



Rona Pondick's Monkeys installation

Harpies, merpeople, fauns...and monkeys. Rona Pondick's entrancing sculpture sees our simian relatives merge with human parts in the historical surrounds of Upper Belvedere palace.

- Latest iteration of the Carlone Contemporary series
- Runs Sept 23, 2022 to Jan 8, 2023



MONKEYS, 1998-2001



(Rona Pondick, *Monkeys*, 1998-2001; Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London · Paris · Salzburg · Seoul; © Rona Pondick)

The world has always had a certain fascination with beings that are part human, part animal, or who might transform between the two.

Ancient times are full of them. Think of the Great Sphinx of Giza: silent guardian of the pyramids. Not to mention sundry Egyptian deities.

Such hybrids have found their way into great literary works of civilisation, too. The Minotaur in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, for example. Or Franz Kafka's 1915 *Metamorphosis* has salesman Gregor Samsa turn into an insect.

Similar themes continue to fill stories today. Centaurs lived in the Forbidden Forest at Hogwarts, for example.

Monkeys by the acclaimed US sculptor Rona Pondick slips into this artistic and literary tradition.

The installation continues the Carlone Contemporary series, featuring a piece of contemporary art in the baroque Carlone Hall at Upper Belvedere palace. As such, the hybrid or dual nature of the piece comes across at different levels.

Quite apart from the juxtaposition of old and new embedded in the Carlone Contemporary concept, the sculpted monkeys of the installation title morph seamlessly into casts of Pondick's own head and limbs. (A motif apparently inspired in part by Kafka's story.)

Closer examination reveals the transition between human and monkey is not quite as seamless as supposed from a distance: the monkeys are representations in smooth stainless steel, while Pondick's metal casts reflect her true form (albeit at a smaller scale).

Monkeys also plays with our perceptions, much like the illusionist frescoes on the surrounding walls.

The urge is to walk around and view the troop from different angles. The mix of poses swings from cheeky playfulness to suffering, though much depends on your position and interpretation.

TICKETS, DATES & TIPS

Belvedere lets loose the monkeys between September 23rd, 2022 and January 8th, 2023. A ticket for Upper Belvedere includes the installation.

The seductive smoothness of parts of Pondick's work reminds me of exhibits within the wonderful Tony Cragg sculpture exhibition at the Albertina. Well

worth a visit, too (but ends on November 6th, 2022). Cragg's works have also appeared in historical surrounds in the past.

HOW TO GET TO THE INSTALLATION

Follow the instructions on the directions page to reach Upper Belvedere. The Carlone Hall is the first room on your right after the ticket check.

Address: Prinz Eugen-Straße 27, 1030 Vienna

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