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Panza

THE LEGACY OF A COLLECTOR

**The Panza di Biumo Collection at The Museum of Contemporary Art
Los Angeles**

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Ross Rudel / Panza
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The organic sculptures of Ross Rudel emerge from the wall and slink across the floor, subtly and deliberately occupying the space that surrounds them. These soft, smooth, and rounded forms are contrary to the vocabulary of the hard-edged cube that so dominated sculptural production of the 1960s. Together with Charles Simonds and Carole Seborovski, Rudel's work has been aligned with the body-art genre of sculpture making and has been described as "erotic abstraction."¹ His anthropomorphic forms, although anatomically ambiguous, are corporeal and sensual. His interest in primordial forms with sleek and glossy surfaces also reflects an extension of modernist sculptural ideas explored earlier in this century by Constantin Brancusi.

Many pieces in Rudel's oeuvre embody his interest in variations on the form of the sphere. Mounted on the wall, these shapes appear to emerge from the vertical planes that support them, blurring the figure/ground relationship and activating the surrounding wall space as part of the sculptural whole. *Untitled No. 108 (Black)* (1992) is a solid black sphere that shines with polished luster from its perch upon the wall. Covered with a textured fabric and painted over in a flat white, *Untitled No. 115 (White)* (1992) is a slightly smaller sphere with a visibly patterned and tactilely exotic surface. The same expanding, bulbous shape is echoed in Rudel's *Untitled No. 107* (1992); here, however, a deep and

narrowly sloping orifice erupts from just below the middle section of the creamy white orb. This ominous opening appears unsteady, supple, and strangely capable of expansion.

Rudel's sculptures are alive with harnessed potential energy. *Untitled No. 129* (1993) is a curvilinear dowel upon which dark wooden spheres and lightly colored separators have been stacked. It extends aggressively from the wall and challenges the surrounding space. A variation on this form is manifest in *Untitled No. 126* (1993), a black columnar sculpture made of large spheres and separating partitions; it too projects challengingly into the viewer's space. Spreading out along the floor, *Untitled No. 132* (1993) is a series of wooden pods, encased in nylon stockings, that appears to be dividing, blossoming, and growing in numbers. Each of these works moves the eye around and beyond its structural form, as we are led to consider the work's interaction with, and activation of, its encompassing space.

The sensuality and inherent motion of Rudel's sculptures are facilitated in part by the artist's choice of materials. He uses carved wood as the core of all of his sculptures, enabling him to mine the organic and animate quality inherent to this natural resource. Energy exudes from these luscious bodily forms, masquerading as living and breathing organisms with a sensuality that has been momentarily contained. —R. M.

ROSS
rudel

¹ Suzanne Ramljak, "The Art of Seduction: Suzanne Ramljak Makes a Case for Erotic Abstraction," *Sculpture* 14, no. 5 (September–October 1995), 32–33.