



Fausta Facciponte Transforms Yesterday's Objects

Fausta is a contemporary artist who uses a variety of photographic techniques, including traditional film-based and modern digital processes. Her works are part of the McMaster Museum of Art, Art Gallery of Peel Permanent Art Collection, The David Somers Collection on paper, The Sheridan College Art Collection, and various private collections. Fausta is represented by the Stephen Bulger Gallery in Toronto. Her work explores the human condition as a "material thing." Through the examination of objects — how they decay, how they are preserved,

forgotten, and passed along from one owner to the next — the work raises questions about our own physical bodies and the nature of their existence within the boundaries of material goods. Fausta has been the recipient of various juried awards, the Toronto Image Works Award, the Talens Bursary Award, and the D.L. Stevenson & Sons Artists Award. Her recent accomplishments include an OAC mid-career grant, and the publication of her artwork with the Johns Hopkins University of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland.



A Conversation with Fausta Facciponte

As a child, what did you want to become [profession-wise]?

I always thought it would be neat to be an archaeologist because I liked the idea of finding things and I liked to dig in the dirt. As a child I actually found a lot of things buried in the ground like old coins, broken toys, and a soldier's medal. I also thought it would be neat to work at the mall at the Orange Julius drink stand – it seemed like a really cool job because the kiosk was a giant orange that opened up and the workers served customers from inside there.

In which town did you grow up?

I was born in Toronto but grew up in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

Do you think your background has influenced your current photography style? If so, what specific element in your background is most pervasive in influencing your current photography style?

So many things have influenced my current photography style and at some point the pieces fall into place. The most pervasive element has been my daughter Toni because she has changed the way I think and look at things. A child will never get a creative block and if you don't interfere with their artistic sensitivity they can teach you more than you can teach them.



What inspires you in the job of being a photographer?

Definitely John, my husband. He understands my vision as an artist and so much about photography; we have this ongoing conversation about art, materials, technique, and the messages within a work of art. Without him I probably would have stopped making art with my camera and expressed myself with another medium.

In which way do you consider yourself an innovative creator?

Probably because I can use whatever I have to make something. With this latest project of the doll portraits I didn't have a large format camera but I wanted the portrait of the doll to be huge and at the same time retain the fine details of the worn face – of course this is impossible with only a Nikon D200 12mp camera because an image can only be enlarged so far before it starts to degenerate and show pixels. But if you take a bunch of individual photos and digitally stitch them together the results surpass any large format system. Each finished photograph was composed from 30 – 120 separate photos digitally stitched together into a seamless patchwork to form one image. The images can be printed huge and they reveal dust, dirt and filaments of hair that are magnified beyond what is normally and comfortably perceived.

Which basic elements of creativity did your family teach you?

Playing, curiosity, looking...staying quiet and making things.

How do you get ideas for creating your photography?

They just happen, whether I'm washing the dishes or paying attention to the pictures in my dreams. I do get a lot of inspiration from thrift stores, garage sales, kitschy and quirky things, children, television re-runs, music, art, and walking. Lately my ideas start with collecting things or found everyday objects... usually stuff people don't want anymore. The doll portraits began after I made this one portrait of a shabby haired doll that belonged to my daughter. After that I began collecting old used dolls from unknown children. I collected from thrift stores, garages sales, and online auctions. These worn objects were like symbols of terminated love and abandonment. Children often bestow a power into these objects – to be their keeper of secrets, their confidant and protector and many times these objects are an extension of the owner – a portrait of the self.

Do you have a favorite photographer yourself?

They are many, but I will mention Diane Arbus, Sally Mann, Shelby Lee Adams, Eugene Meatyard, and August Sander.

Are you ever afraid you will run out of inspiration and creativity in your job?

Never. And I never confuse those bad days with running out of inspiration... it may appear that you have nothing left when you make something and it's total crap, but the bad images have to happen so the good ones can come out. It's part of the process and the patience of an artist. Without it an artist will never fully understand the core of their work and what separates a mediocre idea from a great one.



What is the most difficult thing in your job?

Finishing a project. Ideas come easily, but there is a point when it's just a matter of doing the work and you feel like an employee to your own artwork – this is the time you get up in the morning and you go to work. But it's not necessarily a bad thing because it's also the time you spend with your image and get to know it, and if you really pay attention during this time it branches out into new ideas that feed you as an artist.

What is the most fun part of your job?

Wearing jeans everyday.

Do you expect your way of creating photography to change in the future?

New projects always bring new ways of working, plus the changes that happen within the medium itself will have an effect. So I expect my way of working to constantly change. I started my photography career with film, chemicals, and a lot of darkroom time. Now my work is fully digital. It's all good – it keeps things from getting boring.

Do you embrace the changes in the photography industry regarding social media and technology influences?

Sometimes I embrace it and sometimes I reject it...but the important thing is that, as an artist, you respond to it, so that your artwork reflects the world we live in, not a world of the past. With my latest project I have embraced the technological changes in photography but not allow the tools to overpower the ideas - exploring their capabilities and their limitations. It's such a fantastic thing to change your regular working tools because it can change the way you think about things and spark new ideas. It can be challenging because you get pretty comfortable with something ...but comfort can get you in a rut. On the other hand it's also important to not get too caught up in all the tools – it's like the kid who has all the toys and doesn't really know how to play.



What do you consider to be your greatest masterpiece?

It just doesn't exist. But I do have a favorite photograph which I refuse to show anymore.

Do you have any plans for future masterpieces?

I don't think about creating a masterpiece, I just start with an idea which might evolve into more works that form a series. Sometimes when I am working on a series for a show I do think about a work that will anchor the show and one that disrupts the show. These end up being your strongest pieces. At the moment I'm working on a wallpaper which is meant to respond with the hanging artwork so it's more of an installation piece. I'm playing with the tensions between foreground and background, and the physical relationship between artwork and viewer.

Do you like art? Do you have any preferences for an artist? And/or for creators of artistic work? (Creators can also be chefs, designers, fashion designers or inventors.)

I love art. I marvel at works by Masaccio, Jan Van Eyck, Hieronymus Bosch, James Ensor, Christian Boltanski, Henry Darger, and Tom LaPierre.

If so, why is that? What special quality do you like in their work or personalities?

These artists have technical merit, intellectual depth and aesthetic qualities in their works. I'm drawn to their work because it hides something more than it reveals. These

works have engaged me into a long lifetime relationship - I always go back to these artists and their works; I discover new things and I ground myself in them.

Do you aspire to collaborate in your creations with an artist from another artistic discipline?

Yeah, I would like that. I like the idea of expanding some of my ideas into a gallery installation or applying some ideas into the design of things.

Do you follow any philosophical or psychological approach in your photography?

I'm usually thinking about the dichotomies of life and what it means to be human. We teeter between comfort and unease, beauty and decay, endurance and fragility, etc... and I'm interested in making images that strike these raw chords. I don't necessarily set out to make a photograph about these things but through observations and emotions of everyday life, the art just shapes itself that way. With the doll portraits I was thinking about the human condition as a material thing. I was thinking about our own physical bodies and the nature of their existence within the boundaries of material things. I considered the relationship between photograph and viewer, and questioned how could I engage the viewer's participation - so the large scale, the penetrating gaze and the frameless presentation all lead the image outwards, engaging the audience into a relationship.