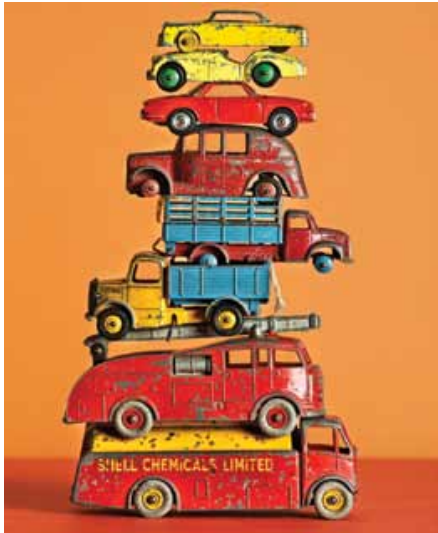


## ARTS AND CULTURE

## Vintage Toys Take On a New Life



Stacked cars and trucks are one of Becca's more popular photos. PHOTO BY BECCA WALLACE



Becca's studio is a small three season porch in the front of her apartment. PHOTO BY SANDY NG

By Ed Kucerek

What do you get when you mix a passion for photography, art and vintage toys together and throw in lots of bright colours with a sprinkling of fun and nostalgia? You get Becca Wallace and her whimsical art.

Becca Wallace, an Old Ottawa South based photographer, loves creating whimsical images with her camera and computer. They cover a broad range of subjects and styles from robots, cars, trucks, barbie dresses, horses to used toys from the 1950s and 60s. Shot on bright backgrounds in a rainbow of colours, her art is available as prints or resin photos mounted on wooden hollow boxes.

She started creating art at a very young age spending summers with her grandparents in northern Ontario and the eastern townships of Quebec. There she was surrounded by nature and encouraged to create whatever her imagination could invent using a multitude of media.

A graduate of Sheridan College's two year applied photography program, Wallace worked in the industry as a professional commercial photographer for a number of years while trying to figure out what she really wanted to do.

"I grew up going to craft shows with my mom who is a quilter and I really liked the craft show scene," she says. "I'm a trained photographer so I started shooting work

that's nothing like my current work to sell at craft shows.

I then decided that it just wasn't me and it was hard to continually produce. So I began to be attracted to the esthetics of vintage robots. I bought a whole bunch of vintage robots and started to photograph them. They started to do really well. Then I sort of moved on to cars. I would just go to eBay and Google vintage toys and see what popped up."

At first Wallace would just photograph single toys because she did not have that many. However when her grandmother passed away, she inherited boxes full of toys and her art started to progress into a new direction.

"My dad's family had to sell the cottage and they had an out building that was just filled with stuff that my grandmother had kept for the last 50 years and there were many boxes marked toys and I took them all. Now I am working my way through my dad's and his siblings' toys when they were kids," says Wallace.

"I like that they are beat up and I like that they sort have a personality and energy by being loved by children in the past. I like the nostalgia of them. And especially now that I am working with my dad's toys I like the connection I have to him and his siblings. These were his cherished items and they were obviously loved enough to be kept for 50 years. I like the connection with them and

the personality that the toys have."

A small three season porch in the front of her apartment serves as Wallace's studio. Working on colder days is challenging for her and requires a lot of space heaters.

With many more toys to work with, Wallace has approached photographing them in unique arrangements. She photographs cars stacked on top of each — the same for trucks, horses and other toys. Her most recent series of photos consist of Seamus and Siobhan, two little people, sitting on a Greyhound bus or a old Diana camera or on other items from the box of toys.

"I would just go into the studio and dump the box out and that's why I started stacking them because I had many of them and I had them in all different sizes and colours so I started working that way."

Wallace is continuing to learn about how to grow and manage her business by selling her art at various spring and fall craft and art shows as well as working with galleries and individuals who commission her art. Her whimsical photography is perfect for home decorating, including kids rooms and nursery wall art as well as bathroom and kitchen art.

She loves watching people's reactions to her work at art shows. "I get a lot of smiles and a lot of laughs and I get a lot of 'I used to own that' and you can see their memories flooding back," she says. "A lot of other photography is sombre and there's nothing wrong with that. But I think when I am part of an art show, mine is so bright and you will see people come in and be like 'ah' because it is so colourful and it is meant to be whimsical and make people smile."

If you are looking to put a smile on your face during these cold grey days, you can find Becca Wallace and her art at the Urban Craft Market on December 6 at the Glebe Community Centre on 175 Third Ave or visit her website at [www.beccawallace.com](http://www.beccawallace.com).



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