作品中尚未見到的自然主義細節相符合。這些樹木以不銹鋼鑄造，經過寶石般的精確加工，初看時可能會被誤認為真品，尤其是

當它們在戶外展示時，更是如此。然而，它們的不銹鋼樹皮和水果，被精心調製成交替的磨砂和光滑表面，在捕捉光線時，反射出一種過於尖銳、以超自然的方式映照天空。最終使其與周圍環境區分開來，成為人工和更永恆的存在。龐迪克曾經談到從蠟、布、泥土和其他相對短暫的材料模型中，表現出過渡對象的生命短暫性，而她的金屬樹木強調持久性和週期性事件的恆常性。〈樹〉的落下的果實永遠不會腐爛成土壤，而將不斷地對自己的消亡感到憤懣。而由〈蘋果樹〉引發的人類墮落寓言，將永遠在花園劇場兼墳場中上演。在樹木中注入永恆性，對於視覺和概念都是同等重要。但也以不同類型的美學紀律，提出比傳統雕塑材料更大的技術挑戰。最終，在物體製作上使用更緩慢、更深思熟慮的方法，以及在過去的幾年中，將更多的思想濃縮成更少的作品。



Fig. 53.

At about the time she was working on her first tree installations, Pondick also embarked on a series of human/animal hybrids with her own visage grafted onto the bodies of various species. A four-year period of research and experimentation resulted in her first successful creature, the Sphinx-like *Dog* (1998-2001). In an effort to plausibly miniaturize her head for another hybrid, the mercurial evolutionary riot of *Monkeys* (1998-2001), Pondick turned to 3-dimensional scanning and rapid-prototyping, which enabled her to resize her head to any scale without loss of proportionate detail. An extreme result of this new technology appeared in *Worry Beads* (1999-2001), a bronze string of seven graduated versions of her head, the smallest of which measures less than one-half of an inch in height. The uncanny results prompted new possibilities for her trees, beginning with *Pussy Willow Tree* (2001), an outdoor commission that, like *Apple Tree*, has also been exhibited in a gallery space. Planted in the dirt, the leafless willow seems both whimsical and abject, its cascade of wilting branches leading it a melancholic form. Encountering it inside or outdoors, one is arrested by the extraordinary technical feat required to articulate hundreds of wispy branched that look as if they could be sent clattering in the slightest breeze. That seduction of material and craft draws us intimately into Pondick's alchemical fiction. As we approach *Pussy Willow Tree* at arm's length, its tiny buds reveal themselves to be minuscule human heads. It is Pondick's own miniaturized face clinging to every branch, expressionless, androgynous, and mysterious. While disturbing in its incongruity, this human/vegetable hybrid is also exhilarating as a powerful image of growth and transformation.

在她開始製作第一批樹木裝置藝術作品的同時，龐迪克還開始製作一系列人類/動物混種生物。她將自己的臉孔嫁接到不同物種的身體上。經過四年的研究和實驗，她成功製作出她的第一個生物，人面獅身獸般的〈狗〉（1998-2001）。為了合理地使她的頭部迷你化，以應用於另一個混種生物 — 變異性極大的〈猴子〉（1998-2001），龐迪克轉向了立體掃描和快速原型製作技術，這使她能夠在不損失細節的情況下，調整頭部的大小。這種新技術的極端結果出現在〈擔憂珠〉（1999-2001）中。這是一條含有七顆不同大小版本的頭像，所製成的青銅項鍊，其中最小的一顆高度不到半英吋。這些令人不安的結果為她的樹木提供新的可能性，開始於〈貓柳〉（2001）。它是一件戶外委託作品，與〈蘋果樹〉一樣，也在藝廊空間中展出。種植在泥土中的無葉柳樹既異想天開又令人感到卑微，其垂垂枝條的串聯使它呈現出憂鬱的形式。在室內或室外看見它，人們會被在最微風中就能發出聲響的數百片脆弱樹枝的卓越技術所吸引。這種材料和工藝的誘惑親密地帶我們進入龐迪克的煉金虛構中。當我們伸手觸摸〈貓柳〉時，它的小芽顯示微小的人類頭部。這是龐迪克自己的迷你臉孔緊貼在每一根枝條上，面無表情、中性且神秘。儘管在其不協調性中具有令人不安的成分，這種人/植物混合體也是令人振奮的強大生長和形象轉變。







