

The following is an excerpt from an interview between RAG (Richmond Art Gallery, Richmond, BC) Curator/Director Corrine Corry (CC) and artist Susan Bozic (SB) – May 25, 2003.

CC: You make a distinction between making a photograph and taking a photograph.

SB: When I was at Concordia, in my third year, I realized that I could make a photograph that I liked. That was a moment of great satisfaction because I would no longer just take photographs; I learned how to compose a photograph, working with still life, objects, ... It was an amazing experience. I just had to find the subject matter that interested me; it was possible for the first time.

CC: So you set out to make works that are 'constructed'.

SB: My images are absolutely artificial and constructed. No detail is left to chance. Every part of the image is meticulously arranged.

CC: Could you tell me about your original idea for this portfolio?

SB: It started with an interest in recreating paintings. Originally I thought this is where the portfolio was headed. Then in my search for the paintings I wanted to recreate; I started looking through art history books. I realized that I really like the Dutch still life paintings from the sixteenth century. I would photocopy images that I liked in hopes of finding a commonality that was of interest to me. It was drapery. The Dutch use drapery as a framing devise. ... Then the birds, I remember seeing one photograph by Joyce Tenneson. She does portraiture. There is a portrait of a woman with a dove on her shoulder and it was something that really struck me. I remember thinking: Is this a real bird? Is this not a real bird? It provoked questions. So it was a combination of different things that led me to the idea of using taxidermy birds in theatrical three-dimensional sets. I knew I wanted to do something with nature, whether it was flora, fauna or both.

CC: Where do you find your material?

SB: I know all the taxidermists in town. I have about five sources. I also rent props from various companies that supply the movie industry.

CC: How did you resolve the setting?

SB: It took a long time to make these photographs because it was about the process of just doing them. It was a process of trial and error. Once all the props were found it took between twenty-five to thirty-five hours to complete each image in the studio. My goal was to make each photograph look effortless.

Hopefully the photographs do look effortless. Hopefully people do question. I want the work to pose questions. In the beginning, when I would tell people that I was using taxidermy animals, they were shocked. It was an automatic reaction. So I want to create photographs that make your perceptions change.