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Rona Pondick: Works on Paper & Artist's Books

Howard Yezerki Gallery

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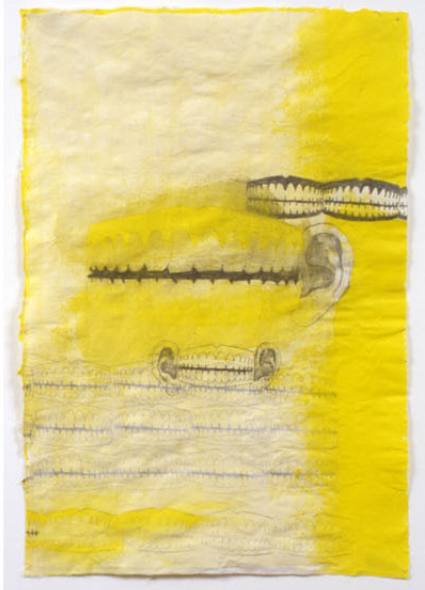
Schedule

Through June 20

During regular gallery hours

The work of the New York-based sculptor and printmaker Rona Pondick is included in the landmark survey "**Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism and Self-Representation**" at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, as well as in a one-woman exhibition at the prestigious Howard Yezerki Gallery.

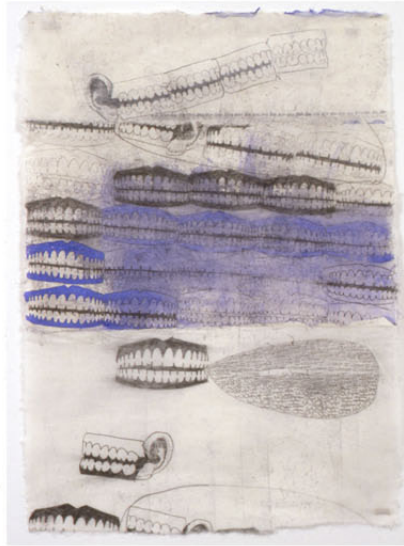
Pondick's works, which have been included in many major international shows in recent years, have the uncanny ability to be simultaneously important and insightful, as well as puzzling or pathetic, and always provoke a range of responses, from fascination to humor to disgust.



"Ear to Mouth" (11)

Some of this ambivalence was expressed by the artist herself during her presentation at a daylong colloquium for the surrealist exhibition at MIT. For example, she remarked on how her early series of brown, wax forms prompted a discussion with her shrink about her compulsion to make turd sculptures. Later, she described how, much against her will, she was dragged off by a male curator to see an exhibit of nude bathers by the French impressionist Renoir. The response to the encounter with all that Renoir-inspired flesh resulted in her signature small, pink balls embedded with teeth.

A crisis later occurred when her source for the teeth, a joke store, dried up. The manufacturer had discontinued the product, but, when contacted, informed the artist of a willingness to fill an order for "several thousand." The audience howled when Pondick revealed that, "for a moment, I considered it." She later decided to cast her own teeth.



"Ear to Mouth" (4)

superb and masterful. But, good heavens, what do those ears and teeth mean? Unfortunately, I can't afford the hourly rate of the artist's shrink.



"12345"

After enduring a whole lecture on turds, teeth, penises, vaginas, baby bottles and upholstered little stools (this time of the seating variety) with shoes, one begins to wonder: Is this a gifted artist or a really disturbed person?

After viewing the graphic works and artist books on display at Yezerksi, I am willing to grant her the benefit of the doubt — at least for now — and consider her more a troubling, but very talented, artist.

Her small, mixed-media drawings from the "Ear to Mouth" series are, literally, about just that. The paper seems fragile and delicate, like thin, crumpled vellum. The drawing is

And what to make of the hundreds of lines of carefully written "I Want." Or, in the edition of 100 bound, numbered and signed artist books, published by Yezerksi, the cryptic mantra "12345."

Is the repetition of these numbers an incantation of a healing process, or symptomatic of obsessive compulsive disorder? This is often the very nature of the difficulty of separating the work of an artist from the rantings of a lunatic.

The jury is still out.

— Charles Giuliano

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