Fig. 54



Fig. 55

Forever blossoming, Pondick's steel "tree of life" is a vivid symbol that touches upon a host of creation myths and universal cosmologies. With the image of the anthropomorphic *Pussy Willow Tree*, she invokes a wide array of associations dating back to ancient eras and given voice in Old Testament parables, Buddhist iconography, Greek mythology, and modern fairy tales. Looking at *Pussy Willow Tree*, one cannot help but recall legendary instances of human/botanical fusion, such as Adonis being born of a myrrh or Daphne transforming into a laurel. Fantastic images of hybridization – the term is botanical in its etymology – have captured artistic imaginations for millennia, from Homer to Kafka to Disney. Appearing across cultures, the themes of metamorphosis and animism seem deeply embedded in human consciousness. In the contemporary context Pondick's hybrid images found a new

historical imperative as the embodiment of the anxiety of a new *fin de siècle*. It may seem paradoxical that Pondick engaged cutting-edge technology to invoke ancient, deep-seated associations with her human/animal/botanical convergences. However, such manipulation of living matter, or cellular, molecular, and genetic levels, is now made possible by the transformative power of computer. The digital language of 0 and 1 allows us to decode and recode nature at will, much as Pondick has done with her own body. The invention of monsters is a 21st-century reality, as evidenced by the entry of the word *chimera* into the scientific lexicon, not as a metaphor, but to describe new biological forms. With the selective aid of digital technology and industrial materials such as stainless steel and silicone rubber, Pondick taps into a labyrinth of associations both sacred and scientific, giving concrete form to unconscious desires and cultural fears with ever more virtuosic feats of aesthetic imagination.

永恆綻放的鋼製「生命之樹」是生動的象徵，觸及眾多的神話和普遍的宇宙論。通過人形的〈貓柳〉，龐迪克喚起自古以來的各種聯想，並在舊約寓言、佛教圖像、希臘神話和現代童話中發聲。觀看〈貓柳〉，人們不禁會回想起傳說中的人類/植物融合，例如阿多尼斯出生於沒藥或達芙妮變成月桂。夢幻的混合圖像 — 詞源上是植物學的術語 — 幾千年來一直捕捉藝術想像，從荷馬到卡夫卡再到迪士尼。主題的變形和泛靈主義在跨文化出現，似乎深深根植於人類意識中。在當代背景下，龐迪克的混合形體找到新的歷史使命，成為新世紀末焦慮的具體體現。龐迪克運用尖端技術喚起與人/動物/植物匯聚的古老、根深蒂固的聯想，這可能看似自相矛盾。然而，透過計算機的轉化力量，對生命物質或細胞、分子和基因水平的操作現在已經成為可能。0和1的數字語言使我們能夠隨心所欲地解碼和重新編碼自然，就像龐迪克對自己的身體所做的那樣。怪物的創造是21世紀的現實，這一事實在科學詞彙中出現了「合成獸」的詞語，不是作為一種隱喻，而是用來描述新的生物形態。借助數位技術和不銹鋼、矽膠等工業材料的選擇與幫助，龐迪克深入挖掘既神聖又科學的聯想迷宮，用越來越多的藝術想像力與高超技巧，具體呈現潛在的欲望和文化恐懼。



Fig. 56



Fig. 57

Originally conceived for temporary installation on the highly manicured grounds of Cranbrook Art Museum in Michigan, Pondick's next tree exploited the full potential of its historic architectural setting. For her intervention, she selected a site adjacent to three reflecting

pools descending down the grassy campus designed by Eiel Saarinen. At the top of symmetrical pools stands Carl Milles' *moderne* monument of Triton surrounded by a fountain of slippery mermen. At the opposite end, Pondick placed *Crimson Queen Maple* (2002-2003), a tree sculpture nearly six feet tall with contorted boughs extending the breadth of twelve feet. Unlike previous trees, her ornamental maple was planted in a large bronze pot filled with smooth, black Japanese river rocks. Seated on a low concrete plinth proportionate to its surroundings, *Crimson Queen Maple* was poised like an exotic garden feature, ready to elicit casual admiration. In this context, most viewers experienced the work serendipitously while crossing the campus on nearby pathways, eventually slowed in their tracks by the tree's unseasonal, defoliated state and a peculiar glint in the branches. Close up, it reveals its stainless steel bark, and closer still, its peculiar buds transform into tiny human heads of varying scale, some approaching the size of small fruits. Eyes closed and mouth shut, Pondick's stoic visage hangs from every branch. The sheer number of these human buds, 120 in all, can be read alternately as a disturbing expression of fractured identity or as a stirring manifestation of creative potential. In either case it is a vivid, unforgettable image of rampant self-proliferation.

