



Martin Conrad spends hours 3-D modelling toys based off of pop culture and his own imagination. (Patrick Davies photo - 100 Mile Free Press)

Interlakes couple creates 3-D models, toys

Using 3-D software and a printer has become something of a passion for Martin Conrad

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Creating models and toys with 3-D software and a printer has become something of a passion for Martin Conrad.

The eye can't help but be drawn to the booth he and his wife Yuko tend to at the Loon Bay Craft Market. On their table is a colourful mob of plastic figurines depicting everything from the menacing Darth Vader to classic model cars.

Conrad said they had a good response, especially among children who return year after year. "They have a small museum at home already on the shelf and we're very proud about that," he said.

His foray into 3-D modelling and printing began when he noticed his son was playing too many video games. The two decided to do something else with the computer and learned 3-D modelling, using DOS together. They started making car models for games.

After his son left home, Conrad decided to expand into 3-D printing. He thought it'd be cool to hold the things he'd designed in his hands. He got his first 3-D printer seven years ago and has been hooked ever since.

"I love it. I think it's very exciting," Conrad said. "I do lots of miniatures that I sell all over the world."

3-D printing is the process of making a solid object from a digital file. Using the file as a blueprint, a machine will lay down material such as metal, plastic, resin or carbon fibres and create the object the user desires.

The bread and butter of Conrad's business, ctrlp3d, are his HO scale-size miniature cars and motorcycles, which are typically 3.5 mm to one foot in size. He's designed 300 different models based on vintage cars, mostly from the '30s to '60s.

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Each car goes for \$15 and is sold by Shapeways 3D printing service, with \$5 going into Conrad's pocket. It's convenient for him, he said, as they do all the work of shipping and selling his designs.

"People with train sets, they buy them and paint them up really funky."

In addition to his model toys and cars, Conrad also designs metal jewelry that's 3-D printed. This involves pouring molten nickel or other metals into a lost wax casting, done by Shapeways. Yuko, who modestly remarked she's just the girl who puts price tags on the work, wholeheartedly supports her husband's work. The couple has lived on Hansen Lake in the Interlakes for the past 18 years.

"I think it's really good for him. As we get older, you know, we can still do something and that makes the days go by faster and more exciting."

Conrad said he's faster designing models now than when he started but it still takes him about a week working five hours a day. He doesn't like spending more time on the computer than that but has to be precise for the models to work.

He loves coming to the market in the summers so he can bring all his "fun stuff." These pieces are inspired by movies, cool pictures on the internet and his own creativity. Watching people appreciate and buy his work is his "food for making more," Conrad said.

"That is my inspiration. It makes me very happy. It makes me feel like a good singer who gets lots of applause, it feels good."

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Martin Conrad spends hours 3-D modelling toys based off of pop culture and his own imagination. (Patrick Davies photo - 100 Mile Free Press)



Martin Conrad also 3-D models jewellery that is cast in nickel by Shapeways: 3D Printing Service. (Patrick Davies photo - 100 Mile Free Press)



A 3-D print of a dragon roaring atop a rock created by Martin Conrad. (Patrick Davies photo - 100 Mile Free Press)



An eastern dragon statuette designed by Martin Conrad. (Patrick Davies photo - 100 Mile Free Press)



Martin Conrad has designed over 300 different models of tiny cars like these for modellers to use in train sets and other mock ups. (Patrick Davies photo - 100 Mile Free Press)



Models of Star Wars characters like Darth Vader, Chewbacca and Din Djarin are especially popular amongst young people, Martin Conrad said. (Patrick Davies photo - 100 Mile Free Press)



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