

art and cake

A Contemporary Art Magazine with a Focus on the
Los Angeles Art Scene

00 by Ross Rudel at Baik Art



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BAIK ART, LOS ANGELES

By Eve Wood

Ross Rudel's newest body of work, aptly titled *00*, on view at Baik Art, represents a mini retrospective of the artist's incredibly imaginative sculptures. Working mostly in wood, Rudel's precise and rigorous attention to detail yields an astonishing array of elegant, complicated works that engage the viewer emotionally, spiritually and psychologically. Working with wood, which is an organic matter, Rudel's artistic concerns have always veered in the direction of the metaphysical. Yet, at the heart of his creative impulse is a deeply felt compassion and curiosity in the natural world.

The work in this exhibition, divided between the two gallery spaces, represents a lifelong fascination with the way things work, both mechanically, as in constructing an inanimate object, and spiritually, as in the specific cultural meaning these objects hold for us. The means by which these objects are constructed becomes a near holy experience for both the artist and the viewer. Many of the works directly attest to a deep and abiding fluidity within the natural world. However, these sculptures are alternately sad, poignant and contemplative. Nowhere is this more apparent than with the acrylic on wood sculptural forms in the main gallery. Carved intersections of male and female anatomy face one another in a kind of metaphysical standoff. The carvings are intimate and intricate and appear as metaphors for an array of flawed human connections whether on an interpersonal or global scale.



Ross Rudel 00 Photo Courtesy Baik Art.

Other pieces like the beautifully enigmatic *Hybrid*, 2017, a carved woman's buttocks made from a single piece of wood, is stunning in both its economy and implied content. As with other of Rudel's sculptures, there is a divine flaw, a crack across the pristine surface of the wood, and it is this crack, this disruption in an otherwise perfected structure that gives the work its strangely alluring and transcendent quality. Still other works are more obvious in their meaning as with *Murder*, made entirely from algae from the LA River and epoxy resin in a steel drum. The central figure is of a man whose head is tilted to one side in the manner

of Jacques David's *The Death of Marat*. Unlike Maret however, Rudel's figure has not been stabbed in his bath in an otherwise romanticized scene, but is slumped down in what looks to be motor oil, mired in his own experience. So that the murder Rudel alludes to in the title is not so much the unlawful taking of a single man's life, but the image of what is in store for us all as members of the human race – that we will suffer collectively. More importantly, the algae and other microscopic organisms will take the planet back for its own long after we are gone.

These are hard won and difficult sculptures, the kind of work that does not need to proclaim itself wildly, demanding, like so much forgettable art being made today, to be seen and reckoned with. Rudel whispers to us from a place deep inside the core of who we are to listen and look more closely before its too late, if it isn't already.









