

# MINE

a site specific installation by

# Rona Pondick



# The Brooklyn Museum

Opening November 13, 1996

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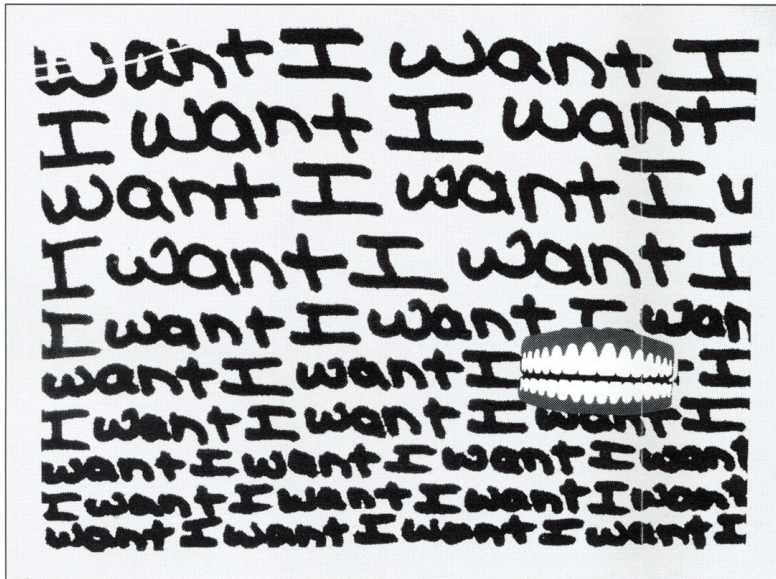
# Rona Pondick

Rona Pondick is a sculptor and an installation artist well known for her highly expressive pieces that frequently are shaped as fragments of the body. They are often accompanied by parts of furniture or selected clothing, and although fashioned as individual, distinct objects, they are usually displayed in large groups. This multiplication intensifies their suggestive power and strengthens the narrative inherently present in Pondick's work. The position of objects within an exhibition space dictates viewers' moves through an installation and makes them become a part of the spectacle. This participation, at first carried out more on a physical level, is soon followed by an immersion into the psychological content of the artist's work. Pondick's pieces, almost playful on the surface, are actually probes into the depths of the human psyche and its complex mix of fears, desires, and occasional joys. The work has elements in common with that of the Surrealists in its mining of the subconscious and the imagination and in its ability to create a visual poetry while bringing together opposing elements. Pondick comments eloquently on various issues in her own words:

*I like to take dissonant fragments (of bodies, pieces of furniture, articles of clothing) that are highly suggestive and juxtapose them to make preverbal, visceral meanings. As a maker of both discrete objects and installations that are built environments, I've come to have an acute awareness of the differences and relationships between the two forms. My environments are created in response to specific architectural sites and are often built on location. I use the idea of a viewer who moves through the space and is engulfed by it. The work is somewhat close to theater, but unlike theater, my built environments have been silent and still.*

*In my installations and my discrete objects I*

*look to provoke desires and impulses that are simultaneously horrific and hilarious. I like stillness and frenzy and I often use repetition to make impact. I'm drawn to building compulsive and contradictory wholes that use formal structure as a way to get to the psychological. My work makes connections between the infantile and the adult. By linking desires and impulses that are polar and might seem schizophrenic, I can suggest preverbal meanings. I want to take*



Detail of dancers' costumes for MINE, 1996. Silkscreened cotton. Courtesy of the artist.

*these qualities and the ideas that are inherent in my discrete objects and built environments and work with my collaborators to extend them into a performance that uses real time, space, movement, light and sound.*

The theatrical element that has always been part of Pondick's work was fully developed for performances held at The Brooklyn Museum on November 13 through 16, 1996. The artist expanded the role of the Lobby from the regular exhibition space designed to present long-term installations into a theater space of fleeting performances. The

sculptural environment that was set up as a stage for the dancers, however, was designed as an art piece that is to remain on view for a year, contradicting the usual temporal aspect of stage set design. Not only were the concepts of the permanent and the temporal scrutinized and the expected definitions questioned, but the polarities between crucial aspects of our existence were introduced and explored and became an integral part of the present installation.

