

SculptureNews

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National Sculpture Society



Sculptor Profile
Roger Martin, NSS

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Roger Martin began his art career as an assistant curator at the Schiele Museum of Natural History creating dioramas for the North Carolina institution. Eventually branching into the taxidermy supply industry, Martin began to sculpt on the side, challenging his own particular artistic vision. In the past three decades, Martin has established himself as a sculptor of animals, and has devoted himself to the study and understanding of all creatures. Martin is a signature member of the Society of Animal Artists and his work has been included in their annual and touring shows. Martin has also exhibited with "Birds in Art", Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum (Wausau, WI); "Sculpture in Savannah", Green-Meldrim House, (Savannah, GA); "World Carving Championships", (Ocean City MD); and has been included in four National Sculpture Society Annual Awards Exhibitions including this year's 81st Annual. His sculptures can be found in private and public collections across the U.S. including Salisbury, NC (*Jeremiah*); Summerville, SC (*Resting Icon*); Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art, Salisbury, MD (*Midnight Rambler*); and Kilauea, Kauai, Hawaii (*Excuse Number 153*). Martin resides in Albemarle, North Carolina and became an Elected Member of NSS in 2009.

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Mardie Rees had no shortage of artistic influence growing up in a family of craftspeople, builders, and artisans, but it was living in Central America as an impressionable teen that really guided her focus to sculpture. Graduating from Laguna College of Art and Design in 2003, Rees has made short work of establishing herself as a sculptor in the decade or so since graduation. Rees has exhibited with the Portrait Society of America; the California Art Club; the Allied Artists of America; and the American Artists Professional League. Her work can be found in private and public collections including Gig Harbor, Washington (*St. Anthony & Child* and *Skansie Brothers Park Medalion*); British Columbia, Canada (*Founder: C.W. Lonsdale & Dog*); and Quantico, Virginia (*WWII U.S. Marine Raider Memorial*). Rees lives in Gig Harbor, Washington with her husband and two children.

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Cover:

Elusive
Roger Martin, NSS
Bronze - 27" x 15" x 12"

This Page:

Spoonbill
Roger Martin
Mixed Media - 55" x 19" x 14"



ROGER MARTIN

Sculptor Profile

Your interest in art began with an interest in taxidermy. Tell us about that.

As a kid I was interested in anything creative: painting, making things out of clay, wood, papier-mâché, building models, glueing rocks together to make little animals. I grew up about a half a mile from The Schiele Museum of Natural History. I was fascinated by all the mounted birds and mammals and at 13 I assumed I could do it as well as they could. So I borrowed a book on taxidermy from my brother who had gotten it for his birthday and never read it (I still have it). Taxidermy involves lots of different processes, not unlike the creative play I enjoyed as a child, so I felt an immediate connection. Most people get started in taxidermy because of an interest in hunting. I got started because I enjoyed the challenging combination of processes. It combined all the different things I liked to do.



Are there any memorable taxidermy stories you can share with us?

Back in the early eighties I was busy building a taxidermy supply business and sculpting every little critter known to man. I sculpted a mannequin for and mounted a spotted skunk. In those days I would enter national competitions for business marketing and publicity purposes. The skunk did well in one particular competition and I took home a nice check. With the prize money, I purchased new stones for an engagement ring my aunt had given me and married my college girlfriend, Gina, shortly thereafter.

In 2002, I donated the collection of mounted animals I had accumulated though the years to the National Museum of Natural History. The museum wanted the collection for use in its renovations of the Mammal Hall. When my wife and I received the invitation to the prestigious event, we were happy to see that the spotted skunk was pictured on the front. When we made our way up the side walk we were greeted by a thirty-foot banner featuring the skunk on the front to the Museum of Natural History. To this day the spotted skunk is on display in the Mammal Hall and viewed by millions of people each year. Gina and I recently celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary and it's nice that the spotted skunk is part of our family folklore.

You've taken safaris to observe and study animals in the wild. Any powerful lessons learned in the field?