起初為密西根州克蘭布魯克藝術博物館的草坪所設計的臨時裝置藝術作品，龐迪克的下一棵樹充分利用其歷史悠久的建築環境潛力。她選擇位於艾利爾·薩林設計的草坪上，三個倒影池旁邊處。在對稱的池塘頂部，卡爾·米勒斯的摩登崇拜者特里同站在由滑溜的美人魚所組成的噴泉中。在相反的一端，龐迪克放置〈赤紅女王楓〉（2002-2003），一個近六英尺高的樹木雕塑，扭曲的樹枝橫跨十二英尺寬。與先前的樹木不同，她的裝飾楓樹種植在一個裝滿光滑、黑色日本河石的大銅缸中。坐落在與周圍環境成比例的低水泥基座上，〈赤紅女王楓〉像一個異國情調的花園特色，準備獲得讚美。在這種情況下，大多數觀眾在穿越附近的小徑時偶然地看到了這件作品，最終被樹木異季節的落葉狀態和樹枝上奇異的閃光所吸引，而慢下腳步。近距離觀看其不銹鋼樹皮，再更進一步，它奇異的芽變成大小不一的人頭，有些接近果實的大小。閉著眼睛和嘴巴，龐迪克嚴肅的面容懸掛在每一根樹枝上。這些人類頭像芽的數量之多，總數為 120 顆，可以交替地被解讀為破碎身份所帶來令人不安的表達，或者是創造潛力且激動人心的表現。在任何一種情況下，這都是一個生動而難忘的自我激增形象。



Fig. 58

With *Crimson Queen Maple*, Pondick orchestrates a kinesthetic experience that unfolds incrementally, enacting the active process of mutation as one draws near. That alchemical magic, the inexplicable amalgam of the organic and the technological, mythic in its construction, provokes a conflicting mix of responses from the viewer. Nothing can be more immediately recognizable than a tree, but upon approaching Pondick's versions, discrepancies between knowledge and perception confound us. People have often approached Pondick's work, going back two decades, as one creeps up on a caged animal: knowing they are safe, yet fearful of the unknown, the aesthetic equivalent of "fight or flight." That apprehension is amplified by the random encounter one may have with works like *Apple Tree* and *Crimson Queen Maple*. At Cranbrook, people huddled about Pondick's lustrous tree; neighborhood joggers, schoolchildren, and the occasional museum visitor became caught in its spell. One morning a scrap of paper was pierced onto the tip of one of its finely wrought branches with the urgent message: "Please tell the artist this is amazing."

在〈赤紅女王楓〉中，龐迪克精心編排一種漸進展開的動態體驗，演繹在接近時發生的主動變異過程。這種煉金魔法，有機和技術間難以解釋的混合，構造上是神話的，引起觀眾充滿矛盾的反應。沒有什麼比一棵樹更容易被認出的，但在接近龐迪克的版本時，知識和感知之間的差異使我們感到困惑。人們經常在接近像〈蘋果樹〉和〈赤紅女王楓〉這樣的作品時，像悄悄走近籠中的動物一樣：知道自己是安全的，但對未知感到害怕，這猶如美學上所指「戰鬥還是逃跑」的對等價值。這種擔憂在與類似〈蘋果樹〉和〈赤紅女王楓〉這樣的作品偶然相遇時，所放大。在克蘭布魯克，人們圍繞聚集於龐迪克的光澤樹；社區慢跑者、學童和偶然造訪的博物館遊客都被其所吸引。一天早晨，一張紙條被刺穿到其中一根精細製作的樹枝尖端，上面急切地寫著：「請告訴藝術家這太神奇了。」



Fig. 59



Fig. 60

The choice of the crimson queen is a significant one. A dwarf variety, more closely related to the azalea than the maple, it is bred to be a tame, somewhat cursory version of true tree. Pondick's adaptation of it is an even more elaborate fiction, further pruned and reshaped to meet her own aesthetic and practical concerns. While resolving most of the technical problems with the imposing *Crimson Queen*, Pondick also began work on several more diminutive sculptures based on bonsai specimens. Part botany, part aesthetics, bonsai is an ancient horticultural practice of miniaturization. The endeavor requires painstaking pruning and nurturing over decades, simultaneously coaxing and stunting growth to hold a species in

stasis. In Zen philosophy, the tree and container represent sky and earth, shaped into a harmonic equilibrium. An extreme domestication of wilderness, bonsai cultivation proves that the urge to reinvent nature is not only a modern conceit, but one that dates back centuries.

