

ART TALK

by Fred Coppersmith

INT. MUSEUM-DAY

RICARDO and CONRAD stand or sit in front of a number of paintings which hang on the wall.

RICARDO:

Hello there, and welcome to Art Talk. This is Ricardo Montalban — no, not that one — coming to you live from Le Musée de Machins (The Museum of Things) here in Paris, France, and with me this afternoon is American sculptor and stockbroker, Conrad Glasgow. Conrad, it's a pleasure.

CONRAD:

Yes, Ricardo, I'm sure it is. I'm quite a captivating person.

RICARDO:

Right... Of course you are... (beat) Now, Conrad, as I understand it, your sculptures on exhibit here have recently received a great deal of praise from a great many people.

CONRAD:

Well, I don't like to brag, but yes.

RICARDO:

How do these pieces differ from your earlier work, which, quite frankly, no one in their right mind seemed to like?

CONRAD:

Well, Ricardo, it's sort of an interesting story.

RICARDO:

Ooh. Stories are good.

CONRAD:

Yes, well you see I'd been thinking—

RICARDO:

That's always nice.

CONRAD:

Yes. Well, you see, I thought, clay and marble, they're just so—I don't know, what's the word?—overrated. So passé. I wanted to explore an untapped artistic medium. Virgin material, if you will.

RICARDO:

(to himself)

Heh heh. Virgin.

(sheepishly)

Oh, sorry. You were saying?

CONRAD:

Yes, well, I thought—ice? No, no, it's been done too. Metal, wood—all done before. It looked like there were no new frontiers to conquer. I don't mind telling you, Ricardo, it looked like I'd have to throw in the towel as an artist and go back to my millions on Wall Street a beaten man.

RICARDO:

Oh no!

CONRAD:

But then! I stumbled upon an amazing and revolutionary new idea! A brand spanking new sculpting medium.

RICARDO:

You're speaking, of course, of dead fish.

CONRAD:

Yes. Large, dead bluefish.

RICARDO:

Intriguing.

CONRAD:

Yes, quite. You see this piece here? CONRAD gestures, revealing a small piece on a table or stand to the side of them. It looks more than vaguely like a miniature misshapen Christmas tree.

RICARDO:
(enraptured)
Oh yes! It looks just like a little
Christmas tree!

CONRAD:
I call it "Evergreen Made from a Big
Dead Fish". I don't consider it my
best work overall, but I do think
it's indicative of the new artistic
ground I've broken here.

RICARDO:
(no longer listening)
A little Christmas tree. How cute!

CONRAD:
Um, yes. "Cute".

RICARDO:
Does it light up?

CONRAD:
No...it doesn't light up.

RICARDO:
(disappointed))
Oh. Why doesn't it light up?

CONRAD:
Because it's a goddamn dead fish,
that's why.

RICARDO:
(laughs, as if only just
realizing this)
Oh yes. It is so easy to forget
these things sometimes.

CONRAD:
Yes, well, I do strive for realism.

RICARDO:
Of course. But tell me, what do you
find most challenging about this
particular medium?

CONRAD:
You mean other than the smell?

RICARDO:
Is that a major factor?

CONRAD:

Well they are dead fish. We've had to keep some of the larger pieces in a separate wing out of direct sunlight.

RICARDO:

I see.

CONRAD:

And there's been some trouble keeping cats out of the studio at night. But I think we've managed to fix that with heavy applications of shellac.

RICARDO:

You mean on the fish?

CONRAD:

No, on the cats.

RICARDO:

Oh, I see.

(turning to camera)

Well, to give us some historical perspective on the use of fish in the arts, we're joined now by world-renowned ichthyologist, Dr. William Gerbilfood.

Enter GERBILFOOD. He smiles and waves.

GERBILFOOD:

That's right. Hello.

RICARDO:

Thank you for coming, Doctor. Perhaps we can begin by—

CONRAD:

(with obvious contempt)

Oh great. A fish doctor.

GERBILFOOD:

Well, no, actually we do prefer the term ichthyologist. You see, it's derived originally from the Greek word "ikhthus" meaning fish, which is what—

CONRAD:
Oh please. I think we all know what
"ichthyologists" do.

GERBILFOOD:
Well, yes. We study fish.

RICARDO:
That's right. I looked it up.

GERBILFOOD:
Now you see, in your work, the
"blue" fish or *Pomatomus saltatrix* as
it's commonly called is—

CONRAD:
Sure. You study fish.
(beat)
By performing bizarre sexual
experiments on them.

GERBILFOOD:
(beat)
I'm sorry, what?

RICARDO:
(shocked)
Doctor, is this true?

GERBILFOOD:
What? No! Of course it isn't true!
I've never—

CONRAD:
Never what, Doctor? Dressed a
marlin up in a garter belt? Put
perverted little panties on the
paired pelvic and pectoral fins of
pike, piranha, and pipefish?

RICARDO:
Ooh. Nice alliteration.

CONRAD:
Thanks. Is that the sort of thing
you've never done, Doctor?

GERBILFOOD:
Of course I've never done that!
What are you talking about?
(to RICARDO)
Look, I was told we'd be discussing
the great white shark today.

CONRAD:

Oh, really. And what do you do with them, Doctor? What sort of frilly underpants do you force them to wear?

RICARDO:

Frilly underpants?

GERBILFOOD:

Honestly, I don't know what he's talking about.

CONRAD:

Right. Like we're going to take your word for it, Dr. Gerbilfood. If that's even your real name.

RICARDO:

(to GERBILFOOD)

Is that your real name?

GERBILFOOD:

My god, I haven't done anything! You're insane!

CONRAD:

Oh, right. I'm crazy. This, coming from the sex-crazed fish pervert over here.

RICARDO:

(apologetically, to CONRAD)

)

I'm sorry. I swear, I didn't know.

(to GERBILFOOD)

Doctor, I must say, I'm really quite disappointed.

GERBILFOOD:

But it's insane! He's making it up! I've never—

CONRAD:

Oh really. Let me get this straight. You claim you've never had an erotic encounter with even the littlest minnow?

GERBILFOOD:

No! I mean yes! Yes, that's right, never!

CONRAD:

Oh come on. Those mackerel really
turn you on, don't they?

GERBILFOOD:

Look, I have never slept with any
fish! And I don't appreciate these
baseless allegations. You're some
kind of nut!

CONRAD:

No, I am an artist! And you, sir,
are a loathsome, immoral degenerate.

RICARDO:

(nodding sadly, to
GERBILFOOD)

He's got you there.

GERBILFOOD:

What?! Look, I have never in my
entire life had a sexual encounter
involving fish! All right? And God
knows I've had opportunity.

RICARDO:

I'm sorry, Doctor, but I think it
would be best for you to just go.

CONRAD:

Sicko.

GERBILFOOD:

Arrgh. Fine. I don't need this
abuse.

GERBILFOOD storms off.

RICARDO:

(to CONRAD)

I'm really very sorry about that.

CONRAD:

It's all right. How could you have
known?

RICARDO:

I swear, no one told me he was a
fish pervert.

(turns back to face camera)

Well, I'm afraid that's all we have
time for on this week's edition. On

behalf of all of us here at Art
Talk, this is Ricardo Montalban –
no, not that one – from Paris,
saying goodnight.

(turning away again as show
titles appear)

So...anybody else want seafood for
lunch?