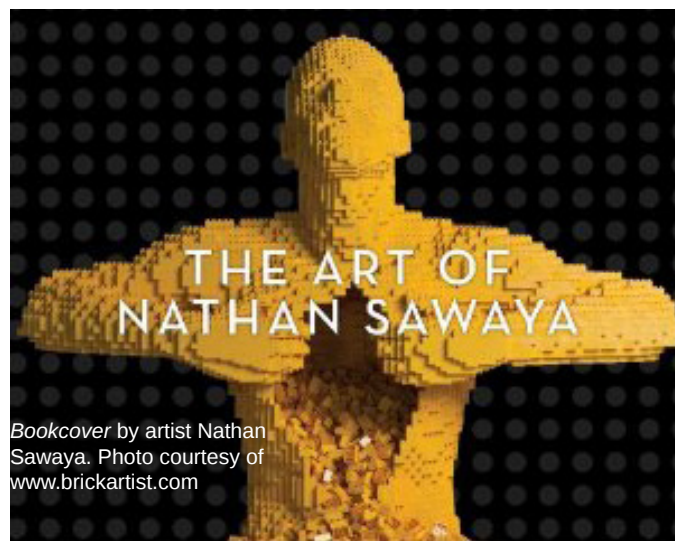




Interview: Nathan Sawaya

By HispaBrick Magazine®

Photos courtesy of www.brickartist.com



Bookcover by artist Nathan Sawaya. Photo courtesy of www.brickartist.com

In this issue we bring you an interview with one of the most popular LCP (LEGO® Certified Professional). His exhibitions and sculptures appear regularly in the worldwide media and are a clear example of art created with LEGO.

HBM: How did you get started with LEGO bricks?

NS: I had a variety of creative toys growing up, including LEGO bricks. My parents encouraged creativity. When I was ten years old, I asked for a dog, but when I couldn't get a dog, I built a life-size dog out of LEGO bricks. That might have been the first time I realized that you didn't have to build what was on the front of the box. I could let my imagination go wild.

It was later in life, when I was sculpting out of other media that I thought about this childhood toy. I started experimenting with LEGO bricks as an art medium, and it worked. The toy I loved as a child, became the tool I used to create art.

HBM: What made you leave behind a career as a lawyer to start building with LEGO bricks professionally?

NS: I wanted to be happy. After long days at the law firm and I needed a creative outlet. So, I would come home and build sculptures and post photos of them to my website – brickartist.com. Then came a day when the site crashed from too many hits and I thought "okay, there might be something in this" and that's when I became a full-time freelance artist. For my entire life, art has been necessary. It is indispensable to me, but not only for personal happiness, but I believe that art is

not optional to the welfare of society as a whole.

HBM: Do you use other media, aside from LEGO, to express your art?

NS: Yes, over the years I have sculpted out of different media, including clay, wire, bottle caps, even candy, but in the end I am happiest when I'm using LEGO bricks to express myself.

HBM: What obligations does being a LEGO Certified Professional entail? What advice would you give our readers should they be considering becoming a LCP?

NS: It is a bridge to better communication between me and the company. I am still an independent artist. I buy all of my bricks. I just buy more of them than most.

To any aspirational artists, continue to express yourself creatively. Follow those moments and see where they lead you. Jump carefully and slowly, but definitely jump. Once you take that leap you can open up an entire new world.

HBM: What is the main source of inspiration for your work?

NS: I am inspired by many things and inspiration comes from everywhere. I always carry a sketch pad with me so that I am able to jot down ideas. As I am fortunate enough to travel quite a bit, I find inspiration in the many experiences I have in different countries and different cultures. The world is an amazing place full of endless possibilities.



Gray by artist Nathan Sawaya. Photo courtesy of www.brickartist.com

HBM: What are the main aesthetic and structural limitations when creating something with LEGO® bricks?

NS: There are very few. I believe I can build anything I can think of out of LEGO bricks. That is why it is such a great medium for creating art.

HBM: How do you solve structural issues to let your work support so much weight?

NS: I work out the design and engineering of each piece in advance to maintain both safety and beauty of the work. My father is a civil engineer so perhaps there is something inherited there.

HBM: What is more complicated, representing facial features or creating complex geometrical shapes?

NS: Anytime I am using rectangular bricks to represent something, be it facial features or geometrical shapes, there are always many different challenges. Just making curves is a challenge when using rectangular bricks. But that is the real fun of this art form, in taking those rectangular bricks and making them look like something else.

HBM: How much time goes into preparation before you start building?

NS: The amount of time that goes into a sculpture depends on the size and complexity of the piece. Each work of art has different amounts of prep time. A fair amount of time is spent on preparing how the piece will come together.

HBM: Do you make many changes "on the go"?

NS: Yes. There are times when I am working on a sculpture and it doesn't look right. I will chisel apart large portions of a sculpture and make changes on the go.

