

**Metamorphoses: Rona Pondick at NCMA March 13 through May 23,” *Long Island Contemporary Arts Examiner*, March 6, 2010**  
**By Carleton Palmer**



Rona Pondick, "Muskrat," stainless steel, courtesy of Sonnabend Gallery, NY

**Sculptural work by [Rona Pondick](#), fusing human and natural forms in provocative ways, will be on view in *Metamorphosis: Rona Pondick*, at [Nassau County Museum of Art's](#) (NCMA) Contemporary Gallery from March 13 to May 23.**

*Rona Pondick blends traditional sculptural methods with the latest 3-D computer technology to produce powerful sculptural objects that morph human, animal and plant forms. Her work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions in this country and abroad and is in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, The Morgan Library & Museum, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, among other art museums in this country, and in prominent museums in France, Germany and Israel. Much honored in her field, Pondick's many awards include a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship, a Mid-Atlantic Arts Grant and Guggenheim Fellowship. A native of New York, Pondick lives and works in New York City. She studied at Yale University School of Art and received her MFA in 1977. She has lectured at many universities and institutions in the U.S. and in Israel and France.*



Rona Pondick, "Fox," photo courtesy of Fundament Foundation and Sonnabend Gallery, NY

**Subscribing to the premise that sculptures are things-in-the-world, Rona Pondick has in the past rendered the paraphernalia of everyday life such as beds, teeth, baby bottles, shoes and chairs in unexpected and provocative combinations and materials. Organisms do not escape the same treatment, as in the case of stainless steel trees blooming tumorous tiny human heads, and human-headed animal forms reversing the animal-headed human forms of ancient deities.**

**Verbal description of visual art has the same value as the description of a violin sonata as “the sound produced when a horse’s tail is drawn across a cat’s gut,” but phenomenological description provides a place to begin. These works are devoid of the cartoon humor their casual description might suggest. More careful description of “Muskrat,” for example, should precede analysis, and consist of observing that this foot-high stainless steel piece appears to consist of three visual elements. They are a smoothly rendered, schematic animal body and tail, an articulately rendered and textured human head which is proportionately small in relation to the animal body, and similarly articulate, naturalistically-sized, human fingers in the place of the animal body forepaws.**



Rona Pondick, "Rams Head"

The sculptural styles, naturalistic and schematized, are in contrast. The smooth, generalized treatment of the animal body resembles a Trova sculpture or Oscar award, both of which are of a similar size to "Muskrat." The fingers, on the other hand, which emerge from the animal form as if it were a hand-puppet, appear to be life-cast, and although the head is realistically rendered its small size insures that it has been sculpted.

This piece is one of a group titled *Animals / Human Hybrids* combining animal and human body parts, frequently including a cast of the artist's head. The head of the artist was, in this small scale, also used as tumorous elements on the branches of skeletal trees of the series *Tree / Human Hybrids*.



Rona Pondick, "Double Azalea," painted bronze, photo courtesy of Sonnabend Gallery, NY

Having moved away from description, one is obliged to ask oneself what the work means. There is surely a clue in the Pondick's split-image association of "Muskrat" with an ancient sculpture, but unless one is to rely on an artist's intentions and utterances for meaning, the viewer has to rely on a relationship with the work itself or reasonable surrogates for answers. This viewer's associations and responses to this work are disturbing, referencing failed genetic experiments or radiation-soaked nightmare futures, and nervous deoxyribonucleic acid ideas about artists putting a lot of themselves into their works. Other viewers are invited to have other responses, because the works of Rona Pondick invite your participation.



Rona Pondick, Portfolio image, offset lithograph, courtesy of Sonnabend, NY

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