Among the world’s most accomplished artists in the field of animation installation, Jennifer Steinkamp’s work is synonymous with contemporary digital art. And well it should be; her work is rooted in the great traditions of West Coast art: Light and Space, Finish Fetish among them. Steinkamp manages to parlay her technical expertise and state-of-the-art commercial experience into art installations that engage us both conceptually and bodily, even as they literally dazzle us. She works with the contemporary technologies of our digital age in a way that speaks to all of us, the very definition of creative technology.

At this small exhibition hopefully demonstrates, however, the use of computer technologies in the fine arts is considerably more widespread than the 3D animation that has come to represent it in the popular imagination. Rona Pondick’s investment in leading edge 3D scanning and fabrication technologies is one of many other examples of how computer technologies are transforming contemporary art practice.

Two Trees: Rona Pondick and Jennifer Steinkamp (25 October - 22 November 2013) is presented in conjunction with the opening exhibitions at Virginia Tech’s new Center for the Arts, which include Jennifer Steinkamp’s Madame Curie; Joan Grossman’s The Edge I Have to Jump; and Leo Villareal’s Digital Sublime.

Artist Talks
Jennifer Steinkamp  “From Computer Code to Virtual Realities...” Sponsored by the Center for the Arts  October 18, 4pm, Armory 101, Draper Rd. Steinkamp speaks about her evolution, process and breadth of her work.


All technical photographs are courtesy of Rona Pondick. Copyright © Rona Pondick 2013.
**MAKING DWARFED WHITE JACK**

By Rona Pondick

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**TWO TREES**

By Kevin Concannon

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**Two Trees** presents the work of two exceptional contemporary artists working with computer technologies: Rona Pondick and Jennifer Steinkamp. On the face of it, their works seem to have little in common other than their subject matter. Each artist presents in this private exhibition an installation of a tree. Steinkamp’s* Dwarfed White Jack (2010-12) is situated in a glass case, while Pondick’s sculptures are spread around the gallery. The exhibition is presented like a laugh in the dark, and it’s everything I want in my work.

These buds will blossom not on the delicate white branches, but in the viewer’s imagination. Due to emotion from personal and environmental identity with physical and psychological vulnerability, Pondick袭s visual metaphors of her progeny, which are honored with tree dedications. The first one is located in the garden, in the room that the visitor is led into by the artists working with computer technologies: Rona Pondick and Jennifer Steinkamp. On the face of it, their works seem to have little in common other than their subject matter. Each artist presents in this private exhibition an installation of a tree. Steinkamp’s* Dwarfed White Jack (2010-12) is situated in a glass case, while Pondick’s sculptures are spread around the gallery. The exhibition is presented like a laugh in the dark, and it’s everything I want in my work.

Pondick’s animated tree and Pondick’s metamorphically pansexual bonsai each suggest, in different ways, the evanescence of artefact in narrative context. Steinkamp’s animated trees have been granted supernatural powers through the magic of computer coding, and Pondick’s bonsai because entered the world at a moment when the growth of genetically modified foods has raised global concerns about their potential impact on human development. The differences between the virtual and the real have increased dramatically in a relatively short period of time, and that time has accelerated the data.

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**Dwarfed White Jack** (left) Rona Pondick

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**Dwarfed White Jack** (2010-12) sits serenely in the garden, in the room that the visitor is led into by the artists working with computer technologies: Rona Pondick and Jennifer Steinkamp. On the face of it, their works seem to have little in common other than their subject matter. Each artist presents in this private exhibition an installation of a tree. Steinkamp’s* Dwarfed White Jack (2010-12) is situated in a glass case, while Pondick’s sculptures are spread around the gallery. The exhibition is presented like a laugh in the dark, and it’s everything I want in my work.

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**From Jennifer Steinkamp:**

“Composed of computer code and projected light, Dwarfed White Jack transports us to another place, a virtual forest that at once personal and absent in the gallery, its branches and symbols of different sizes and thickness. This means that we have to interact with it in the same way that we would with any other electronic interface. Steinkamp’s Dwarfed White Jack is an avatar of a tree, seemingly frozen in time and transported from another dimension. Careful inspection reveals that it too building is the blank visage of the artist herself, however, that is posed to be a tree.”

**From Rona Pondick:**

“The translation of the tray into metal loaned itself to milling. The first time I read it that was my reaction. But on subsequent readings, I discovered the actually quite simple in his description. It’s like a laugh in the dark, and the everything I want in my work.”

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**Steinkamp** has been granted supernatural powers through the magic of computer coding, and Pondick’s bonsai because entered the world at a moment when the growth of genetically modified foods has raised global concerns about their potential impact on human development. The differences between the virtual and the real have increased dramatically in a relatively short period of time, and that time has accelerated the data.

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**Bodily abandon (and it does),**

Both artists play with ideas of transformation, hybridization, and even mutation. Steinkamp uses the term “theatrical” to describe these sculptures. As curator Joe Houston notes, when she began working on her animated trees, “Steinkamp had been reading feminist interpretations of Medusa as a metaphor for female power and sexuality.” 1 The visually stunning trees are inspired by the serpentine hair of the mythological Medusa. The spot Judy Crook presents on viewers’ psyche is not as much physical and psychological as it is in a text-based metaphorical sense by Crook and the artist’s own dream.

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1 Ibid., 36.

2 Rona Pondick, quoted in: “Rona Pondick interviewed by Barbara Wally” in Jennifer Steinkamp (San Jose: San Jose Museum of Art, 2006), 92.

3 The sensually swaying trees are inspired by the
dazzle in so many
different ways, but among them is their power to bring these
trees on viewers is rooted in this mythological power, just as
the individual, just as the personal and the social. ”

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