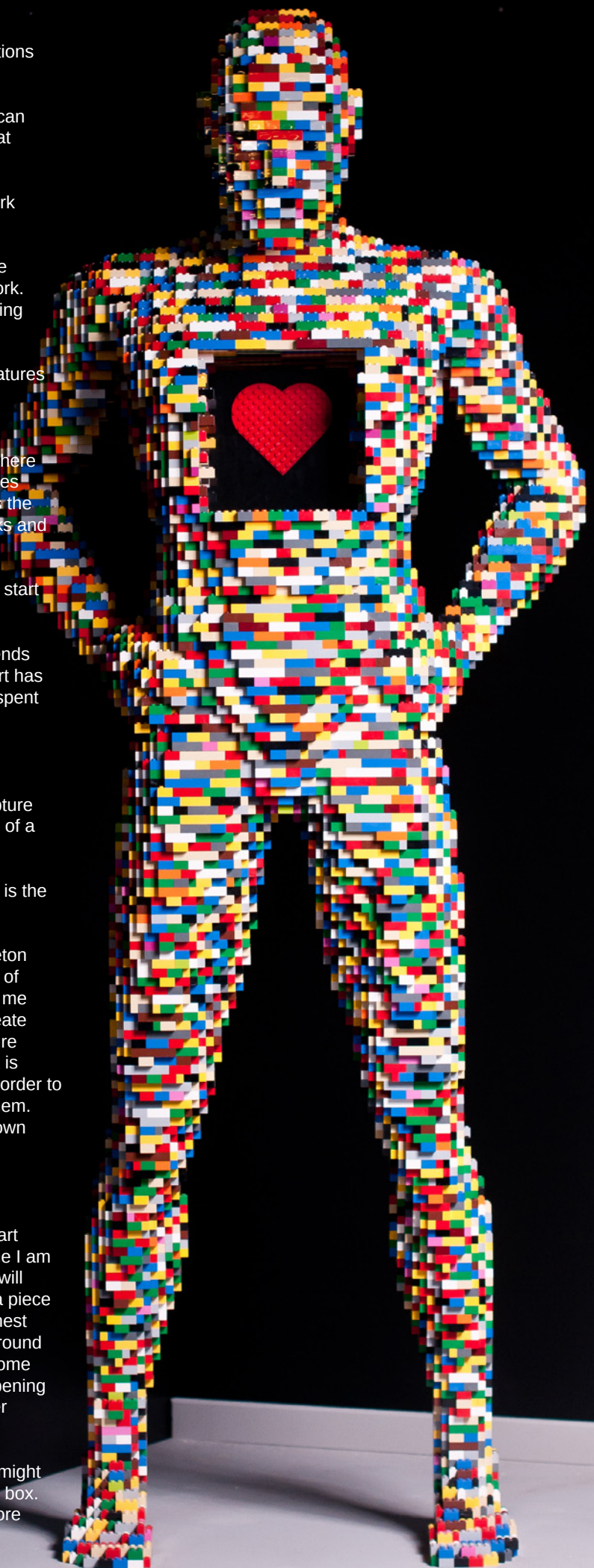
HBM: What is the largest model you have made? What is the smallest?

NS: The largest sculpture was actually a dinosaur skeleton that is currently touring as part of my exhibition, The Art of the Brick. It measures over twenty feet long, and it took me an entire summer to build. The idea behind it was to create a sculpture that would appeal to kids. I want to make sure that there is something for everyone in the shows and it is important to me that my artwork is accessible to kids in order to open their eyes to the art world, and hopefully inspire them. The smallest sculpture was a tree I made out of one brown brick and one green brick.

HBM: What is your favourite sculpture?

NS: It is difficult to pick a favorite sculpture. I put my heart and soul into them. I am most excited about the next one I am working on, but you will have to wait and see what that will be. I think the most iconic sculpture in the exhibition is a piece titled Yellow which depicts a human figure tearing his chest open while thousands of yellow LEGO bricks spill out around him. This piece really resonates with people. It has become part of pop culture. People relate to the messages of opening oneself up to the world, while also appreciating the inner struggle of the figure.

But if I am to choose a sculpture that personifies me, it might be Gray, where a figure is tearing itself out of a big gray box. This piece seems to sum up my transitions in life, as I tore



XRay by artist Nathan Sawaya. Photo courtesy of www.brickartist.com



away from my past doings as a lawyer to find myself as an artist.

HBM: Do you use other materials in your work in addition to LEGO?

NS: Yes, depending on what I am trying to say with the piece. There are times I have incorporated, wood, glass and other media.

HBM: Do you have any future projects you can tell us something about?

NS: I have plans for future works, but you will have to wait and see. Currently I am preparing works for a new exhibition. However, I don't like to talk about the specifics of my next project until I am ready to reveal it completed and ready to be experienced as a whole. For sneak peeks you can follow me on twitter and Instagram at @NathanSawaya.

HBM: How do you see the evolution of the AFOL (Adult Fan of LEGO®) phenomenon over the last couple of years?

NS: I don't know if there has been an evolution, or if it has just become more well-known and accessible. I think there have always been adult fans of the LEGO toy, but now more and more of them are making themselves known.

