

# SUR M'ALE GOBROS

Por HispaBrick Magazine®

That you can create art with LEGO® is a known fact, but you can also create art based on our favorite brick. A clear example are the creations we bring you today, LEGO sets embodied in the form of graphic art, according to the particular focus of these Polish brothers.

**HBM:** Tell us a little about yourselves, your names, where you are from, what you do for a living, ...

**M:** Hi! My name is Marcin Surma (xulm) and I'm Przemek's brother. I was born in the late 1980s. By education I'm both a programmer and an animation director.

**P:** And I'm Przemek (Surpiko) and I am Marcin's eleven years older brother. We live in Poland and at the moment we both work as illustrators and comic book authors. I'm a historical preservation engineer by education, also.



**HBM:** How did you come up with the idea of giving your own vision of classic LEGO sets in drawings and publishing them on the Internet?

**P:** The idea, I believe, came to us when we browsed some LEGO set aggregators together. We got reminded about the toys we played with when we were kids and those we wanted to play with. Transition to illustrations was quite natural -- I guess it's normal for an illustrator to say "what if I drew this". It was supposed to be a short project: A couple of sets from me, a couple from Marcin. It became a little longer project, since quite early we found out that when you start having fun -- it's hard to stop. Same as LEGO.

**M:** We should add that we had been looking for a thing we could do together for a long time already at the time -- we even briefly thought about a webcomic (around the time I did my own, the Vault 12). When we browsed that LEGO set database it struck me: we both loved LEGO when we were young, yet we have never actually played together -- Since Przemek is way older than me, he had already grown out of LEGO at the time I grew into it. And since we both loved LEGO at different times, it would be cool to see how the other one would draw one's LEGO sets and how we'd respond to our own childhoods.

**HBM:** Why LEGO? And why draw instead of build?

**P:** Simple. I adored LEGO as a kid -- and now, after all these years I have lots of fun thanks to it again. In my own way, now as an adult illustrator.

LEGO bricks were not only a construction toy for me, but also a way to create adventures and worlds, replaying stories, imagining characters and their relations. I was a director of all those "movies" minifigs played part in. Weren't you?

My illustration work now is in some way a direct descendant of them. And it gives me no less fun than building before. Especially since I can "play" with every single set I want!

**M:** Funny thing -- I actually made (and even published online) some MOCs about 7 years ago! I had a lot of fun, yet at the time I felt I had to focus on something. And I



focused on illustration and art. Clearly, it still didn't stop me from turning to LEGO® in the end.

**HBM:** *Why classic sets?*

**M:** Part of the fun is imagining "What I really saw when I was a kid" -- LEGO sets were always more than the sum of their bricks to me, and I wanted to express this. What better way than to just draw it? Also, revisiting childhood toys is fun!

**P:** I was a child in 1980s -- when LEGO sets (and those sets are now called "classic sets") were something incredible and the most modern thing in the world. And these sets I am most fond of. I revisit them just like I revisit my old friends.

**HBM:** *What criteria do you follow to choose the sets you draw?*

**M:** At one point it was all about those few sets we had. We're way past that point and now we're looking for sets we really longed for back then. Or beautiful sets we didn't even know existed. Or anything from our inspirational "other LEGO beauties" folder

**P:** Like I said before: At first it was all about sets we had and sets we wanted to have (the list of the latter is much longer) Sometimes I pick a particular set because I think it may make a cool illustrations. Or think drawing it might be simply enjoyable. Sometimes because it fits our current theme. And sometimes because I know fans want to see this particular set. The only fixed criterion is "LEGO".

**HBM:** *Have you considered the possibility of drawing current sets?*

**M:** We already did! I drew the Cafe Corner, for example.

**P:** And I illustrated the cute 3177 set.

**M:** We're probably still going to stick to the old sets, though -- not only because it's our childhood, but also because all the new colors, new bricks and new building techniques already fill a lot space between "what is built from bricks" and "what we really see".

On the other side, those bricks are amazing for MOC modellers! When I look at what can now be done with LEGO bricks I sometimes think about doing MOCs again.

...Or illustrating someone else's MOCs -- that's an idea I've been playing with for a long time already, yet I still haven't gone through with it. Maybe after the "Space Minifig Fashion" series I'm working on right now.

