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The Real Toy Story

By Nancy Powell

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It's a familiar scene. The kids are watching their favorite cartoons, and then cut to a 5-minute commercial break where the flash of bright lights and happy kids propels your own flesh and blood to beg for this newest of wondrous

gadgets. You buy the toy. The kids are entertained for all of a week, and then you toss the toy into a closet or box where goes out of sight, out of mind. One or two years later, the toy lands on the tables of a garage sale or Goodwill. Only Goodwill won't take it any more. Unfortunately for you, while consumerism was good for our economy, it has become bad for our environment.

Few toys can ever be recycled. As for toys that get recalled—forget about it; it's either due for a trip to the hazardous (think lead paint or some part that causes choking) or electronic waste (remote control cars, talking robots) yards, unfit again for consumption by others. As *L.A. Times* columnist Susan Carpenter wrote in 2011, the used-toy issue is "a problem that's a lot like bedbugs . . . getting rid of them responsibly is a lot more difficult than I imagined." So half those toys you thought were safe for the tots—maybe not so great after all.

L.A.-based artist Joyce Dallal has taken several hundreds of used and broken toys too thrashed to be donated and too toxic to be recycled and fed them into a 10-foot tall wire-meshed, baby doll trash can she now calls *Receptacle*. The sculpture represents Dallal's idea of purgatory for lost toys, much like the daycare scene in *Toy Story 3* serves for abandoned toys, the humane alternative to landfill hell and an apropos metaphor for children's consumerism in our society.

As Carpenter, Dallal and Flynn show, it's not easy to practice green when it comes to satiating our children's appetites. But knowing how these plasticized toys can poison the air we live and breathe might make us think twice about that next trip to the 99-Cent Only Store, Target or Walmart.

Joyce Dallal's *Receptacle* is on display at the Manhattan Beach Creative Arts Center until July 12 and at the Huntington Beach Art Center from July 14 to Sept. 1, where it will share floor space with John Flynn's documentary called *Mine*, a collaborative effort with Dallal that highlights the problem of collected and disposed toys.

**Manhattan Beach Art Center, 1560 Manhattan Beach Blvd.,
Manhattan Beach, (310) 802-5440; www.citymb.info.**

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Huntington Beach Art Center, 538 Main St., Huntington Beach,
(714) 374-1650; www.HuntingtonBeachArtCenter.org.

Joyce Dallal, www.JoyceDallal.com.



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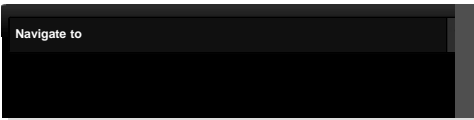
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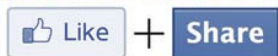
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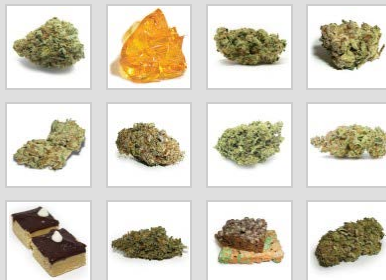
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