選擇赤紅女王楓是關鍵的。這是矮樹品種，與楓樹相比更接近杜鵑花，被培育成一種較為馴服、相對簡略的真樹版本。龐迪克對它的調整是更為複雜的虛構，進一步修剪和改造，以滿足她自己的美學和實際需求。在解決赤紅女王楓大部分的技術問題時，龐迪克還開始製作基於盆景樹木樣本，但更小型的雕塑。盆景是古老的園藝實踐，對植物進行微縮。這需要在數十年內進行精心修剪和培育，同時引導並阻礙生長，以保持該物種的靜止狀態。在禪宗哲學中，樹和容器代表天空和大地，形成和諧的平衡。盆景栽培是野生樹木的極端馴化，證明改造自然的慾望不僅是現代的妄想，而且可以追溯到數世紀前。

This elaborate, pre-digital manipulation of the natural world is a perfect match for Pondick's interpretation. The themes of transformation and proliferation embodied by *Pussy Willow Tree* and *Crimson Queen Maple* are condensed with jewel-like precision in works like *Chinese Elm* (2002-2003) and *Fukien Tea* (2002-2003), two related works featuring golden heads on ash white trunks. The animated *Fukien* lurches sideways from its black pot, as though fleeing the shallow confines on its dense tangle of roots. Such anthropomorphism is emphasized in a series of white azalea shrub bonsais that sprout tiny gold hands at the tip of each attenuated limb. This human character is further evoked by the botanical name of the azalea sculpture titled *Helen Curtis* (2005-2006). The gilt-edged plant seems uncannily alive, begging our attention with outstretched palms, her hundreds of delicate fingers grasping outwards to return our touch.

這種精心策劃、前數位時代的自然世界操作與龐迪克的詮釋完美契合。如〈中國榆〉（2002-2003）和〈福建茶〉（2002-2003）等作品中所表現的變革和擴散主題，這兩個作品呈現金色頭部與灰白樹幹，以寶石般的精確度凝縮在其中。生氣勃勃的〈福建茶〉從黑色盆中橫移，彷彿在逃離淺薄的狹隘空間，其根結纏密集。這種擬人化在一系列強調於白色杜鵑灌木盆景中，這些盆景在每條細長枝條的尖端長出微小的金色手。這個植物雕塑的名稱為〈Helen Curtis〉（2005-2006）進一步喚起人的性格。這個鍍金的植物似乎活靈活現，伸出張開的手掌引起我們的注意，她數百根精緻的手指向外伸展，期待著我們的觸摸。

At less than two feet in height, Pondick's bonsais demand a different level and speed of attention, inviting an intimate and contemplative viewing experience that is heightened by the drama of bonsai's innate theatricality. The exquisite finishes and minuscule features of works like *Pyracantha* (2005-2006) lure us to within a breath's distance to appreciate its finely articulated organic structures, a delicacy tempered by its steely sheen and dangerous, spear-like shoots. Like the living bonsai on which they are modeled, Pondick's unnatural wonders are a precarious balance of vulnerability and resilience. *Firethorn* (2005-2006) is a particularly thorny specimen potted in a stainless steel bowl. The chrome-like finish of the entire ensemble offers a stark, post-industrial image of nature. Like all of her bonsais,

Firethorn is a fabrication based on a fantasy. In relatively short order, given the contingencies of casting and fabrication, Pondick produced more than a dozen bonsai sculptures over a five-year period, while continuing with ever more incongruous human/animal hybrids like *Cat* (2002-2005), a creature with a ponderously outsized human hand growing from its tiny torso. Her interspecies menagerie was evolving into exponentially more malleable and exotic forms.