**HBM:** *How do you share the work? Do you each make your own drawings or does each one participate in every drawing (like one drawing and the other coloring)?*

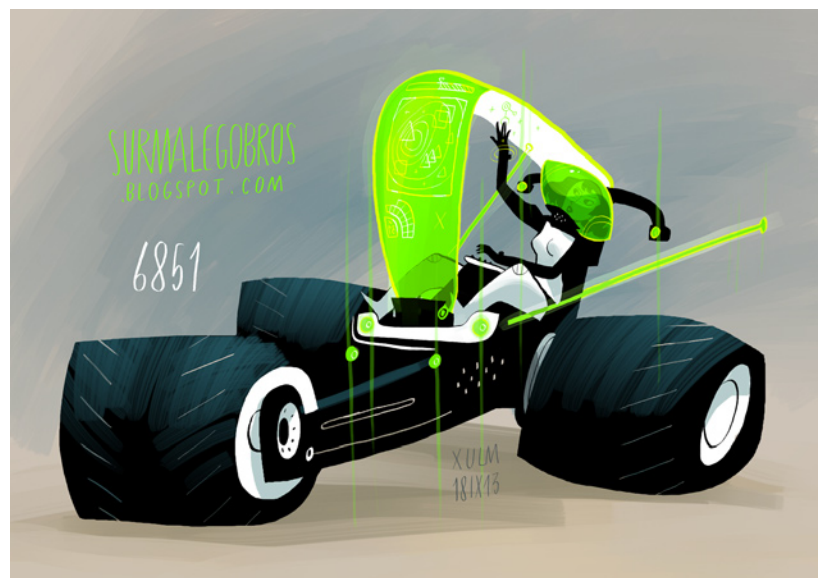
**P:** We do our illustrations separately. And usually don't discuss them beforehand.

**M:** ...and see his illustration only after it's been published. Every two weeks we feel like any other fan, just waiting for the illustration to go live without even a clue what set it's going to be.

**P:** Only one illustration was created by both of us as a gift for a friend. Also, a few were created by our amazing guests!

**M:** That's true! We keep inviting our friends to do their own illustrations inspired by their favourite LEGO sets (and try to limit it to women -- to show that, contrary to popular belief, girls do also love and have always loved LEGO!)

**HBM:** *Do you make a lot of designs and sketches before you make the final drawing or do you have a clear idea of what you want to do from the start?*







But if I did, we'd have to start calling ourselves "sur m'amatch boxbros" ;)

**M:** I, just like Przemek (as usual), am an illustrator, comic book author, animated short film artist and (lately) a video game art director, and yeah: all this kind of requires me to draw a lot. Most of the stuff I do besides Sur m'ale Gobros is trackable from my website <http://xulm.pl>

In similar vein to Sur m'ale Gobros: I myself am a fanart fan -- I make fan illustration of not only LEGO sets and minifigs, but of the comic book/video game characters, vehicles and buildings. I adore the idea of trying to reimagine in my own way a thing that already exists!

**HBM:** How much time does it take you on average to make a drawing?

**M:** I rarely do sketches -- I usually make a brief composition sketch of what I have in mind and go from there.

**P:** You could say that all of my surmalegobros illustrations make one big sketchbook. I experiment, improvise and play with all sorts of techniques,.

**M:** Yeah, me too.

**P:** And if I had to reply directly to the question: everything usually happens quite fast. Sketches are just brief notes on the idea and composition.

**HBM:** Is it difficult to artistically recreate a set in such a way that it is still recognizable to a LEGO® fan?

**P:** Not quite. Most of the groundwork was already done by authors and LEGO set designers. I always try to keep the particular set's look-and-feel, wardrobe, vehicles. Sometimes I add an anecdote or two. (Though our biggest discovery might be how many minifigs in spacesuits might actually be female ;))

I always get really happy when viewers recognize the set we illustrated. I love hearing: "I had this set! I knew which one it was in no time. You brought me back to my childhood. Thanks!"

**M:** It's always easier with space sets -- LEGO Space themes have these instantly recognizable color palettes, and spaceship shapes can (obviously) be quite characteristic.

**HBM:** Do you create drawings of other things than LEGO?

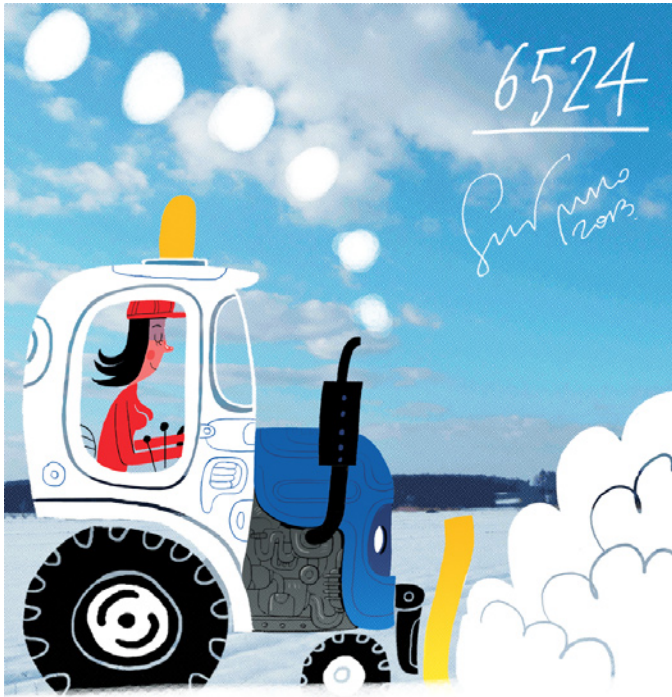
**P:** Yes. And it's those "other thing" I mostly draw. I illustrate books and textbooks. I'm also a comic book author (currently working on my third book).

