

### Spotlight David Trautrimas



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**Fact File**  
David Trautrimas  
Toronto, Canada

dav@trautrimas.ca  
www.trautrimas.ca

For print information, contact:  
www.photosee.com or  
www.d-gallery.ca

"I'm not necessarily fascinated by the act of photography in and of itself," says Toronto-based photographer David Trautrimas. "It's the first and usually least complicated step in a long process of assembling an image. I'm much more interested in what happens after the shutter clicks. That's when the real fun begins."

For the past eight years Trautrimas has been creating wondrous and unlikely worlds where fantasy collides with an incredible future that might exist in some alternative universe. Think Jules Verne meets Buckminster Fuller. Somewhere between the neural synapses of Trautrimas' mind and the digital realm in his Macpro computer lies a realm of surreal landscapes with a distinctive retro-futuristic look to them. Viewing his work is like seeing early 1900s magazines with artists' renditions of what the world might look like in 100 years.

Growing up in Toronto, Canada, Trautrimas was addicted to that great old British television show *The Secret Life of Machines*, hosted by two mad scientists. They would explain the inner workings of modern appliances by taking them apart and doing crazy things, like creating a giant burning pyramid of old television sets.

"There was so much potential that failed to materialize," he laments. "Things like jet packs and architecture inspired by space travel. This is my way of creating a future that we were denied."

Trautrimas' recently completed series, "Sprokist," is a sly homage to the various secret government projects perpetrated during the Cold War, such as the CIA's mind-control program MKULTRA. He wanted to evoke quasi-military operations with ambivalent ambitions, shrouded in an atmosphere of mystery and intrigue. He hypothesized the origins of iconic modern appliances by reassembling them into top-secret Cold War military outposts. These colossal structures, hybrids of both machinery and architecture, stand as weaponized ancestors to common household objects such as refrigerators, lawnmowers and washing machines. The series elicits the uneasy balance between the era's use of technology to enhance standard of living with its capacity to precipitate global catastrophe.

"My images are the result of blending dozens of photographs of multiple objects such as art deco coffee pots, bathroom scales, electric razors and such. Once I've found an object of interest I'll tear it down to its component parts, photograph the individual pieces, and start building them into architectural structures in Photoshop."

The inspiration for this series came from a review of an exhibition held several years ago at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Titled "Cold War Modern," it looked at the role of design during the Cold War. The article mentioned a telecommunications tower built in Czechoslovakia that housed a hotel and dining room for the military.

"This combination of machinery and architecture fit nicely with my previous bodies of work. With the Sprokist Project I wanted to combine the technological aspects of my creations with a futuristic architectural element. I wanted to create a plausible explanation of the origins of our common household appliances."

A typical image may be the result of hundreds of photos painstakingly combined in the computer. "The majority of the images in my archives were photographed with specific projects in mind," he says. "But there's also a large collection of random places and things that may be of use in the future. For example, I just took day-trip to Buffalo, and went on an impromptu art deco tour of the downtown area. I took hundreds of images of building details, windows, awnings, landscaping—none of which I have a current use for, but I never know what I'll need in the future."

"I've been attending a very interesting lecture series here in Toronto called 'Architecture in Combination,' that invites artists to present their work and talk about how their work uses and relates to architecture. A few months ago I presented my Sprokist photographs and it led to a fascinating discussion, with real structural engineers, on the feasibility of constructing my buildings. The consensus for the evening was that if I found a patron rich and eccentric enough, I could probably have some of these built."

—David Best



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