在不到兩英尺的高度下，龐迪克的盆景需要不同層次和速度的關注，邀請觀者進行高度戲劇性的視覺體驗，這種體驗被盆景固有的戲劇性所增強。像〈火棘〉（2005-2006）這樣的作品的精美表面和微小特徵，引誘我們靠近，欣賞其精細而巧妙的有機結構。這種巧妙性被其鋼鐵般的光澤和危險的槍矛狀枝條所調和。與其塑造的生盆景一樣，龐迪克的不自然奇蹟是脆弱和復原的危險平衡。〈火刺木〉（2005-2006）是特別多刺的樣本，種植在不銹鋼碗中。整個套裝的鉻樣完成呈現出鮮明的後工業自然形象。像她所有的盆景一樣，〈火刺木〉是基於幻想的創作。在鑄造和製作的偶發性中，龐迪克在五年的時間裡製作十多個盆景雕塑，同時繼續創作愈發不協調的人/動物混合生物，如小巧的身軀上生有一只龐大的人手的〈貓〉（2002-2005）。她的跨物種動物園正在演變成更具可塑性和奇異形式。



Fig. 01

Just as her work was gaining new momentum, Pondick suffered a setback when she lost feeling in her right arm and leg. Delicate surgery was required to stave off paralysis, followed by months of recuperation. When she finally returned to the studio, she began giving shape to some of the inexplicable images that had surfaced and steeped during her convalescence. After completing *Gillie* (2007), a remarkably expressive bronze bonsai struggling to escape its gilded tray, she tackled her largest sculpture in several years, *Head in Tree* (2006-2008). Standing nine feet tall, the frail tree holds in its branches the life-size head of the artist. Polished on the back and sides to a mirror-like finish, the stainless steel head looks much like a wayward balloon entangled in its boughs, but head on, we come face to face again with Pondick's own features, naturalistically textured down to their very pores. Three branches pierce through the skull, pinning it in place with its growing shoots. It's a dreamlike image from an anxious and fevered imagination, worthy of a Symbolist like Odilon Redon, whom Pondick admires. What may be taken for a violent image on the surface reveals itself in time

to be an image of resignation and fulfillment, manifesting a return to origins.

就在她的作品獲得新的動力時，龐迪克遭受了一次打擊，她的右臂和右腿失去知覺。需要精密的手術來防止癱瘓，接著是長達數月的休養。當她終於回到工作室時，她開始創作一些在休養期間浮現和難以理解的畫面。完成〈吉利〉（2007）後，一個極具表現力的青銅盆景，努力要逃離它的鍍金托盤，她開始著手創作幾年來最大的雕塑之一，〈樹中之首〉（2006-2008）。這棵九英尺高的虛弱樹枝上承載著藝術家的真人大小的頭。不鏽鋼頭的背面和側面經過拋光，呈現出鏡子般的光澤，看起來就像是飛走的氣球纏在樹枝上。但正面來看，我們再次面對面地看到龐迪克的特徵，紋理逼真，甚至到毛孔的細節。三根樹枝穿透頭骨，用生長的嫩枝固定在原地。這是一個來自焦慮而狂熱的想像所產生的夢幻般形象，可與象徵主義者奧迪隆·雷東（Odilon Redon）相比擬。表面上可能被視為暴力形象的事物，隨著時間的推移，它顯現為充滿辭令和實現的形象，體現回歸根源。



Fig. 52

Fragmentation and separation, previous leitmotifs of Ponderick's work, have now given way to reconciliation and reclamation in *Head in Tree*. While her face has tended to be used as a surrogate for the proverbial "everyone," it's difficult not to imagine this latest sculpture as a true self-portrait, particularly in light of her recent health crisis. After all, the tree is the inverted image of the forked ganglia of the central nervous system, struggling to balance its dangerously unwieldy load. *Head in Tree* is arguably among her most personal works to date. Yet, tapping into a preconscious desire to belong, it is also among her most universal – a strangely comforting incantation, its polished steel surface mirroring, quite literally, our own vulnerable and rootless image.

碎裂和分離，是龐迪克作品中以往的主題，如今在〈樹中之首〉中已經被和解和重新宣告取代。儘管她的臉常被用作寓言中的「每個人」，但難以想像這最新的雕塑不是一個真正的自畫像，尤其是考慮到她最近的健康危機。畢竟，這棵樹是中樞神經系統分叉神經節的倒影，努力平衡其危險又難以掌握的負擔。〈樹中之首〉可以說是她迄今為止最個人的作品之一。然而，它也是最具普遍性的作品之一，深入挖掘對歸屬的潛在慾望，以奇異而令人安慰的咒語，其拋光的鋼表面，反映了我們自己脆弱而無根的形象。