

ART NEW ENGLAND

CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

REVIEW: *Maine*

RONA PONDICK AND ROBERT FEINTUCH: HEADS, HANDS, FEET; SLEEPING, HOLDING, DREAMING, DYING

Bates College Museum of Art • Lewiston, ME • bates.edu/museum • Through March 23, 2018

New York City-based artists Rona Pondick and Robert Feintuch have worked side by side since the 1970s. As this first significant combined exhibition of their work demonstrates, while their sensibilities share certain unconventional qualities, their work is independently compelling. Nine sculptures and a series of offset print lithographs by Pondick from 1998–2013 join 11 polymer emulsion paintings by Feintuch from 2007–2016.

Pondick's sculptures have been called "disturbing" by more than one critic. In unpacking that relevant adjective, several obvious points can be made. To begin with, the sculptor seamlessly grafts human body parts—casts of her head, feet and hands—onto animals in such a way as to upset one's sense of nature.

At the same time, the precision fabrication of Pondick's pieces heightens their oddness. In *Wallaby* (2007-2012), the body of this kangaroo cousin is gleaming stainless steel, except for the miniature human head and large human hands

attached to it. Pondick plays similar metamorphic changes with a dog, cat, muskrat, marmot and beaver.

Feintuch is existential, too. In one series, he presents a male figure in white boxers in various poses: raising his fist in *Rabble II* (2010), punching the air in *Knock Out* (2010). The man with chin on his chest in *Standing with Newspaper* (2007) might represent any of us after a dose of morning headlines.

More comic are Feintuch's paintings of overweight men and feet. The broad-backed figure in *Fat Hercules* (2011) holding a club is supported by crutches: his 12 labors are clearly behind him. The feet pieces are edgy comical. *Over the Hill* (2015) features a pair of them, attached to skinny legs, stretched over a hill-top. The setting has a Hockney feel while the



Rona Pondick, *White Beaver*, 2009-11, painted bronze, edition 2/3, 13 x 31 ½ x 9 ¼". Courtesy of Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris Pantin/Salzburg, Sonnabend Gallery, New York and the artist.



Robert Feintuch, *Another Assumption*, 2014, 19 x 23 ¾", polymer emulsion on honeycomb panel. Courtesy Sonnabend Gallery, New York and the artist.

subject brings Guston to mind.

The exhibition catalogue, with an essay by critic Terry Myers and an interview with the artists by *Brooklyn Rail* co-founder Phong Bui, uses details of individual works to highlight connections between the two artists, most notably, their use of physical extremities and distortion. In the end, what Pondick calls "psychological feeling" is their shared goal—and outcome.

—Carl Little