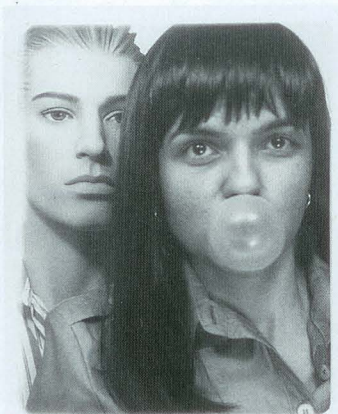


SUSAN

BOZIC

If Carl is a bit stiff, his girlfriend doesn't seem to notice. As long as he keeps the Champagne flowing, lets her pick the movie, and presents her with lavish jewels, she is, for all appearances, radiantly happy. Artist Susan Bozic channels Carl's "girlfriend" in *The Dating Portfolio*. This tongue-in-cheek look at the ritual of mating and the clichés of social mores is double edged: simultaneously entertaining and critical of the happiness propagated in popular culture and advertising. Is Carl the object of desire, or is he a stand-in for something bigger? The sting is that "Carl's girlfriend" is ultimately as mannequin-like and vacuous as he is. "The humor aspect is used as a way to entice people to look at the images, then the longer you spend with the images, the more psychologically complex they become," says Bozic. She adds that the inspiration for this work comes from looking at her environment and "seeing what kind of lifestyle I was being sold."



Bozic was captivated by photography as a child growing up in Vancouver, B.C. "My earliest recollection," she says, "was when I was about nine. I couldn't wait to get the camera in my hands. I loved looking through the viewfinder." She went on to study photography and cinema at Concordia University in Montreal and eventually moved back to Vancouver, which has become her location of choice. "I incorporate the cinema into my images," she says.

The Dating Portfolio is an amalgam of all her interests. Bozic is writer, producer, director, location scout, set designer, costumer, make-up artist, co-star and photographer in her own productions. Each photograph in the series is a still from the ongoing movie of Carl and his girlfriend. The picture titles serve as captions and are literally thoughts from Carl's girlfriend's head, tempting the viewer to create a narrative for these players beyond the confines of the photograph.

Bozic is amused when people confuse her with Carl's girlfriend, although she does admit that in some instances the creation takes on a life of its own. "In the images, playing the part, I have found myself losing control sometimes. I don't know how it is going to turn out." This element of surprise keeps even the photographer coming back. In the next installment of *The Dating Portfolio*, Carl and his girlfriend move in together. What possibilities for possessions for this material couple!

These days it's not unusual for a woman to say "I found my boyfriend on the Internet," and that's precisely how Bozic found Carl, after a great deal of research. She also buys props and costumes on eBay, or rents in Vancouver, which has a lively movie industry. Each photograph requires months of planning and preparation, and Bozic keeps a book in which she constantly notes down all of her ideas. "I am inspired by everything from film to magazines," says Bozic. "I love the stage quality. I love making something out of nothing and basing it solely on my imagination. I make this work for the viewer. It's not for me. It's theater."

Possessing a strong background in photography history, Bozic admires the work of many photographers, including Sandy Skoglund's elaborate fantasy images, Duane Michael's narratives, and the portraiture of Julia Margaret Cameron and August Sander. She also cites the Dutch Master painters as a strong influence.

In *Harmonization*, an early black-and-white portfolio, Bozic featured the male nude, focusing on body parts juxtaposed with flora and fauna. Much of her imagery since then is edgier and explores a recurrent theme of staging and the perception of real versus artificial. In *Incarnation* and *Affectation*, both black and white, she creates tableaux and still-lives using taxidermy, assembling Victorian-like stage settings. They resemble an old photo studio where people might pose, but instead Bozic peoples them with birds and animals. "I liked the idea of fabrication and artificiality," she says. "The birds look like they are living, and they are really dead." Carl was a natural extension of this query, with a decidedly sociological twist.

The Dating Portfolio is also Bozic's first major color work, shot with a medium format Mamiya camera and film, although she plans to move to digital soon. She is already conceiving her next body of work to incorporate both video and still images—again emphasizing her interest in film.

The recipient of numerous awards, her work is held in both public and private collections and she has had one-person shows throughout the U.S., Canada and Sweden. Bozic will have a solo exhibition of her new work at the Joel Soroka Gallery in Aspen, Colorado during the month of July, 2009.

—Shawn O'Sullivan

■ PRINT INFORMATION

C-type prints; 15x20 inches, editions of 20-\$1000
30x40 inches, editions of 5-\$3000

■ CONTACT INFORMATION

Joel Soroka Gallery, Aspen, Colorado
(970) 920-3152; joelsoroka@msn.com
<http://www.artnet.com/gallery/117155/joel-soroka-gallery.html>