The main element of this environment is a doorway set into a narrow, tall wall spanning the Grand Lobby from the floor to the ceiling. The door divides the space into two formally and psychologically opposed areas—the private realm of the bedroom and the public world on the outside. The wall itself echoes the inspiring height of the two columns, the most monumental architectural features of the Grand Lobby. The verticality of the wall is counteracted by the horizontality of the long, narrow bed, under which “spill” three hundred ears cast from urethane and paper pulp. These are rough and seemingly unfinished on one side and beautifully crafted on the other. The ear is an organ through which elements of the external world enter the internal world of the individual. Knowledge enters our

mind, the beauty of music elevates our spirit, and the words of friendship can soothe our soul through this organ. It can also be the entryway for tragic news or malicious words of slander. The dual message is ever present—what can heal can hurt, what can nourish can also devour. This message is illustrated by the baby carriage-like apparition fashioned in the shape of a big mouth endowed with threatening teeth, which repudiate any sense of childlike sweetness and gentleness.

The clothesline stretched from the right column in the foreground to the large back wall runs

through the Grand Lobby as if it were a line in a narrative. It is hung with clothes, some of them used by the dancers during performances, further accentuating the alliance of the private and the public within our lives. The allusion to “dirty laundry” hung out for everyone to see accentuates the trauma of being exposed publicly.

Desire to possess, and thus to exert control, is a motive running throughout the installation. It is clearly stated in the compulsively repeated inscription *I want*, handwritten on the bed and silkscreened on the blanket and on the dancers' clothes. “I want” means “I want it to be MINE,” hence the title that the artist has selected.

The present sculptural installation, which was slightly augmented after the performance, is a statement about this artist's ability to address ideas about the psychological and societal implications of desiring, possessing, and controlling on a monumental scale. These issues are not usually dealt with by visual means; it is a tribute to Rona Pondick's courage and imagination that she is able to create a visual tale drawn from the emotions which, though hidden deep within ourselves, nevertheless exert profound influence on all facets of human behavior.

**Charlotta Kotik**  
Curator of Contemporary Art

Rona Pondick directed the performances with the painter Robert Feintuch. Choreography was by Sara Rudner, music by William Matthews, lighting design by Jennifer Tipton, sound design by David Ferdinand, and costumes fabricated with the help of Arabella Lewis of Arabella, Inc. The production manager was Matthew Silver.

Rona Pondick's installation MINE is made possible in part by The FUNd at The Brooklyn Museum, created by a gift from the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation.

The installation is part of Artists in Action: BAM Visual Arts Initiative, made possible by The Pew Charitable Trust; The Henry Luce Foundation, Inc.; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; The Greenwall Foundation; The Cowles Charitable Trust; and The Arch W. Shaw Foundation

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**THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM**   
200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York 11238-6052

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**On the reverse:**

*Ear*, 1995-96 (detail)

From "MINE" a site-specific installation and performance  
at the Brooklyn Academy of Music & The Brooklyn Museum

Urethane and paper pulp; dimensions vary

Courtesy Sidney Janis Gallery, 110 West 57th Street, New York, New York 10019.

Photo by Lisa Deschenes, 1996

**On the cover:**

*Night Light*, 1995-96

From "MINE" a site-specific installation and performance  
at the Brooklyn Academy of Music & The Brooklyn Museum

Urethane, light bulb and fixture

Courtesy Sidney Janis Gallery, 110 West 57th Street, New York, New York 10019.

Photo by Lisa Deschenes, 1996

**Directions**

Subway: 2 or 3 train to Eastern Parkway/Brooklyn Museum.

Or switch to 2 or 3 at Nevins Street (across platform) from 4 or 5.

Bus: B71 Stops at front of Museum. For detailed directions by car, call (718) 638-5000.