

## Interview...

### RONA PONDICK, "DRAWINGS AND SCULPTURES"

Rona Pondick is one of the most accomplished sculptors of her generation, having participated in more than a hundred international exhibitions and received numerous awards and grants. By experimenting with different materials and forms she creates work that is highly suggestive, psychologically provocative and engaging to viewers. Ever since her success in the late 80s, she has worked with fragments that invoke the body, including shoes, baby bottles and teeth. In the late 90s, she created her first hybrid sculptures, merging her own body fragments with animals or trees. Her current exhibition, "Drawings and Sculptures," is on display at Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac in Paris from 4 to 28 July 2012. Art Media Agency spoke to the American artist to learn more about her work.

**"Drawings and Sculptures" is your fifth solo show at Ropac's. What is it about the concept that made you return four times?**

We have a long relationship and this one has been very rewarding. We have worked together for more than 21 years. We are like a family.

**What fascinates you about sculpture historically and how do you integrate that into your own work?**

History is my family tree, from Egyptian art to Etruscan art to Roman art. There are just so many periods and images, particularly the animal-human hybrid that has been around a long time. The hybrid image interests me in both a challenging and exciting way because of its history and so I became very engaged in that and curious, could I take this image that is so rich and historical and use it in a contemporary way and make it feel as though it were part of my own tongue?

**You often bring contradictory elements together. What is your intention for doing so?**

Kafka has always been a hero and I'm very drawn to the way in which, in his writing, he will take things that feel incredibly serious and at the same time change them and make it seem quite ridiculous. He takes things that are contradictory or different in nature or behavior and makes them feel as though they were one. That is something that has just always been of interest to me. I think that it's very enriching and very natural, like life, and life is never only one thing. You can experience something and think, "oh my God, this is fabulous, I want it," and then you get it and you start to think, "Why did I want this? It's not what I had imagined it to be." But maybe it is! Or not! Things are complex, and the complexity that exists in life, the fragment, the parts of things that can be read in multiple ways, those are the things that symbolically I'm very interested in.

**Which are your favorite materials to combine?**

It is more about the image, rather than the combining of different materials, because usually when I'm working on the original sculpture, I can work from two to eight years on one single sculpture where I bring together different parts, and seamlessly, so that it looks like nature made it, although it was entirely made by hand. All of these hybrid trees you see in the exhibition, they were all made up, they are not actual trees. Sometimes people say to me "Oh, you just found this tree!" and I'm thinking, "If it were only that easy!" Much of it is modeled. Much of it comes together over long periods of time, too, as I try to make them look like they just magically happened and that nature made them.

**How do you choose the materials you work with?**

This was not the material I was working with originally. All the work was done in a material that was very plastic and fluid that allowed me to model and carve, to chase and correct. I'm using a lot of different methods to create, merging old and new technologies. For example, I model, carve, chase, cast and then I also use cutting-edge computer technologies. I sometimes take a part of my own body, manipulate it as I want to, scan it into the computer, then use another computer to generate it on the scale that I want, make castings from it, alter it as I want, and then merge it into the final product. This head is the same as my Pillow Head. I use the computer just to change the scale, that's all. Everything else is just literally made by hand through merging different technologies. I don't have a hierarchy or an attitude that one way is better than another way. I just think of them as tools and I do whatever I need to, to get the imagery the way I want.

**Your work highly engages viewers and makes them question your work. Is this the main intention?**

I see art as a visual language, I think if we look, trust our senses, and let it work, it will transport you. And I think that art doesn't need an explanation, it speaks for itself.

**Don't you play with the effect that your work poses questions to the viewer?**

I am interested in metaphor, which is highly suggestive, symbolic and can make the viewer think of a number of things or associations. And I like to create things in a way so that they can be viewed in multiple ways. I am interested in things that are highly, highly suggestive.

**How has your work developed since it first became famous in the late 80s?**

We change and we grow, and I am sixty now, I am not the same person as when I was in my 30s or 40s. I hope that I will always continue to evolve and challenge myself and change.

**And concerning materials?**

I am a material-addict. I'm always looking for what is going to communicate colors, textures, materials, and what forms an image. The whole thing should come together so that it just looks and feels right.

**What are your next projects?**

I have an exhibition of work that's in Istanbul in the fall and in the late spring a big show at Sonnabend Gallery in New York. In Istanbul it is going to be just sculpture, and in New York it is going to be sculpture and drawings.

