

Great creators of the world: Simon Liu

By HispaBrick Magazine®

Pictures by Simon Liu

Science fiction is one of the most attractive themes because of the freedom to create without any kind of rules. Today bring you a creator who uses this freedom like few others.

HispaBrick Magazine®: Name?

Simon Liu AKA Si-MOCs on Flickr/Eurobricks etc

HBM: Age?

SL: Old enough where it's fun to make people guess.

HBM: Nationality?

SL: I am Canadian, eh.

HBM: What do you do normally?

SL: I'm an IT Consultant... specializing in everything and nothing – so I can go in and basically fill any role.

HBM: When did you first start building with LEGO®?

SL: When did I not build with LEGO? I really have no idea, I've always built as a kid. I have an older brother so I've always had bricks LEGO somewhere.

HBM: When did you start posting your models online?

SL: I started posting my builds around Jan 2011. I collected and did some newbie building before that. But I didn't really start to build seriously until a chance meeting with Iain Green who pushed me to post more on Flickr and get involved in the online community.

HBM: What is the last set you have purchased?

SL: As of the time of this writing, it was a Friends set to draft at Brickworld – Though we didn't start till display tear down, so I actually had to get someone to draft for me – missing out the fun.

HBM: What is your favorite commercial LEGO building theme?

SL: Anyone that knows me knows I'm big into Sci-Fi/Space (hence the common miss spelling of my user name haha). So anything Sci-Fi is great... So all the classic space stuff, the recent Alien Conquest wave was great. Galaxy Squad is really cool, but I really loved the feel for Alien Conquest - I wish they extended that a bit longer.

HBM: What is your favorite theme for building?

SL: Sci-Fi. It just suits me. My build style can be described as ... messy ... so greebling (adding superfluous texture) is something I do well and easily. I also really like the fact that Sci-Fi literally anything is possible and I don't have to build things perfectly. I don't have to spend too much time inventing solutions to recreate life, I can build what looks 'cool' or what makes sense in my mind. Sci-Fi gives me that extra freedom to build.

I look at town builders – like the incredible firetrucks that Isaac Mazer does – the amount of time and effort town builders put into recreating real life objects scaled down to minifig scale is beyond me. I could not build like they can, I don't have the patience or the ingenuity to replicate life, instead I just make it up as I go– thus Sci-Fi!

HBM: What is your favorite LEGO element and why?

SL: The 1x2 2/3 slope with grills, or the “grilled cheese” or “cheese grate” depending on who you're talking to. This was one of the greatest new pieces when I came back





into the hobby – it's the perfect transition piece between greeble and sleek. It's a Sci-Fi builder's dream piece – it allows you to smooth out greeble sections, or add a bit of greeble to smooth section. It also is a new angle slope pieces So it really is a fantastic piece – though over the years I've over used it a bit too much, the most glaring example is when I used it for roofing cause I was too lazy to think up something else.

HBM: Which part would you like LEGO® to produce?

SL: Some sort of snot plate where studs are on BOTH sides with a thickness of a plate to allow for two halves to be joined. I don't think it'll ever happen – there are already some solutions out there, but this would be nice... Then again they came out with inverted tile... so who knows?

HBM: How many hours do you spend building with LEGO?

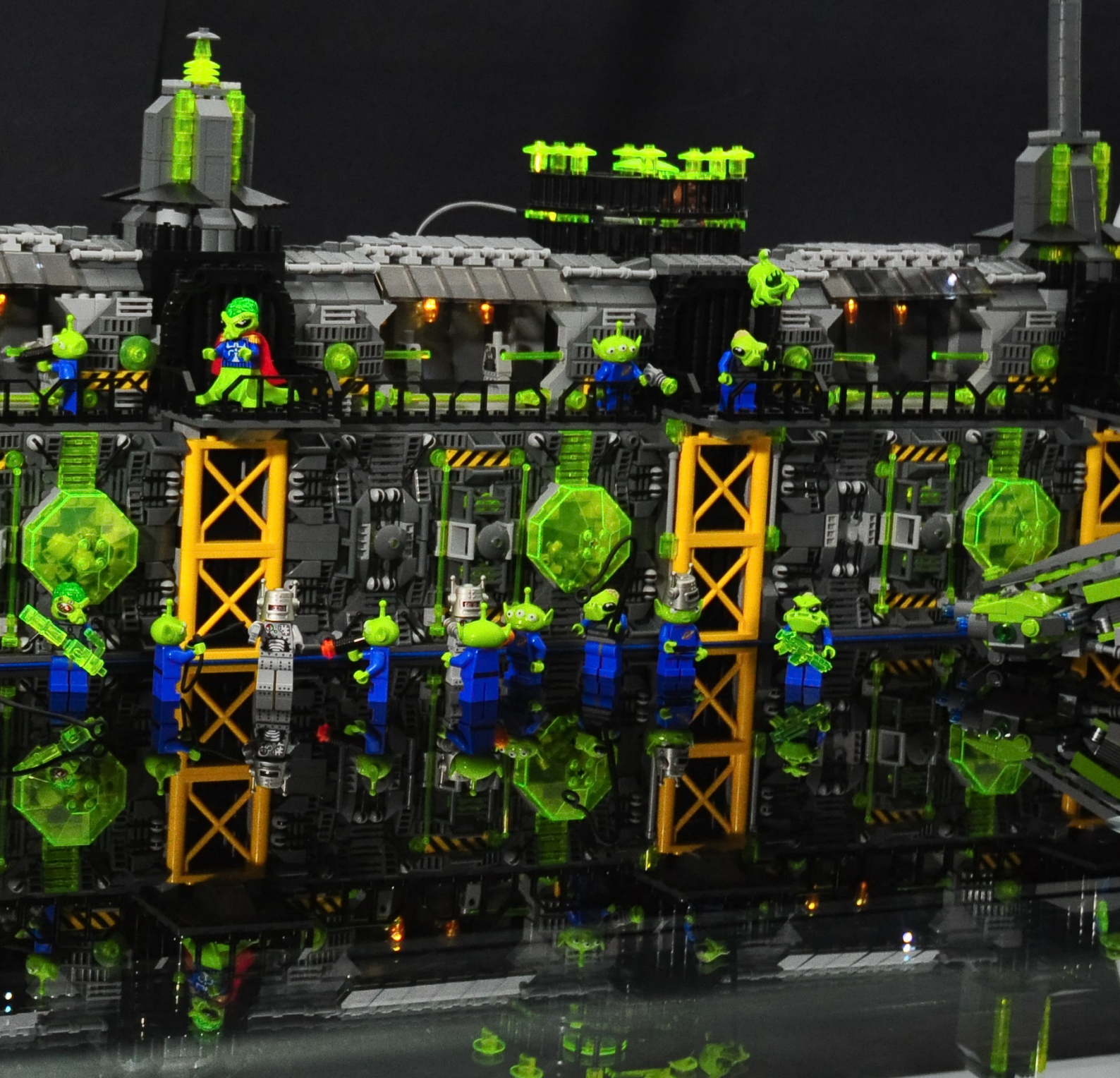
SL: It depends on what I'm building ... it's surprising that when I'm not building towards a contest or to support an event (convention or online), I don't actually spend that much time building ... but when I have deadlines or in a contest I shift into that Iron Builder gear and go basically 4-7 hours a night... and double that on weekends which was the pace I spent most of the first half of 2013 doing...

