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Doug Jeck

Beautifully made male nudes inspired by the classical tradition of the hero but weathered, damaged, incomplete and strikingly passive were the creations of Doug Jeck in the early '90s. The fragmentation and vulnerability seemed to comment on the times, as did specific realism that gracefully parted the figures from the ideal, suggesting that there is no ideal. They are slightly less than lifesize, as if literally diminished. Such sensitive details as veins and muscles and exquisitely modeled genitalia play against the artifice of broken, missing or mismatched parts.

Born in 1963 and educated at the Appalachian Center for Crafts in Tennessee (BFA 1986) and at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (MFA 1989), Jeck teaches at the University of Washington, which has a tradition of figurative sculpture. In the '90s he grew more savage in his juxtapositions and alterations. Heads inappropriate to bodies were set backward and roped on, a sharp allusion to the battered past of historic sculptures now marooned in art museums—a concern that is also suggested by the variety of plinths he uses. Heads went missing and genitalia was reduced to rubble. The bodies remain finer in modeling than DeStaebler's time-ravaged figures; their realism is akin to the children modeled by Judy Fox, but whereas she undercuts reality by having them impersonate art and adults, Jeck more drastically interrupts the illusion with damage and absence.