

Backstage Pass: the Artist's Studio

Georgia Guenther, Panya Clark Espinal, ROM Artists
Royal Ontario Museum

[View of Georgia Guenther, Artist in the ROM Artists' Studio] **Georgia Guenther:** Come and have a look behind the scenes in the artists' workshop here at the ROM.

[Cut to close up of artist's hands cutting leaves from translucent material with scissors; Cut to close up of an artist's hands arranging orange coral models in a foam block]

[Cut to close up of artist's hands mixing paint on a palette] **Georgia:** We've been busy for about a year [cut to Georgia in the Artists' Studio] now making hundreds of models [cut to panning shot of reptile and amphibian specimen models arranged on a white board] of various life forms for the new Schad Gallery of Biodiversity. Of course, the Museum is committed to showing [cut to zooming shot of coral models and specimens arranged in boxes on a work table] as many real things as possible [cut to shot of a sea slug model in a white box] and there are hundreds of real things in the Schad Gallery [Cut to panning shot of various sea creatures including starfish and squid models] but in some cases things do not preserve well enough for display [Cut to shot of Georgia in the studio] and in other cases we actually don't have a real specimen of something that we want to exhibit.

[Cut to shot of an artist working at a table in the studio] **Georgia:** Sometimes we model objects directly by eye.

[Cut to close up of an artist's hand as she carves at a model with a knife] **Georgia:** Sometimes we can use parts of organisms, [Cut to shot of an artist at a table working on cacti models] particularly plants, where the pieces preserve well enough to be used and other parts that don't preserve, [Music begins to fade in; Cut to shot of the two artists working at a table in the studio] we re-create and combine.

[Cut to zooming close up of Georgia painting a coral model; Cut to a close up of two shrimp models; Cut to a close up of a squid model; cut to a panning shot of several fungi models]

[Cut to shot of artist, Panya Clark Espinal sitting at a work table] **Panya Clark Espinal:** Ok so, in the case of the chameleon, I was provided with an actual pickled specimen from the Herpetology Department *[Zooms in on Panya's hands as she picks up a mold and indicates how she made it]* and I made this rubber mold around the chameleon and this plaster piece, *[she picks up the plaster piece and demonstrates how it fits around the rubber]* which is called the mother mold to hold the rubber piece in place, and so, typically when this was cut open *[she peels apart the mold and pulls out a chameleon specimen]* I would pull out the actual pickled specimen. So what we see inside here is the actual chameleon. And then what we're left with is a rubber cast, which picks up all the texture of the skin of the chameleon, all the small scales, the eyes and so on. What I ended up being able to pull out of the mold *[she picks up a cast]* was an unpainted cast of the chameleon.

[Cut to close up of Panya's hand as she uses a brush to mix paint] **Panya:** Then I painted the cast to look like the photo reference, which in this case is sort of an unbelievably colourful, almost clown-like creature, *[cut to shot of Panya holding the reference photo and comparing it to the finished model]* so it was funny painting something that looks this colourful and to think it was actually found in nature looking this colourful is remarkable.

[Cut to zooming shot of the chameleon model on a white background; fade to a sea slug model on a white background; fade to a blue crab model on a white background; fade to an octopus specimen on a white background; fade to a frog specimen on a white background; screen fades to white, text reads:
The Art Department has processed 266 complex Herpetology, Invert Zoology, Mycology, and Botany organisms for the Schad Gallery of Biodiversity:]

[Cross-fades to more text: 115 new models, 27 refurbished models, and 124 specimens augmented with modeling and colour]

[Screen fades to white; Red text appears: Schad Gallery of Biodiversity; a green and black animated butterfly flutters across the text]

[Podcast ends as screen fades to black]