



## **Fabricating insects: The unnatural history of insects on display**

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Mimicry in nature takes innumerable forms and serves many functions. So too, does the mimicry *of* nature. From an Egyptian scarab pendant to the crafted bait of the fish fly, tangible likenesses of insects have had a glorious and peculiar history. Insects continue to catalyze the human compunction to examine, to appreciate, and to create. Creating the semblance of an insect is a commonplace endeavor today, with manufactured insects taking the stage in theater, film, dance, as well as in fashion, including jewelry. The insect likeness has its six legs firmly situated in commercial kitsch, as well as in the hallowed halls of natural history and art museums.

I present a survey of modern day trompe l'oeil, where the replication of nature brings entomology, education, and art together in inseparable ways. Sculptures range from the actual-size reproduction of insects to behemoths of unnatural proportion. Reasons for building each, and techniques applied to achieve these ends are the subject of this survey. Extreme examples of insect fabrication include stone fly nymphs, meticulously tied in the spirit of and incorporating the traditions of fly tying, and a suite of insects exploiting a dung pile nestled within a diorama. Whether they are presented or interpreted to be art pieces, educational tools, or scientific materials, these examples are setting the standards for the accurate representation of insects.

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**Program Selection:** Program Symposia, Entomological Society of America 2003

**Session Selection:** Insects in Art and Culture - Vision, Resonance, and Spirit

**Keywords:** cultural entomology, education