

rial code of ethics interests me at all, it is because the expectation that it exists provides me with an opportunity to exploit convention in order to subvert it.”

It is unfortunate when the works of serious artists become the warm-up act for an unsolicited curatorial performance, when a review such as this one must focus on curator-as-trickster rather than the integrity of the work shown.

“The lines between artist and curator are blurred,” says Crawford, who along with Dykhuis considers the conflicts raised here worth debating. Most of the people caught up in this episode concur that an artist-curated exhibition with an underlying performance element is an intriguing idea—so long as everyone understands what they are signing on for. No one denies Hatry her due as a talented, smart, edgy, and experimental artist, but most cut a wide divide between good, provocative art and bad behavior.

—Joyce Beckenstein

## NEW YORK

### Rona Pondick

#### Sonnabend Gallery

When Rona Pondick’s sculptural installations first appeared in the mid-1980s, their raw expression of abjection, feminist rage, infantile greed, and intimations of mortality was startling. Roughly made, her unsettling works were ambivalent, psychological, and completely uncanny: elongated lead beds, beds protruding baby bottles like teats, weird agglomerations of children’s shoes and pillows, mounds of pink skull-like balls with casts of the artist’s biting teeth that might have emerged from a catacomb.

Then, just before the turn of this century, her work morphed into equally uncanny metal hybrid beings—as sleekly polished and precisely modulated as her former work was grungy. Melding casts of her own face and hands with the forms



Rona Pondick, *Ginko*, 2007–12. Stainless steel, 57.75 x 33.75 x 41 in.

of trees or small animals, she began to make polymorphous half-human mutants. In 1997, she planted her first aluminum tree outdoors and surrounded it with a scattering of fallen apple-teeth. With *Dog* (1998–2001), she sculpted herself as a sphinx-like creature, part human, part dog.

In her first New York solo since 2006, Pondick continued to refine these mutant sculptures. A painted bronze tree sprouts minuscule gilded self-portrait heads as buds, while a stainless steel *Ginko* grows from a shiny steel globe to blossom as a cluster of outstretched human hands, her own. Balanced on a swirl of roots, Pondick’s life-size head nestles in the branches of another steel tree. The animal mutations are even stranger. A hunched, painted bronze *White Beaver* sports Pondick’s head, while a chrome-like prairie dog with

a tiny head is supported by life-size human fingers that serve as legs. A sleek, shiny *Wallaby* with a long tapered tail has the clawed feet of a bird and one heavy dangling human arm. Made with the latest 3-D computer scanning technology and the utmost attention to detail, these works are eerily beautiful, pristinely perfect, and quite monstrous. Their shape-shifting forms, material transformations, and contrasting surfaces—sliding suddenly from matte to shiny, from skin-like to preternaturally smooth—are unnerving and inscrutable, yet somehow make perfect sense.

Most powerful are two deceptive, white-painted bronzes: *Pillow Head* and *Navel*, which seem as soft as balloons yet as fragile as porcelain. The first gathers itself into a tiny head strangled by billowing folds, while

the latter has a miniature head that protrudes neckless from the globular navel like a tit. Squeezed to bursting, these two pieces are visceral metaphors of birth, death, or something equally intolerable and narrowly escaped.

Also, for the first time, Pondick showed drawings: a series of delicately colored, collaged works on mulberry paper, titled “Small Heads.” Each one is made up of layered tissue-thin drawings pulled, stretched, and glued together, superimposed invisibly one atop another. Their recurrent image is a strange pointy-nosed head, alluding perhaps to *Commedia dell’Arte*, Pinocchio, or Giacometti’s *Nose*.

Formal and primal, tactile and personal, the contradictory metaphors and symbolic subtleties of Pondick’s oeuvre can suggest Neolithic artifacts, the hybrid creatures of Greek mythology, Hieronymus Bosch’s demons, Gregor Samsa’s transformation, Brancusi’s streamlined bird, or the latest genetic manipulations of experimental science. They also manage to look excruciatingly unique.

—Kim Levin

## PROVIDENCE

### Thomas Morrissey

#### AS220 Project Space

An in-your-face, freedom-of-speech quality informed Thomas Morrissey’s recent installation about the summary worth of creative endeavor. His life’s work was arranged, boxed, labeled with limited descriptions, and given a by-the-pound valuation. Heavy-duty, locked chain-link gates made the collection inaccessible, and an overhead security camera remained trained on his intellectual and artistic property. In *Approximately 7,642 Pounds of Art*, *Stacked* and *Somewhat Arranged*, the sense of things was confrontational, with a hard edge from a dark place.



