

PHOTOGRAPHER **LEAH GALLO** MAKES HER LIVING ON MOVIE SETS, CAPTURING STILL IMAGES OF THE ACTION AS DIRECTOR **TIM BURTON'S** VISIONS — FULL OF MONSTERS AND MISHAPS — BECOME REALITY. 🐰

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**DOWN THE**

**RABBIT  
HOLE**

**ENTER THE WORLD OF  
TIM BURTON**

story by Sarah Garber 🐰 illustrations by Tim Burton 🐰 photos by Leah Gallo



**IN LEWIS CARROLL'S NOVEL ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND, A LOST ALICE ASKS THE CHESHIRE CAT, "WOULD YOU TELL ME, PLEASE, WHICH WAY I OUGHT TO GO FROM HERE?" THE CAT RESPONDS, "THAT DEPENDS A GOOD DEAL ON WHERE YOU WANT TO GET TO."**

Indeed, sometimes in life, intent is paramount to success. Carroll obviously had a plan for his now-beloved characters, most recently brought to life on the big screen in Tim Burton's film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). Not short on vision himself, Burton's singular aesthetic — dark, fantastical and somewhat quirky — has made him one of the most identifiable and popular filmmakers of our time.

As the director of films that include *Beetlejuice* (1988), *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005) and *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (2007), Burton also is known for his frequent

collaboration with the same small group of actors, musicians, designers, producers and photographers.

"He works with the same people again and again because he trusts them," says Leah Gallo, MA '08, a recent addition to the Burton tribe. "It becomes a family."

Before Gallo, who now lives in London, completed her photojournalism

degree, she met Burton through her boyfriend, Derek Frey, Burton's long-time assistant and associate producer. After photographing one of Burton's press tours in Japan, Gallo was hired to fill in on set for photographer Peter Mountain, who was committed to another film during the first two weeks of filming for *Sweeney Todd*.

"It's kind of a series of fortunate events for me," Gallo says. "I don't think they normally would have hired someone who had never shot a film before."

When her two weeks were up, Gallo stayed on set to document the rest of the filmmaking for a behind-the-scenes cast and crew book — Burton's way of thanking his team. She has since co-edited *The Art of Tim Burton* (Steeles Publishing, 2009), a 437-page collection of Burton's illustrations, sketches and film concepts, some of which were also on display November 2009 through April 2010 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

"It was brutal," Gallo says, describing the process of sifting through and scanning mountains of Burton's artwork. "It's amazing how prolific he is. He's always, always, always sketching, and there are thousands of pieces that didn't make it in. In a way, it serves as his diary. Instead of writing his memories, he sketches things that strike him."

While Gallo was compiling the book, Burton started filming *Alice in Wonderland*.

"Because at that point I was working closely with Tim and because they liked my work on *Sweeney*, they hired me as the still photographer for *Alice*," says Gallo, whose official position is unit stills photographer. Her job is to document both the behind-the-scenes process and to mimic the film camera and capture the same images as those you see on screen. Her work is featured in the book *Alice in Wonderland: A Visual Companion*



(Disney Editions, 2010), which she also edited.

"The best thing any unit stills photographer can do is be invisible. You really have to fit in with the flow and not bother anyone. I feel lucky that my photojournalism training helped me out with that — I learned how to not interrupt, not influence moments."

Reminiscent of Alice in *Alice*, Gallo seems to appreciate a little adventure and a good story in life. She readily admits that, for her, photography wasn't always part of the big picture. Originally, she earned her undergraduate degree in biology and worked in the field for a few years. Unhappy with her choice, Gallo quit and traveled across the country for three months.

"I wanted to do something to change my life," Gallo says. "While I was traveling, I documented my trip and photographed all the places I visited. I loved it, and I loved it so much that I decided maybe I could do it for the rest of my life."

Safe to say, she's found her niche.

"Before I got sucked into this world, I was never a huge filmophile," she says. "But being around creative people helps me be creative in my own way. I like the situation that I'm in now, and I don't see myself leaving it anytime soon." ■



Edward Scissorhands



Burton takes the reins as director of films *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (top and bottom left) and *Alice in Wonderland* (bottom right).



Alice in Wonderland



Sweeney Todd



Alice in Wonderland



Sweeney Todd



Alice in Wonderland



The graveyard,  
Beetlejuice



Jack and Sally,  
The Nightmare Before Christmas



Red Queen, Mad Hatter,  
Alice in Wonderland



Martians,  
Mars Attacks!

"Best-known for his highly imaginative, distinctive, and sympathetic characters, Tim Burton creates a line-up of freaks and geeks in his artwork," writes unit stills photographer Leah Gallo, MA '08, in *The Art of Tim Burton*, which she co-edited. The sketches above are featured in the book, right, and depict characters or scenes from films Burton directed or produced.



Leah Gallo



The Art of Tim Burton