Unless you ask if we draw our other toys :) Which we actually don't. I'd love to interpret a few of my "resoraks" [matchbox cars] (especially one particular orange BMW) but I still haven't found the time to do it.

**P:** That depends (mostly from the illustration's technique and complexity), but usually it takes quite a few hours (usually after Sunday dinner). There are some illustrations that take way more. Also some that take 30 seconds to sketch and few months to actually start to be drawn.

**M:** I can do nothing else than to agree with Przemek.





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**HBM:** Have you ever made different drawing of the same set each?

**P:** It happened two or three times, I believe. What's funniest about it is that each time we drew those pictures simultaneously, without even knowing what the other brother was doing right then. And we live 300 km apart.

**M:** Not only that, I even made a couple of second attempts at illustrating the same set (Blacktron Alienator, for example. Which is a funny story, because just after I published the illustration, the set's original designer sent us an amazing message. And I HAD to made another take after that.)

**HBM:** Are you surprised about the notoriety your drawings have gained?

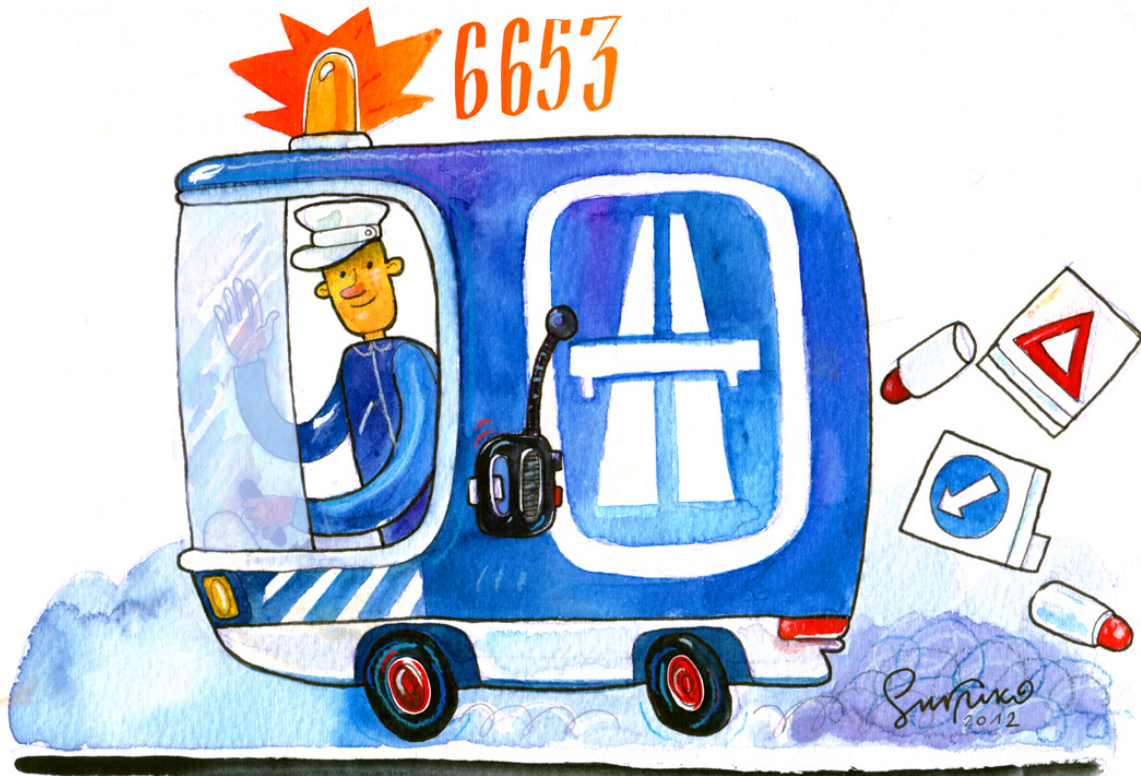
**P:** That might sound banal, but we didn't expect it at all. And we're very, very, very thankful for such awesome, worldwide response.

**M:** I guess we wouldn't have that much fun with Sur m'ale Gobros (and that long, for that matter) if not for that amazing feedback!

**HBM:** Have you considered commercializing your drawings?

**P:** Sometimes...

**M:** At the moment we can't afford to. We'd love to, though!  
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