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### **Harcourt going out on a wing**

Susan Bozic's Incarnation

Art fans are forgiven if they think Harcourt House Gallery is for the birds given two avian-themed art exhibits.

Susan Bozic's Incarnation features a series of dramatic photographic still-lives focusing on a variety of species of stuffed birds. Vancouver-based Bozic is inspired in part by Dutch paintings from the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries in the creation of her heavily staged, lush photographic tableaux juxtaposing antique furniture and knick-knacks, rich cloth drapes and backdrops and her stuffed avian stars.

"The birds were rented from four or five different taxidermists with at least half coming from one source, Cinemazoo in Vancouver," Bozic says. "They're a large private animal agency that rents both live and stuffed animals and birds, mainly to moviemakers."

The artist studied cinema as well as photography in art school.

"The furniture in the shots is also rented from prop rental sources that also cater to the movies. I just love working with antiques and historic objects."

The idea behind the photos is to make the birds look as natural as possible, aiming to make them look like they "belonged in the sets." In her artist statement, Bozic writes that she's striving to give the birds a new context in the photos where they "operate both as subject and object" of the image.

"I'm exploring that idea of transformation and trying to create a situation where the birds own their image again."

Realizing that birds are associated with freedom, the photographer revels in the irony that while the mounted birds are arranged to mimic their "freer selves," the static stuffed bird is as far as you can possibly get from freedom, representing humankind's total domination (through radical preservation) of nature.