



## Jessica Doslin

*How long does it take to construct one of your pieces, for example "Carina"?*

Carina took several months to complete, although I was working on her twin sister Calisto at the same time. It's nearly impossible to calculate how many hours each individual piece takes and honestly, I'd rather not know. It would make it even harder to let them go! Generally speaking, my sculptures range in size from one inch high to six feet tall. For a small piece it might take a week (if I'm lucky.) For large creatures, it takes many months. I will often work on several pieces simultaneously. That keeps things moving along, even if I need to put one of them aside until I find a particular part. Sometimes it can take a quite



Carina 2009  
12" x 12"  
Antique hardware, brass,  
bone, glass, leather, silk  
and painted cloth, glass eyes

Don't Mind 3

while just to find one particular element: a brass vase with exactly the right colour, a specific color of snakeskin, or a perfect piece of 19th century woven brass trim.

*What techniques do you use to assemble your creatures? Your sculptures are so intricately crafted using many different types of materials, did you learn your assemblage techniques prior to the Art Institute of Chicago? Do you have help (ie-professional welders?) or do you do all the work yourself?*

My sculptures are constructed using a wide range of techniques, each appropriate for the qualities of that material. The parts are assembled without welding, because heating would destroy the beautiful patina on the antique metal. I use mechanical fastenings instead. The parts are individually flanged and threaded, bolted or otherwise joined. My sculptures are much more complex than they appear in images. In Ludwig, for example, one single foot consists of 30 separate parts! There is a lot of engineering (and finesse) that goes into making them seem natural, effortless, as if they were meant to be.

I consider myself to be primarily self-taught. I have made this type of sculpture since 1992, so I have refined my techniques over many years. Also, during much of that time, I worked as a professional model maker, building architectural models, prototypes, and custom props. That training brought a level of expertise in machining, casting and precision fabrication, which I have subsequently brought to my own work. In other words, I am the professional who I would want to hire to build my work!

*Why did you choose to sculpt animals over possible images of humans or other things?*

Human skulls and skeletons are a bit too familiar to most. They come loaded with far too many associations. That sense of familiarity gives them a cartoon-ish aspect that I find unappealing. It breaks the dream.

*You've been creating these wonderful menagerie of creatures for quite sometime, what kind of art did you create before this?*

I started off as a photographer. My photographs were of sculptural, mixed media constructions, but at the beginning, these objects were temporary. They were made with the intent of the image being the end product.

As my constructions became more complex, the photographs became secondary. Right around that time, my apartment was robbed, and along with it, my cameras. I took it as a sign and used the insurance money to set up a small metal shop at home. Then I started to build my menagerie in earnest.

Now I feel that I've come close to full circle.

The images of my work, rather than the actual sculptures, are what the vast majority of people see. They have to hold their own, independently.

Still, documentation is inherently limiting. My work is quite intricate and it often incorporates adjustable or moveable parts. There are a lot of details that go by unnoticed. Scale is also an issue. When looking at a small, flat image, you don't get a visceral sense of size. For example, Francesca is nearly 6' tall. She can look you right in the eye. Scarlett, another bird, is only 3" tall. The two flamingos, Canolo & Caprice are constructed so that they are adjustable—they can stand in different poses. Also the full length of the necks is flexible. These things can't be conveyed in a single image. Still, I do feel that the magic somehow comes through...

*How did you find your identity/niche in creating your type of work?*

It was a gradual evolution. My early mixed-media sculptures incorporated bones, seedpods, and other natural objects, combined with man-made found objects (especially parts from old cash registers, adding machines and medical equipment). One day, I happened upon a bag of exquisite taxidermy bird parts, used for 19th century millinery. That was the beginning of the first of my beasts.



Ludwig 2011/12/2008  
Antique hardware, brass, bone, snakeskin,  
bone, velvet, glass, leather, silk, glass eyes



Carrie, 2006  
22.5" x 17"  
Artisan hardware, brass, bone,  
glass teeth, glass eyes

How has your association with galleries, for example the Lisa Sette Gallery, helped shape your career as an independent artist?  
Lisa Sette Gallery has been a marvelous partnership. I respect their aesthetic and admire the other artists who they represent. They believe in their artists and have done a great deal to help my work find its audience among international collectors. Currently we are working on a big, beautiful book of my beasts, which they are sponsoring. It will be released in 2008.

How much of your personality is reflected in your work?  
Although interpreted in obscure ways, many of my intrigues and my sense of humor (or perhaps more accurately, sense of whimsy) are reflected in my work...but only if you look very closely. The beasts incorporate a broad range of my interests, spanning the many years

that I've been building them. Those layers are there to be excavated, but that is not strictly necessary for appreciation of my work. I suppose that answer, in itself, reflects that I have a somewhat secretive nature. I would rather show than tell...

How do you see your work in the next 5-10 years?

There are many projects that have been fermenting in my head for quite some time. In the future (hopefully sooner, rather than later) I'd love to be in a circumstance where I have a larger studio, with more space for tools and the ability to work on a grand scale. It would be marvelous fun to be able to build a pack of wolves or a grapple, for example.

What do you want to relay to viewers when they are in the presence of your work?

I hope to bring a bit of sparkle and mystery to their day. In the visual arts, there is the potential to communicate ideas and to make layered associations, which language cannot fully convey. I make my beasts because they are what I dreamed of discovering, but they didn't exist anywhere, so I had to make them myself.

Harriet, 2005  
30" x 12" x 42"  
Bone, brass, ball bearings,  
copper, brass hair,  
ivory, glass eyes



March, 2006  
9" x 7" x 4"  
Artisan hardware and findings,  
bone, teeth, fur, painted wood,  
silk and silver, copper,  
glass teeth, glass eyes



Caroline & Davina, 2005  
47" x 18" x 20"  
Horn, copper, brass, copper  
Horn, wirework, wood, ivory,  
ivory, acrylic, copper, gold, leather,  
hairs, shell, silk and painted plastic,  
glass eyes



For more information about the artist, visit  
[www.lisasette.com](http://www.lisasette.com)

Carrie, 2007  
8" x 6" x 11"  
Artisan hardware, brass, bone,  
musical instrument parts, glass  
teeth and ivory, glass eyes



Spore, 2002  
6" x 6" x 10"  
Artisan hardware & findings, leather, bone,  
copper, brass, ivory, acrylic, wood, fur,  
painted leather