Morrissey's installation brought viewers abruptly into the challenging conceptual terrain of statement art. In this case, think reality TV's "Storage Wars" with a conceptual relationship to the urinal of R. Mutt and the performance art of Joseph Beuys. Basically, viewers are secondary to the concept and must catch up to the uncompromising appearance of things, or not.

Boxed construct (i.e., wrapping as art) is trending today in the collective consciousness of sculptural method. Walead Beshty's sculptures are prime examples, the most influential forbears being Christo and Andy Warhol. Morrissey's foray into the package scene has its origin in practical matters. His concept for the installation developed in response to a dispute over breakage reimbursement with a different gallery that branched into larger ethical considerations. At AS220, Morrissey wasn't shy about putting ego front and center. His statement about the commodification of art hit a hot-button issue for many artists, raising the thorny topic of what happens to artworks when the maker isn't around to defend their value or merit.

Ultimately, this was a think piece in which stewardship involved the artist's use of literal valuation as the fulcrum to explore broader cultural disrespect for the intrinsic worth of art. Morrissey's statement prodded

viewers to consider how they might alter the flow of destiny through direct participation—buying art to change the situation. Morrissey valued, with the help of his accountant, the sum of his 30-year career at eight dollars per pound, the average according to IRS valuation standards. Sale terms outlined in advance by Morrissey were set at a bulk rate to mimic a blind sale, so the invisibility of a box's contents required a leap of faith from any buyer who might respond to the opportunity.

In written remarks, Morrissey touched on futility, comparing his creative commitment to the tribulations of Sisyphus. The personal dimension manifested in the installation as complex social commentary. The artist created a sophisticated dialogue that was particularly relevant in Rhode Island because the region seems to have difficulty recognizing predatory tendencies. Morrissey's message to fellow artists: heads-up and hold the line because fine art is a bargaining chip.

—Suzanne Volmer

**Above: Thomas Morrissey, *Approximately 7,642 Pounds of Art, Stacked and Somewhat Arranged*, 2013.**

**Boxed, crated, and inventoried art, chain-link security gate, security cameras, and mixed media, installation view. Right: Dan Webb, *Runner*, 2011. Carved maple, 51 x 58 x 58 in.**

## SEATTLE Dan Webb and Edward Wicklander

### Greg Kucera Gallery

Recent solo exhibitions bolstered the standing of two of Seattle's most accomplished sculptors, Dan Webb and Edward Wicklander. Long-term residents of the city, both have shown extensively outside the Pacific Northwest for the past two decades. With the younger Webb, a Cornish College graduate coming off earlier exhibitions in Los Angeles, Miami, and New York, a strong sense of conceptualism underlies over-the-top material handling—in this case, carved wood. Wicklander's eighth Kucera survey since 1985 also underscored virtuoso studio workmanship—in welded steel and carved wood—but drew from more recognizable imagery. What unites both artists is recourse to an illusionism that grows out of fallback reliance on Surrealism as an inspiration. This shared source both liberates and confines Webb and Wicklander.

How buoyant are Wicklander's seven *Steel Balloons*? Mounted on a

wall or, as in *Balloon Quartet* (both 2013), suspended on a line, they epitomize his way with material paradoxes and construction, punning strategies, and visual one-liners. Similarly, *Study for Tube Totem* posits precariously stacked rubber inner tubes that "become" welded steel. Equally elegant, with the same illusionistic joke, *Willendorf Column* (both 2011) consists of a single piece of carved wood nearly eight feet high, its curved lozenge shapes accumulating into a graceful whole.

Webb's *Putti Trap* may allude to blissful gay innocence, with its rainbow-flag cape thrown over a white wooden cherub, but it and *Golden Putti* (both 2012) seemed anomalies amid the bizarre unpainted maple and fir blocks that made up the rest of his show. Amping up the Surrealist illusions, a quintet of wooden sculptures with extended human limbs (averaging six to nine feet high) provided enigmatic tableaux without Wicklander's gentle humor.

The sad poignancy of George Segal's white-plaster "people" could