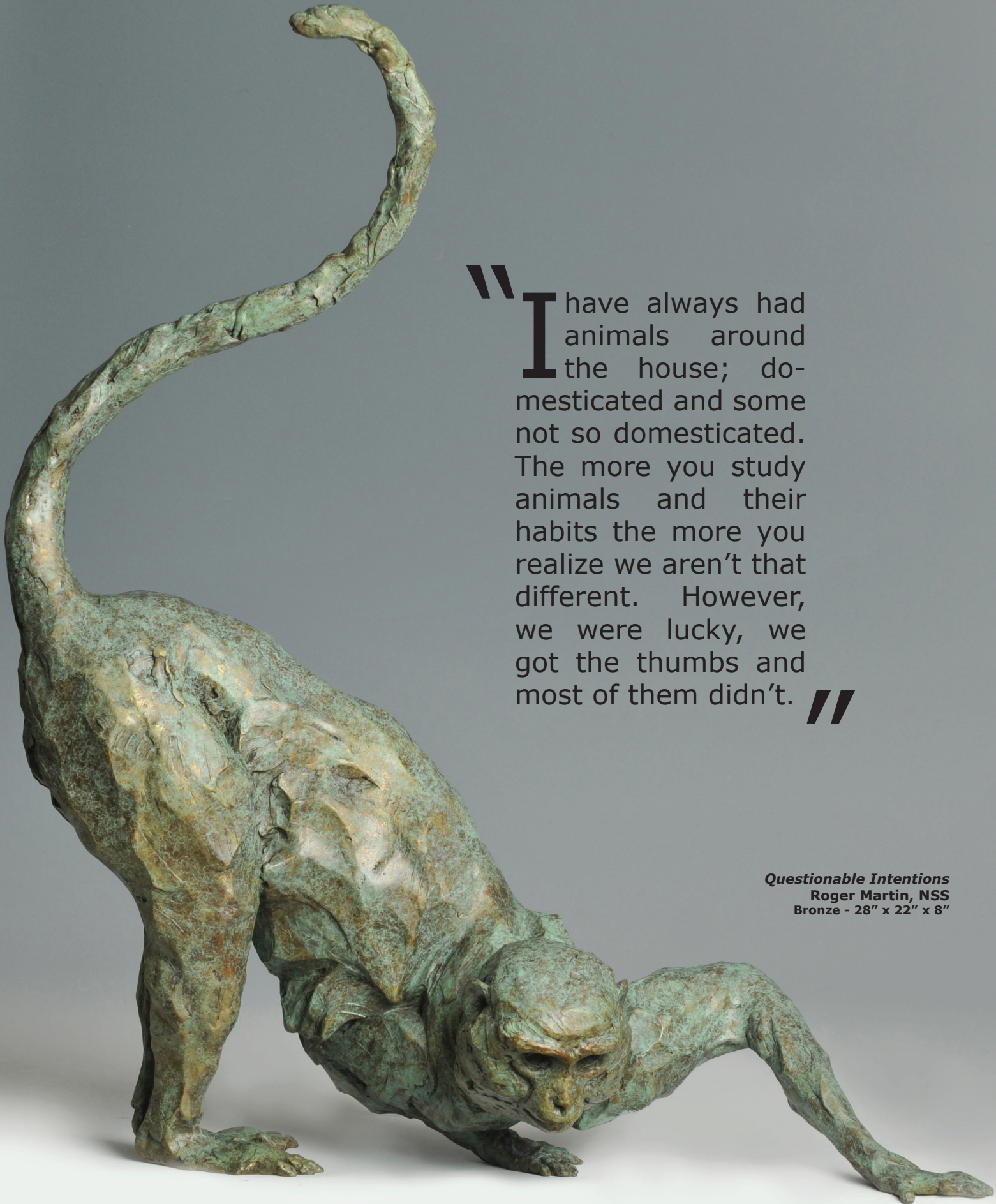
I have been very fortunate; I have been able to view many species of animals in their native habitats around the world. Knowing your subject matter is everything, anatomy is important but you can learn that from a book. It is best when you can experience an animal on their level. I didn't have much of an opportunity to hunt as a kid, I took it up as an adult to further my knowledge. Some years ago I tagged along with a friend as an observer on a hunt in the Dande area of northern Zimbabwe. We spent 21 days in the bush with lots of elephants, buffalo, lions etc... I was still big on my 35mm camera at the time. One day I decided I wanted to get some good images of a herd of buffalo. While on a long hike we came into an open area on the edge of the Zambezi River with a herd of about fifty buffalo, mostly cows and half grown ones with a couple of smallish bulls. The wind was in our favor, so with no real plan or guns the professional hunter and I started running toward the group 100 yards away. The river was behind them and off to our



