

The New York Times

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, MAY 3, 1991

Review/**Art**

By MICHAEL BRENSON

Rona Pondick

*Fiction/Nonfiction Gallery
21 Mercer Street
Through Saturday*

This may be Rona Pondick's most coherent show of discrete objects. It is called "Foot and Mouth" and it includes seven absurd, sometimes kinky, fetishistic hybrids that contain numerous references to Marcel Duchamp, Surrealism and African art. "Sneaker" is like a plant made of untied running shoes, their laces hanging down like branches or hair. "Loveseat" is a buttocks-shaped chair with its three front legs in black patent shoes (one a child's shoe) that is ready to meet anyone sitting on it face to face (so to speak). "Little Bathers" is like an oval burial ground of tennis-ball-size pink skulls with clacking mouths, each stuffed with a wad of black wax. In "Mound," the same clacking mouths — like eyeless skulls — are molded into a hard lumpy mound coated with The Village Voice. These sculptures are like Freudian vaudeville acts designed to make you laugh until you feel something caught in your throat. The big problem with the show is the theatrical lighting, which bathes them in a misleading earnestness and self-importance.