

Rona Pondick

SIDNEY JANIS

Using casts of her own teeth, Rona Pondick made biting comments on artifice and nature, life and death, and good and evil in this multipart installation. Here a lone cast-aluminum tree stood like a hardened survivor on an island of real dirt. Beneath its barren branches were scattered groups of round metallic forms resembling fallen fruit. Closer inspection, though, revealed a disturbing, all-too-human grimace frozen across each form. In Pondick's Garden of Eden, depravity was not camouflaged. Half-covered with soil, the piled forms recalled mass graves. Yet, while evoking

all the horrors of indiscriminate killings, the work also imparted a solemn poetic beauty that presented death simply as a natural part of life.

In one room, Pondick's chattering dentures appeared again—this time with bright red gums and sparkling teeth and intertwined with red-painted ears embedded in a totemic newspaper sculpture that was suspended from the ceiling. On the floor below, more teeth and bulbous newspapered forms were heaped on top of a pair of light-blue children's sneakers. Entitled *Aaron's Third Ear*, the piece was a partially humorous, partially poignant comment on the lack of communication between a father and son.

Other works here included schematic drawings with more ears and mouths and the repeated phrases "I want" and "No." The obsessive repetition of the former also appeared on fiberglass pillow sculptures, whose shimmering surface designs were cruelly inviting. The same silvery pigment decorated a mattress leaning vertically against a wall. All of these objects, usually symbols of comfort and life, were here rendered dysfunctional, echoing our desires ("I want") and their sometimes denied fulfillment ("No").

DEIDRE STEIN GREBEN

**Rona Pondick, *Tree*, 1997,
mixed media, 119" x 64" x 47".
Sidney Janis.**

