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Elizabeth Zvonar is a Canadian artist who works with collage and sculpture. Zvonar currently resides in Vancouver but is in NYC participating in the "Residency Unlimited" located in Brooklyn.

Zvonar's source materials are from media, historical references and popular culture. They question existing social and cultural systems through the use of humour and irony. Her work often speaks to the ethos and aspirations of those among the periphery of mainstream society, drawing inspiration from counterculture movements that challenge the status quo. Zvonar treats imagery as a metaphor, establishing a referential context that calls into question popular conceptions and historical canons to address cultural constructions of power. She often uses a feminist perspective to illustrate how rules of engagement were unbalanced in the past and remain so today.

Tussle Magazine: Can you describe your current residency in NYC and why you were attracted to it?

Elizabeth Zvonar: The residency is called Residency Unlimited. I was interested in it initially because it offers a structure that is relatively autonomous to what each artist requires. It is located in Brooklyn in Carroll Gardens and that was also a consideration. I was interested to spend a bit of time in New York.

TM: Will you describe the project that you are working on for this particular residency.

EZ: I structured my residency around reading Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* as a way to create structure and also a way to guide my thinking while I am in New York. In some ways this

is an antiquated book to immerse myself into as it was published in 1948. For that very reason however, I think it is an important immersive read. It is a seminal foundation for how we talk about Feminism. The impetus to use the book as a structure came from an interest to read a new translation of the original text. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier published a new translation from the full original text in 2009 due to the fact that the first English translation needed an update.

In the early 1950's, Blanche Knopf (wife of Alfred Knopf, book publisher) tuned into the excitement for this book while on a book scouting trip in Paris. She recommended this be considered for translation largely due to the misunderstanding that this was somehow an academic sex manual bordering on highbrow salacious read. The commission to translate was given to H.M. Parshley, a retired professor of zoology at Smith College after his enthusiastic response to the content, noting that it wasn't '...feminist in any doctrinaire sense.'

I think my interest stems from that biographic detail more than my curiosity into biological and social science. I am interested in how culture picks up on science or news, whether accurate or not and runs with it. The details of biography are often how ideas or facts are given value and determined as culturally important.

A few years ago I made work for an exhibition I developed slowly in the studio around the idea of time and the fourth dimension, particularly Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity. I was at Banff and I got into an art historical tome that was Linda Dalrymple Henderson's thesis out of Princeton in the early 1980's titled The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art. The resulting show I titled On Time and it was a solo at the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver in 2009. I developed the works in both collage and sculpture simultaneously around an abstract idea of time, history, counter cultural moments and an allusion to the metaphysical. Maybe it can be thought about as an abstracted speculation on multiple dimensions co-existing. The work is riffing on those ideas, not attempting to define or explain. They come from that consideration but my intention is always to build and interpret art from whatever it is I'm looking at.

TM: Your work (in general) focuses on feminist tropes in the media. Can you expand on expand?

EZ: The ubiquity of the female body in advertising is easy material to find and ripe for critiquing. There is a lot of conversation and activism that turns this content into a larger conversation. The language of collage is one that is dependent on deep visual cognizance, a subliminal engagement with images that we are inundated with through advertising we see regularly in magazines, screens and billboards. We're semiotically sophisticated. There is a danger in the way we navigate our visual landscape versus our ability to articulate and critique how this operates or what the long-term effects will be. We're passive perhaps out of visual exhaustion. When we use voice and language there is a potential shift from passive to active. Once you can name what is happening, you can have agency to build on its future essentially rather than be led through someone else's ideas.

TM: The juxtaposition of collage and sculpture in your exhibitions are extensions of your collages, can you expand on your process of fitting together the two medias?

EZ: In 2008 I put a sculpture and a collage facing each other on an angle in a square space. Sign of the Times is a larger than life black serpentine stone carved sculpture of a hand with two fingers posed in the sign of V for Victory. Pelly's Mission 2982 is a 5.5"X6' large framed collage of a mother ship floating in deep space in the year 2982. Together, facing each other it means peace to the future. Separately, they have their own associations and can stand by themselves.

After this, I started to think about what happens when you make things fluid. Its fun to figure out the sweet spot where something I've made can be autonomous and mutable, mercurial and resilient. I like to think that we as individuals can strive for the same characteristics for each other that we might want for a material existence.

In 2013 I put sculpture and collage directly together in a piece titled The Spector, The Serpent, The Ghost, The Thing. Gold plated bronze stiletto heels prop up and frame a large collage mounted on aluminum that leans against the wall. This positioning of the collage on the sculpture moved forward this earlier idea of collage in conversation with sculpture. This required each part in order to make it a whole.

TM: May you share some of your main influences?

EZ: Recently I've been watching a lot of video documentation of art related panels discussing feminism and also photography; thinking about ego and empathy. I watched this great panel that had Mary Kelly, Catherine Lord and Andrea Fraser speaking at UC Irvine a little while ago. Each speaker talked about real things, life, biographical events that shaped their thinking and it was so refreshing to listen to what they had to say rather than speaking through the theoretical. I feel like I learned so much.

I saw this amazing show at the Guggenheim recently titled Photo Poetics: An Anthology, curated by Jennifer Blessing and dedicated to the work of Sarah Charlesworth. It was a really smart show with a ton of good work that allowed me to dig deeply into a bunch of different internet rabbit-holes researching a particular history and the work that thinks through that. And this flows from the last tangentially. There's a Moyra Davey (she's in the Photo Poetics show) piece that The Metropolitan Museum recently acquired titled Kevin Ayers. It's great. It's dedicated to an idea she read in his (Kevin Ayers, musician) obituary; I think the clever people are the one's who do as little as possible. I can get on board with that especially after spending some time in New York. Chilling is a good influence for me. Being productive and chilled out is an art.

- "An Interview With Elizabeth Zvonar", *Tussle*, June 2016.