Though when I'm not building, I'm usually thinking about what I could build J

HBM: What do your family/friends think about this hobby?

SL: They know it keeps me out of trouble so they're okay with it – and often times I try to include them where I can – so for sets I am about to part out I might lend it to them to build before parting ... so they get that enjoy building.

HBM: Do you draw or pre-designs before you start building?



SL: I never draw things out or pre design in LDD. What I will do is think about the general shape of what I want to build prior to starting – I typically walk to work which gives me a lot of time to ‘pre visualize’ in my head. So when I actually do sit down I can put together things fairly fast as I kind of thought about how the certain pieces fall together.

Most of the time the end result is similar to what I had thought about – but always as you build you kind of see how you can do things better, or you find better bricks to use, or sometimes you don’t have as much brick as you thought so the design changes slightly and organically evolves as you build.

HBM: If you had to choose among all your creations, which one would you choose and why?

SL: I think my favorite build is probably the robotic hands I did for Iron Builder. From a piece usage perspective using the little

microfigs as fingers was (I thought) pretty clever, but I really loved how accurate to real life the hands turned out- the fingers bend and can be posed in very realistic ways. I spent a lot of time playing with those hands.

Though one of my favorite builds was “Operation Oscar” – the build itself was isn’t overly impressive – but it had a lot of significance to me. It was a tribute to some of the builders that has inspired me – I recreated bits of some of my favorite builds/style elements and incorporated it into a single micro build.

It was also a ‘Thank You’ to Brickworld attendees for voting me Brickworld Master in 2012. The previous BW Master – Arthur Gugick had given out a bunch of LEGO® scorpions in 2012, so I devised Operation Oscar to follow in his footsteps and I designed the little “FrogPods” to invade everyone’s displays at BW 2013.



HBM: What do you think about the use of non-official parts (stickers, modified parts, non-LEGO® elements,...)?

SL: It's really up to the builder – the LEGO hobby is just that, a hobby, some call it art, but really it's up to people how they want to build. I generally use all stock LEGO parts, but I do use 3rd party a lot for lighting, and if there are megablock parts that aren't made in by LEGO I have no problems with it. But since I tend to build for contests or bring my mocs to conventions I try to avoid certain companies just cause I don't want to deal with the drama.

As for the custom third party guys – I actually have a lot minifig accessories from various vendors – I just typically don't get a good chance of using them.

Stickers – both official and unofficial, is something that I don't do, but I want to do more of. I see a lot of the Spacer these days using them to great effect and it's just something I haven't learned how to do yet.

HBM: You build models at different scales, which is the more difficult for you to create at?

SL: I think all scales have their own set of challenges, so there aren't ones that are that much easier or harder than the other. But if I had to choose one, it'd be the Brick built fig scale, sometimes known as Bricks of Character. The objects at that scale are actually really easy to do, but it's building the actual character itself, and especially the facial expressions that I think is difficult. I've only done it well once, the other times I've attempted it I gave up and decided to use a featureless head.

HBM: Recently you have faced Andrew Lee (onosendai2600) in the Iron Builder Contest. How do you face this kind of

Sleeping with the fishes...





competition? Is it hard not to draw on opponent models to find new uses for the part chosen for the challenge?

SL: Well like most competitions you try to prepare. Prior to the start, I sorted my bricks, stocked up on junk food and tried to clear my calendar as best I could. I knew who my opponent was ahead of time, so I did do a bit of research to see how I could best build against – not that it really made a difference. As the builds started being posted I tried not to build anything similar to Andrew, and would try to go for a new take on things – so if he built something I was thinking of or have already started, I would have ditched that build. There were a few times where we did play off each other's builds – when he built a swiss army knife to open beer, I built a corkscrew. After I built my Klingon dagger, he built a full on Klingon sword :P #

