

Childhood Heroes

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22/01/2017 A completely new look at automotive history: Christian Blanck highlights six decades of classic cars in his book Kinderzimmerhelden ("Playroom Heroes"). This evocation of childhood memories is now also available in an exclusive Porsche edition.

Christian Blanck gently approaches the object in his lens. He changes its position a few times and tests different perspectives and light conditions. He has spent four years on this photographic quest. Today, his camera is focused on a Porsche 917. Built in 1972, this race car is three years older than Blanck himself. Nearly half a century after its debut, it hasn't lost any of its powerful presence. Blanck runs his hand over the contours and extended rear and comments on the lightweight construction of the aluminum tubular space frame and the powerful twelve-cylinder engine.

This is not your average automotive photo session. You won't find any studio lamps or flash systems here. Instead, bright sunlight illuminates the dents and scratches in the paint on the Porsche. The car's windshield is broken and a headlight is missing, but its wheels spin smoothly. The studio consists of

two white Forex panels, no larger than a pad of drawing paper. The Porsche model car from the French brand Safir Super Champion is 43 times smaller than the original. Blanck takes a photo whenever the sun plays along. Right now he is crawling on the painted concrete floor of his office, following the stretch of light streaming through the large window. A few days ago his children drew a complex pattern of roads on the floor with chalk, remnants of which are now visible on his T-shirt and trousers.

The first edition of Blanck's work is nearly sold out

Christian Blanck stages childhood memories. His first book, Kinderzimmerhelden, was published in 2015. Its 300 pages are filled with beat-up, colored, and scratched toy cars, from Matchbox, Siku, Majorette, and Dinky Toys to Hot Wheels. Collectors refer to them as bespielt ("played with"); however, this term is not precise enough to cover the complete spectrum of wear and tear. Blanck captures it all. He doesn't just take photos of toys. His images transport viewers back to their own childhoods—and very successfully at that. The first edition of his work is nearly sold out.

"We all have very individual memories of our adventures with toy cars," says Blanck. We remember attempting to repair them with a screwdriver, dropping them out of a third-floor window, and staging monstrous crash tests—a car in each hand, arms extended, hands as far from each other as possible, and all available force put into a head-on collision. This memory came to Blanck one Sunday morning. He was pushing cars around the living-room floor with his son Niklas, who was two at the time, and taking photos of the cars and the boy with his phone. "I would never have remembered that if we had been playing with perfect models right out of the package," observes Blanck. Those familiar dings and dents on the cars are what evoked the long-submerged memories for him.

Blanck: "Kinderzimmerhelden is more a work of art than a book"

Model cars with a certain patina are one thing; making a successful book out of them is another. You need a special set of talents to do so. When Blanck isn't finding, sorting, or photographing model cars, he works as a freelance strategy consultant. He describes his work as "helping to launch new brands, products, and ideas." He is also guiding a rock band on its way into the charts. He studied history and political science with the aim of becoming a journalist, but an internship prompted him to become a strategist. He spent two hundred days a year on the road with a Formula One entourage and later organized campaigns for travel companies and manufacturers of sporting goods. He even started his own collection of jewelry. The necklaces and bracelets, made of wood, palm resin, and natural dyes—all of it organic—are marketed under the brand "Die blancke Liebe," a play on his name, which translates into "pure love."

Blanck's wife says his career has not had much continuity, but Blanck sees the matter differently. "My common thread lies in the fact that I don't board trains that are already moving," he says. "What I like to do is set things in motion." That would also describe his approach to his book. "If the product is perfect, you can manage the rest," is his philosophy, so he learned to do more than simply take photos.

“Kinderzimmerhelden is more a work of art than a book,” he says. To understand what he means, all you have to do is hold a copy in your hands. The cover and printing are of superior quality, and the special printing on the cut edges is unique. The cars are still a hobby, but one that is gaining in importance and momentum. Preparation is under way for a second edition. A card game and an Advent calendar have been on the market since early fall, and the first project with a brand-name connection—the Kinderzimmerheldenbook from Edition Porsche Museum—is now available.

The book tells a part of Porsche history from a completely different perspective. “It definitely includes an element of historical preservation,” says Jörg Thilow, who is in charge of product management at the Porsche Museum in Zuffenhausen. The model cars available at the museum shop are products of exceptional quality. They are designed to bring the brand closer to home. “It's very important that our model cars don't all end up with collectors, but also find their way into playrooms,” says Thilow. The miniature cars for sale in Stuttgart are still far too young to have earned the status of those well-worn by years of use. They have to go through ten or twenty years of adventures in the hands of children.

Blanck doesn't need to worry about finding more cars to photograph. Since seeing the first photos, his friends, colleagues, and acquaintances have been on the lookout for cars with the bespielt quality. The oldest source thus far has been a 70-year-old neighbor. The models in the Edition Porsche Museum volume are true heroes too. They all come from old toy chests or flea markets. “All the dents are real,” says Blanck. If a car looks too new, it is sent to his sons Niklas and Henri for a series of trials—until it accumulates sufficient marks of honor.

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