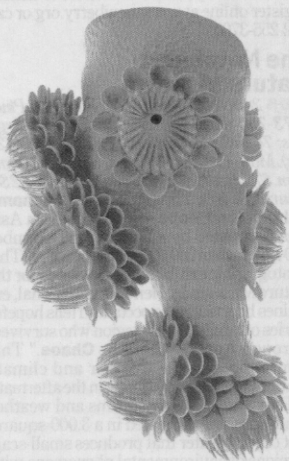


Reviews



**Chris Garofalo, *Protea Mus Auris*
Corallia, 2005.**

“Chris Garofalo: Speculative Zoogeny”

Rhona Hoffman Gallery, through Feb 4 (see West Loop).

The ceramic sculptures suspended from Hoffman’s gallery ceiling are the same ones displayed last year by Chicago artist Chris Garofalo in the Garfield Park Conservatory. There, her petaled and podlike pieces of made-up flora were placed beguilingly amid the plants. It was a congenial enough display, but it’s in the white-cube gallery ecosystem that these works really breathe.

Scyphozoan Echinata—a nearly five-foot-long, egg-shaped sculpture made of countless, overlapping fat and uneven strips of unglazed porcelain—hovers over the small space like a mothership. It’s such a contrast in size and hue from the much smaller, glazed works that it suggests a spent pod from which all this colorful matter exploded.

Garofalo’s clay oddities bring to mind the Blaschka glass models of plant species made in the late 19th century as educational tools in zoology. While Garofalo’s intent is clearly opposite of Blaschka’s scientific exactness—as expressed by the exhibition title—her specimens teach us something just the same. By creating a taxonomy for these pieces in their titles—like *Badifiomycete Florid Hoveren* or *Corallia Bractea*—and by inverting our spatial relationship to plant matter (we walk underneath these porcelain and stoneware pieces), we have an opportunity to consider all living possibilities. At the very least, it’s a refreshing dose of *whimsica organicas*.—RL