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Twisting Steel

Bob Benvenuto's photomontages tweak Pueblo as we know it

By [Eddie Adelstein](#) [@edieadelstein](#)

"I swear to God the writers of that show knew my life," the Pueblo artist says. "It's like, 'Wait a minute, this is too creepy, this is too real, this is like how it really was.' I was lucky to grow up with a dad that was very successful in advertising, and it paid off in terms of my eye and stuff like that, but it was a pretty crazy life during the '60s."

Benvenuto most fondly recalls going into his father's office and being set up with scissors, paper and glue on a drafting board. At its core, it's not altogether different from what the 58-year-old now does with digital photomontage.

In some of his works, the manipulation is fairly pronounced. In others, when the scale, shadows and perspective all match, it's just that something seems ... off. You'll find examples of both, as well as images that are actually just straight photographs, in *Is it Live, or is it Pueblo?*, his current solo exhibition at Pueblo's Kadoya Gallery.

"All of them kind of have stories," Benvenuto says. "They're kind of fictional, but at the same time lots of them are based on the quirkiness of our reality."

In "Noah and His Pet Fish," (pictured) we find a young boy teetering along a crumbled wall amid the ruins of a building. There's water where the foundation was, and strange fish have surfaced to greet him. Behind Noah sits another dilapidated house, with a figure standing in the doorway.

Background figures often appear in Benvenuto's works, looking subtly mysterious. They highlight his transition from the busy "vertical neighborhood" of his upbringing to the expansive, low-populated realm of the "horizontal neighborhood" he has called home since 1988. Drawn to these "wide open spaces" on a deep level, he's been shooting with a digital camera since 1997: Pueblo's buildings, people, cars, animals, whatever grabs him. It all goes into a large archive for later photomontages.

"I'm influenced, inspired and depressed by the environment," he says of Pueblo. "And those are all good things. I think they challenge us to create and do things about it."

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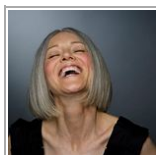
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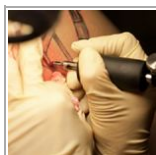
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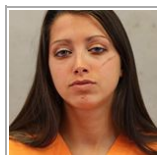
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