

ARTIST RESIDENCIES ASHLEY BRYAN CENSORSHIP RISD'S NATURE LAB AT 80

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CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE



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## REVIEW: *Maine*

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

Bates College Museum of Art • Lewiston, ME • [bates.edu/museum](http://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 1/2 x 9 1/4". Courtesy of Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris Pantin/Salzburg, Sonnabend Gallery, New York and the artist.



Robert Feintuch, *Another Assumption*, 2014, 19 x 23 3/4", 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

## PREVIEW: *Maine*

### TOM FLANAGAN

Frank Brockman Gallery • Brunswick, ME • [frankbrockmangallery.com](http://frankbrockmangallery.com) • February 3–26, 2018

In Tom Flanagan's studio, bright colors dance with neutrals in a tango of triangles on large canvasses. Geometric shapes abut to form prisms that play with the viewer's eye and produce an illusion of solidity.

Flanagan, influenced by Picasso, Pollock, Frankenthaler, Davis and Hodgkin, manipulates texture and composition with complex painting techniques. A fan blows constantly, drying the acrylic and allowing for immediate layering. He uses a broad knife to scrape, screen, marleize and cross-hatch the paint. He fills some shapes with flat color while others resemble wood grain or reveal hidden colors underneath.

In *Burn*, shapes spiral in creating a large central white space. In *Avalanche*, the shapes tumble and fall. "I work with a general framework but allow the painting to develop much like a jazz musician does when they improvise," says Flanagan. Like dueling jazz pianos,



Tom Flanagan, *Avalanche*, 2017, acrylic on canvas on panel, 48 x 84". Courtesy of the artist.

organic tangles of lines counter rigid boxy outlines and form frames for the viewer to explore. Wide, bright, white borders visually anchor the image and float it off the canvas at the same time. Each piece challenges the viewer to identify the major and minor parts of the work.

In addition to Flanagan's acrylics, this exhibit includes drawings on paper in char-

coal, pastel and oil pastels. These media, Flanagan says, "allow me the freedom to look at structure over color mixing." In the drawing *Northern Sky*, a stiff but gestural line, similar to bent wire, takes center stage and plays above and below blocks of color. For Flanagan, the drawings are a prelude to his paintings. He draws for a month while playing with abstraction and "limitlessness." The drawings are not studies in the classical sense yet through them, he gains a muscle memory that informs his larger works.

Flanagan's journey from Pittsburgh to Maine includes a B.A. from the University of Pittsburgh and a teaching scholarship from Ohio University. His own artwork has been his focus since 2006. The Frank Brockman Gallery seeks to show the best aspiring and acclaimed contemporary artists working in Maine. Tom Flanagan's engaging work is well placed.

—Anna Eleanor Jordan