

When life's accessories sideline love

HENRY LEHMANN
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

There are those right-thinking people who believe that surely there must be something more to a person than his/her liquidity. For people convinced that humanity and true human feeling have little to do with personal credit ratings, the notion that money begets love is abhorrent in the extreme. Among those, we should probably count young Montreal artist Susan Bozic, whose show *The Dating Portfolio* is currently being shown at Art Mûr.

For others, though it's generally conceded nowadays that cash indulgences cannot guarantee a seat in heaven above, it's been clear for some time that money is an almost sure ticket to a second heaven right here on Earth. To some of the more naïve among us, it may come as a sick surprise that all those credit card ads out there have more than just an element of truth. The Technicolor promised land in the pictures can become our "backyard" with just a few swipes of hot plastic.

Bozic's latest series of photo images bravely tries to debunk the rampant, frighteningly plausible belief that "money can buy you love." In Bozic's series, bliss, love, sex and intimacy are situated in the context of the right consumer accessories. Indeed, on a first cursory glance, Bozic's pictures can be seen as a celebration of love and happiness as consumer objects. Each Bozic image includes the artist herself portraying the satisfied ideal girlfriend, at around that point in a relationship when passion blossoms into serenity. We find Bozic, arguably Barbie's less-known sister,

in a chic bar, tilting gently into the shoulder of her "boyfriend," himself sporting a silky brown shirt, no doubt from some high-end boutique. Bozic, as posed in this work called "Carl, wields a stiff martini," though one having purely decorative purposes – and not to wash away life's veil of tears. This woman, her hair more sculptural unit than textured field, gazes up worshipfully at her picture-perfect boyfriend, fictitiously named Carl. Indeed, it seems this proper man, with his empty stare and eerily smooth skin, is the one who could use a big swig of ethanol, maybe also some Viagra, to really let go.

However, as we proceed to view Bozic's imaginary diary, as told in real photographs, Carl fails to loosen up. In fact, he seems to turn hard and inhuman in an overtly un-romantic way. We see Carl introducing Bozic to deep sea fishing, geared up for tennis, and seated side-by-side in a corporate jet, clinking glasses of Champagne. In fact, the toast in Bozic's picture, titled "We made a toast, here's to us," is a function of smugness. And, if there is one quality that comes through Bozic's oddly comic images, it is a rock solid belief in the individual's right to blank out most of the rest of the world.

Certainly, Carl, as concocted in Bozic's pseudo-documentary/infomercial, is one resounding blank, his unlined,

handsome face, always wearing more or less the same nothing expression. Of course, it's not hard for viewers to notice that Carl is "played" by a store mannequin, as stolid and unblinking as a 2-by-4 and dumb as a brick. In fact, is Bozic's conception that the girlfriend's love is twice blind?

Far more disturbing is the girlfriend's relentless, wilful blindness to Carl's catatonic state. Yet, the dramatic irony is drawn tight as a violin string. For, if the girlfriend is almost as lifeless as her "hunk" seems to be, the rest of us, applauding love from the proverbial sidelines, are asked to question the spectacle of an untenable situation that involves blind love and great accessories.

Perhaps, here, as Bozic really sees it, love, as currently mal-practiced in the Western world, has much more to do with affectation and rank denial. Certainly, in real life Bozic seems to await, the viewers' wilderness cry that "Carl isn't even a person!" The bigger question in all this is: Are any of us real people? And if it turns out that, contrary to everything we've learned, we're not much more "human" than Carl, what in heaven's name do we do then? Buy a new yacht?

Susan Bozic's *The Dating Portfolio* remains on view at Art Mûr, 5826 St. Hubert St., until Sept. 22. Call 514-933-0711, or check www.artmur.com.

"Far more disturbing is the girlfriend's relentless, wilful blindness to Carl's catatonic state."



Susan Bozic and her mannequin friend Carl in her work titled "He's so thoughtful, it wasn't even my birthday."

ART MÛR