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Review: Biological? Botanical? The weird wonders of Ross Rudel's 'OO' sculptures



One of Ross Rudel's 2017 wood and acrylic sculptures (15 inches by 15 inches by 17 inches) in the show titled "OO" at Baik Art in Los Angeles.

By LEAH OLLMAN

The odd beauty of Ross Rudel's new sculptures at Baik Art haunts, confounds, fascinates.

In one of Baik's two spaces on La Cienega Boulevard, the L.A.-based Rudel presents a unified series of work relating to the title "OO," a biological reference to eggs, or ova. The title piece, a wall-mounted sphere roughly one foot in diameter, carved in wood and painted black and ocher, conjures at once associations from the pedestrian to the profound — an ant head, a sports ball, the yin-yang symbol and interlocking human bodies.

Five more orb-like pieces retain their raw wood exterior but are neatly split open to reveal crisply carved cross-sections of male and female reproductive anatomy, painted white. Progressing around the room, the pieces double and triple to become multi-lobed and dual-gendered. The vaguely clinical diagrams morph from straightforward descriptions of body parts to illustrations of sexual union. Above the sculptures, corollary wall drawings extrapolate further.

The sculptures embody contradiction, or rather an overarching simultaneity of interpretive possibilities. The voluptuous shapes of the wood exterior are more erotic than the sexual organs delineated within. Suggestion (egg? nut? buttock?) wins out over information.



Ross Rudel, "Victor," 2017. Wood, oil and epoxy resin, 14.5 inches by 14.5 inches by 14.5 inches Baik Art

A more diffuse array of sculptures fills the other Baik space, down the block. "Victor" takes the general form of a mounted hunting trophy, but instead boasts a length of wood with a gorgeous ringed and rippled face, an organic fact that hints at an astronomical phenomenon.

Not every piece on view carries such a charge, but many — "Hybrid," "Ouroboros" and "Wet/Dry," especially — are dense with beauty, implication and complication. All are signature Rudel: nebulous notions, exactly crafted.