



The stuffed that dreams are made of

Taxidermy, once the preserve of stuffy country houses and natural history museums, has been cool for some time, with many well-regarded artists turning their creative talents to this ancient craft. Who could forget Turner Prize 2013 nominee David Shrigley's Jack Russell holding up a placard that read, "I'm dead", or ignore the fact that Polly Morgan's pieces now fetch vertiginous prices in the world's auction houses. For those intrigued by this curious art, there will be some truly splendid examples of it on show and for sale at *Darwin's Menagerie*, an exhibition opening next week at Jamb in London's Pimlico.

What makes this show different is that the two artists behind it, Ferry van Tongeren and Jaap Sinke, see their work as paying tribute not just to Darwin (whom they name as their executive director) but to the great 17th-century Dutch Old Masters, such as Jan Weenix, Melchior d'Hondecoeter and Adriaen van Olen, who strove to render in oils the wonders of the natural world, just as van Tongeren and Sinke do in their taxidermy. To this end, they have created a context for each piece - a birdcage adorned with brightly coloured exotic birds (£18,000, pictured left), a pelican on an antique plinth (£8,700) or a black swan on a richly carved, partly gilded French column head (£5,900). Prices start at £600 for a "study", usually a single bird, rising to £30,000 for elaborate works featuring an exotic avian menagerie or group of animals. For those who miss the exhibition, a wide selection of their pieces can be bought online through Fine Taxidermy.

Darwin's Menagerie, October 16-30, Jamb, 95-97 Pimlico Road, London SW1 (020-7730 2122; www.jamb.co.uk). www.finetaxidermy.com.