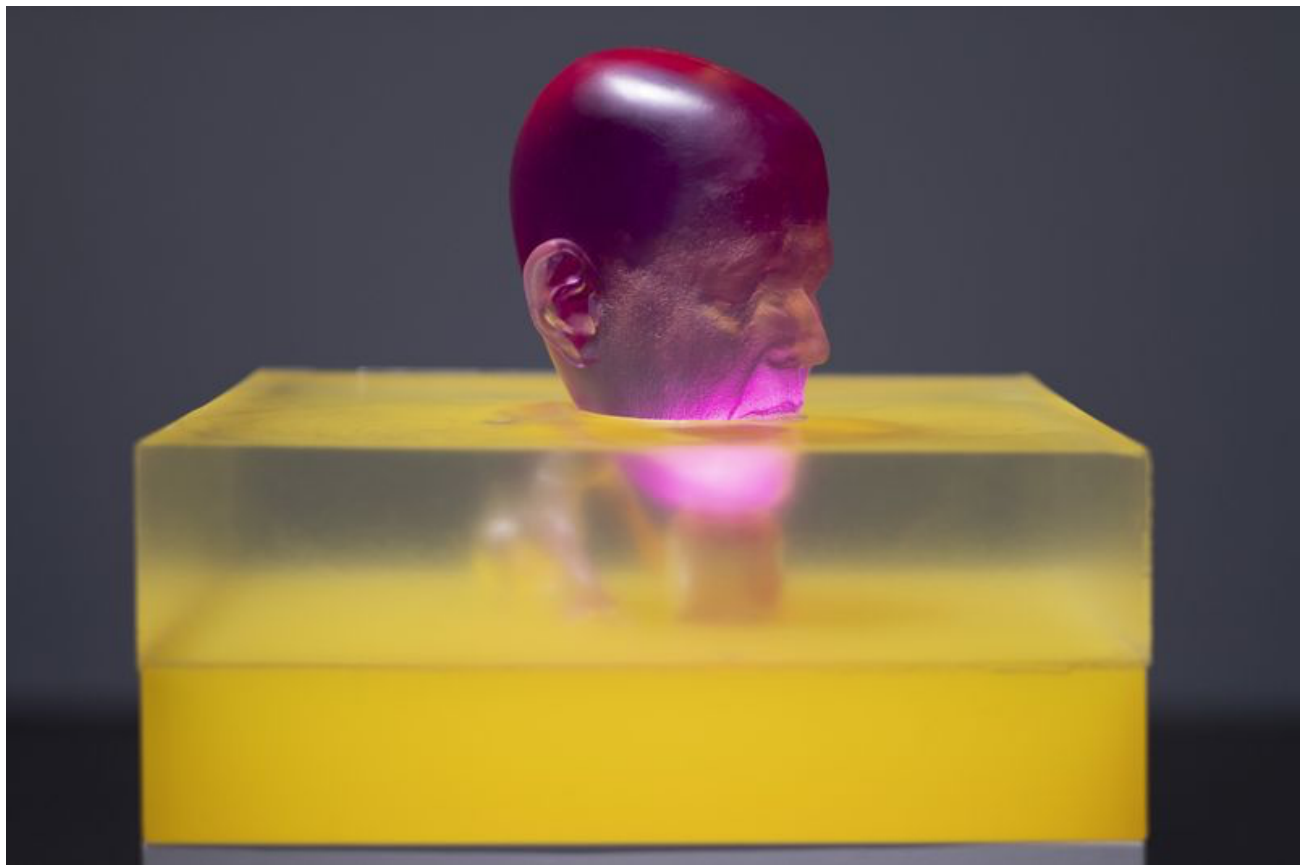


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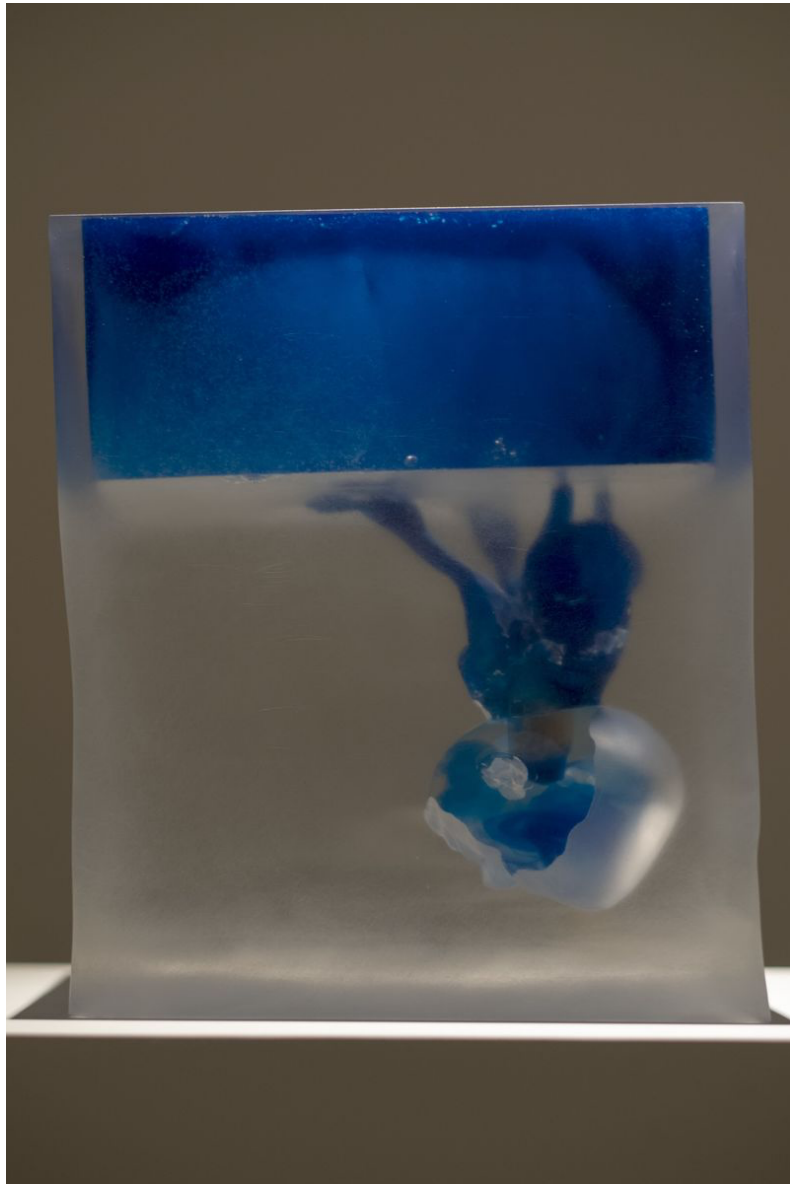
Rona Pondick's head sculptures: Beautiful nightmares of mind and body

By SHARON MIZOTA
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"Magenta Swimming in Yellow" by Rona Pondick, 2015-17. Pigmented resin and acrylic. (Zevitas Marcus)

Rona Pondick's sculptures at Zevitas Marcus gallery are both serene and nightmarish. The artist makes casts of her own head in brightly colored resins, then perches them atop tiny, atrophied bodies, or embeds them in clear cubes or plinths of contrasting color. The results are bizarre by intriguing moments suspended in time.

