



Michael Rees
 From Ear to Ear
 Sculpture from 1997-98
 with essays by
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advent of computer driven media is putting us on the brink of yet another aesthetic revolution, then Michael Rees is one of its tremors.

In Roger Shattuck's *The Banquet Years*, Shattuck describes the avant-garde arts in France at the turn of the last century as characterized by juxtaposition without transition. Movies represented the purest form of the art of juxtaposition, the hard edit, the image in conflict or collision as was much of the art of the early twentieth century. Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, Dadaism, Opism, Simultaneism, Surrealism, Vorticism, all shared this common impulse.

In the work of Michael Rees, juxtaposition is still a key element, but it is juxtaposition with transition as opposed to conflict. Transition, whether of the body, sexuality, form, or any other boundary is much more the defining characteristic of art at our end of the century. Rees' is not the explosion in a shingle factory or a chance meeting of an umbrella and a sewing machine on a dissecting table. It's not even the clumsy stitching together of a Frankenstein monster, but a much more seamless creation. Movies, especially horror movies, are not unrelated to Rees's work.



Ajna Spine Series 12, detail (21" tall), 1998, SLA.

Going to see Rees's sculpture is like taking a trip to a surreal knacker or the back rooms of fossil storage at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. I am reminded of that museum as I glimpse the odd bits of skeleton that Rees displays. Over here is vertebral columns with pelvises attached over there a skull. You'd expect all these skeletons to be pushing out daisies, instead they're festooned with fungi like growths, and uteri, and ears, and other things besides. The growths turn out to be representations of the cakras of Hindu philosophy. Though decidedly human, these extra-skeletal additions make me think of Dr. Moreau and strange science fiction experiments that include alien abduction.

The materials themselves contribute to this. Just what the sculptures are made of is unclear. The color and quality of the sculptures add to their strangeness. The translucent amber sculptures glow and sparkle like crystal. *Ajna2 Amber* is in part a skull. Placed inside it is a uterus. Sprouting from the top, the front, and the back are taberous cakras. The head of a cow is a part of the stalk that comes from the top. Nearly stands the vertebral column of *Ajna Spine Series 12*. As the light moves through them it is broken and reflected by the faceting on their surfaces, which is a by-product of their manufacture. The effect is dazzling, jewel-like. The opaque black and white sculptures could be plaster, stone, or plastic. The black sculpture, *Ajna Spine Series 13* has a rich black granulated surface that absorbs both light and sound. The single large sculpture in the show, *Chakra Seas*, seems carved in wood.

What are these exquisite corpses? It seems we've entered the



Ajna Spine Series 13 Hp, Detail (57" tall), 1998, 3DP.
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