HBM: What do you think of the increase in new parts and colours in the LEGO palette over the last couple of years?

NS: As an artist who works with LEGO bricks, I enjoy the palette of the bricks that are available, and if that palette increases, it just adds new colors for me to work with.





Hugman by artist Nathan Sawaya. Photo courtesy of www.brickartist.com

HBM: Tell us about your latest exhibition.

NS: I have several exhibitions that tour the globe. Currently The Art of the Brick is on display in the US and Europe, with others to come. Keep checking brickartist.com for dates and location.

I enjoy seeing reactions to my work. People can connect to my artwork on a different level because it is made out of this simple toy that they likely have at home. It makes the art very accessible.

HBM: Tell us about your collaboration with Art Revolution.

NS: Art Revolution is my new way of giving back. Art Revolution is an organization promoting art for happiness, health and education. The Foundation's mission is to advocate the importance of art in everyday life and to raise awareness and funds to put art supplies in kids' hands, to fund programs that put arts education back into America's schools and to support organizations that conduct art therapy for the ill and elderly. Its key message, "art is not optional," is driven by the alarming devaluation of the arts in today's schools and communities. With so many educational institutions cutting back on arts-related programs due to budgets and state mandates, our children are not getting the creative inspiration, drive and knowledge that art education offers. Art Revolution wants to change that. To join the Art Revolution visit artrevolution.org.

Nathan's social media information:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/thebrickartist>

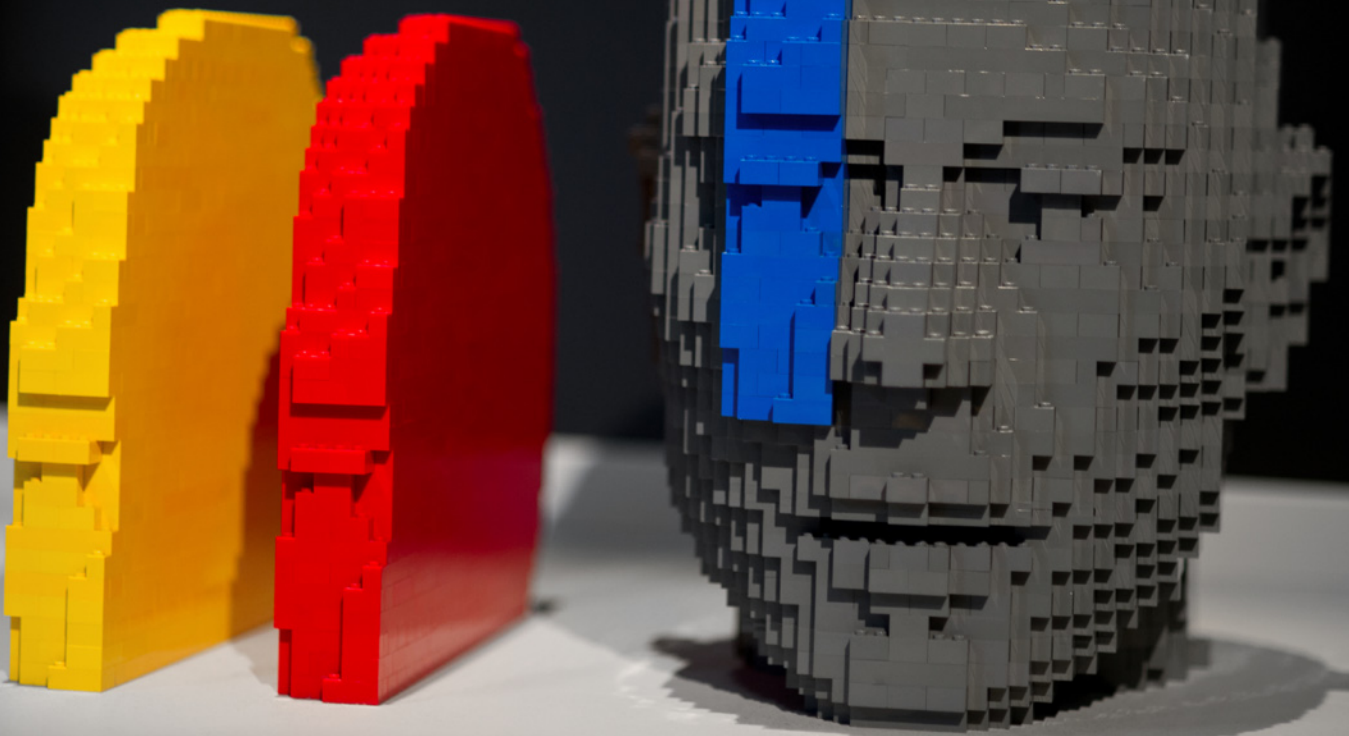
Twitter: [@nathansawaya](https://twitter.com/nathansawaya)

Instagram: [@nathansawaya](https://www.instagram.com/nathansawaya)

Google+: <https://plus.google.com/108552899116267186327/posts>

Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/nathansawaya/

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Courage-within by
artist Nathan Sawaya.
Photo courtesy of www.
brickartist.com