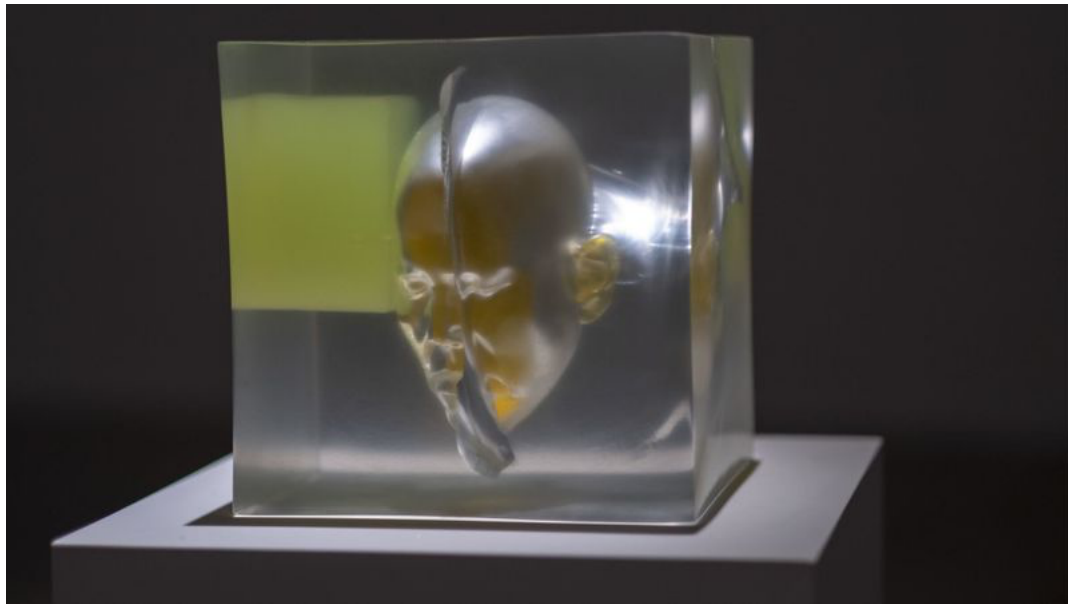


Rona Pondick's "Upside Down Blue," 2014-17. Pigmented resin and acrylic. (Zevitas Marcus)

“Upside Down Blue,” dated 2014-17, features a fetus-like figure suspended in a cube, as if in an upended terrarium. The sculpture feels like an embalmed

scientific specimen, or a creepy creature that crawls across the ceiling in a horror movie.

“Encased Yellow Green,” from 2017-18, with its yellowish head pressed tightly against a green cube, might be the visualization of a headache. The whole thing is encased in a clear rectangle that freezes a moment of tension.



Rona Pondick's "Encased Yellow Green," 2017-18. Pigmented resin and acrylic. (Zevitas Marcus)

Pondick's use of the cube evokes the reductive impulse of Minimalist sculpture, and her bright color palette harks back to the push-pull tension of Hans Hofmann's geometric paintings. Pondick's work combines these austere formal qualities with a firm grounding in the figurative. From the front, "Standing Blue" looks like a beautiful, bright blue head emerging from a rectilinear base of the same hue. Walking around it, however, reveals a small, ugly body trailing behind the head. The serene iconicity of the work quickly disintegrates when we discover this crouching, gnarled figure.

By contrast, "Yellow Blue Black White," dated 2013-18, eschews traditional formalism altogether. It's a bright yellow head perched atop a mottled, dark blue body with puny, Tyrannosaurus Rex hands. The lumpiness and color scheme oddly evokes the Blue Meanies from the animated film "Yellow Submarine." One senses this creature might be just as mischievous.



Rona Pondick's "Yellow Blue Black White," 2013-18. Pigmented resin, acrylic and epoxy modeling compound. (Zevitas Marcus)

In this way, the works walk a fine line between charming and unsettling. They are from one perspective monstrous self-portraits, meditations on the disconnect between mind and body.

Yet one gets the sense that Pondick, a New York artist who has explored bodily presence in her work since the 1980s, isn't interested in self-representation so much as experimentation: her head, stripped of gender cues, eyes shut tight, seems to serve as a motif upon which to iterate, to experiment with proportion and color. In this sense her surreal visions are as playful as they are unsettling. They juxtapose formal experimentation with the organic forms of the body. In doing so, they are oblique but unsettling reminders of the violence abstraction can inflict on the human form.

Zevitas Marcus, 2754 S. La Cienega Blvd., L.A. Tuesdays-Saturdays, through March 30. (424) 298-8088, www.zevitasmarcus.com