“**M**aking fine art sculpture is a great creative release. In the taxidermy supply industry there are tight parameters around what you create. Everything has to be a certain size or pose, other manufactured parts have to be incorporated into the sculpture, and symmetry is the supreme ruler of the taxidermy world. With my bronze sculptures I can make them any way I want, any size, I can distort proportions for effect. It is very liberating. Learning to loosen up my style was one of the hardest things I have ever tried to do. That said, I’ll never abandon my knowledge of animal anatomy; I think my taxidermy roots will always be reflected in my work in some way.” //



Penguin
Roger Martin, NSS
Bronze - 8.5" x 11" x 10"



“I have always had animals around the house; domesticated and some not so domesticated. The more you study animals and their habits the more you realize we aren't that different. However, we were lucky, we got the thumbs and most of them didn't.” //

Questionable Intentions
Roger Martin, NSS
Bronze - 28" x 22" x 8"

Jeremiah
Roger Martin, NSS
Bronze - 36.5" x 27" x 23"



right was a steep rock cliff rising upward, so their escape routes were limited. They ran as a group for a moment then split into two. We continued after the ones that veered left. I stopped to shoot pictures of the animals in motion when the opportunity arose. After a short chase, they suddenly all spun around and stood their ground at about 40 yards. As the dust settled, the scene looked exactly like the painting *The Defensive Line* by John Banovich. The entire time I am photographing it when I decide to check my camera. I used 24-exposure film, but the exposure-counter on the camera read "35" and that's when I realized when loading the film, I must not have gotten the leader around the spool properly. I didn't have a single image on film.

That was the last trip I carried a bag full of camera gear. Now I carry a \$100 Nikon in my pocket and rarely use it. I learned that day it was the experience I needed, not the pictures. If I want to show others what I have experienced, I show them in bronze. I always want to create the animal I remember from experience, not three-dimensional representations from a photograph.

Who are your favorite artists?

Antoine-Louis Barye would be at the top of my list. Through his persistence he secured a place for animals in fine art. Barye knew his subject matter and took it seriously but he also had a great sense of humor. If I could have only one sculpture with me on a desert island it would be *Ape riding a Gnu*. I could look at it for hours and laugh. Besides, it would be the perfect size and weight to bludgeon something for dinner. Barye understood the struggle for survival, I think he would approve. Other favorites include: Rembrandt Bugatti, because he understood animals so well; Deon Duncan, ever since I saw *The Contortionist* at Brookgreen I've been a fan; and Walter Matia, because he says what he thinks.

How do you see your work developing over the next 5 or 10 years?

I want to do more of the pieces that keep me awake at night. I think my work will always have an animal connection. I am interested in pushing the envelope on materials and concepts. I am working in that direction now. Time is the enemy.

What are you working on now?

I am working on a series of pieces that are based on Victorian taxidermy armatures. I have collected books on the subject since I was a kid and have always been fascinated with the antiquated processes. In those days they created elaborate armatures to hold up the skin and stuffing for big game mounts, they were amazing. Unfortunately, the finished product was usually lacking in the desired lifelike effect. I am incorporating the use of period taxidermy materials, wood, plaster, copper, burlap, leather, bone, etc... to construct minimalistic sculptures. My goal is to create pieces that truly capture the subject utilizing the knowledge I have acquired through my various artistic endeavors. Just as when I was a kid, I enjoy all the different materials and processes required to complete a piece.

What is the future of figurative sculpture?

We brought it out of the cave with us; it will always be with us. Technology continues to give us new tools and materials to express our ideas.

What advice do you have for any sculptor beginning his/her career?

Know everything you possibly can about your subject matter... then make it your own.

Midnight Rambler
Roger Martin, NSS
Bronze - 12.5" x 8.5" x 16"

