

Great creators of the world: Paul Vermeesch

By HispaBrick Magazine®
Pictures by Paul Vermeesch



Today we bring you a young American artist who is a clear example of that age has nothing to do with the skill to build. Also we will know a little more about one of the most original projects combining LEGO® and art and in which he participates.

HispaBrick Magazine: Name?

My name is **Paul Vermeesch**.

HBM: Age?

PV: I'm 18 years old.

HBM: Nationality?

PV: I'm a U.S. citizen from Michigan.

HBM: What do you do normally?

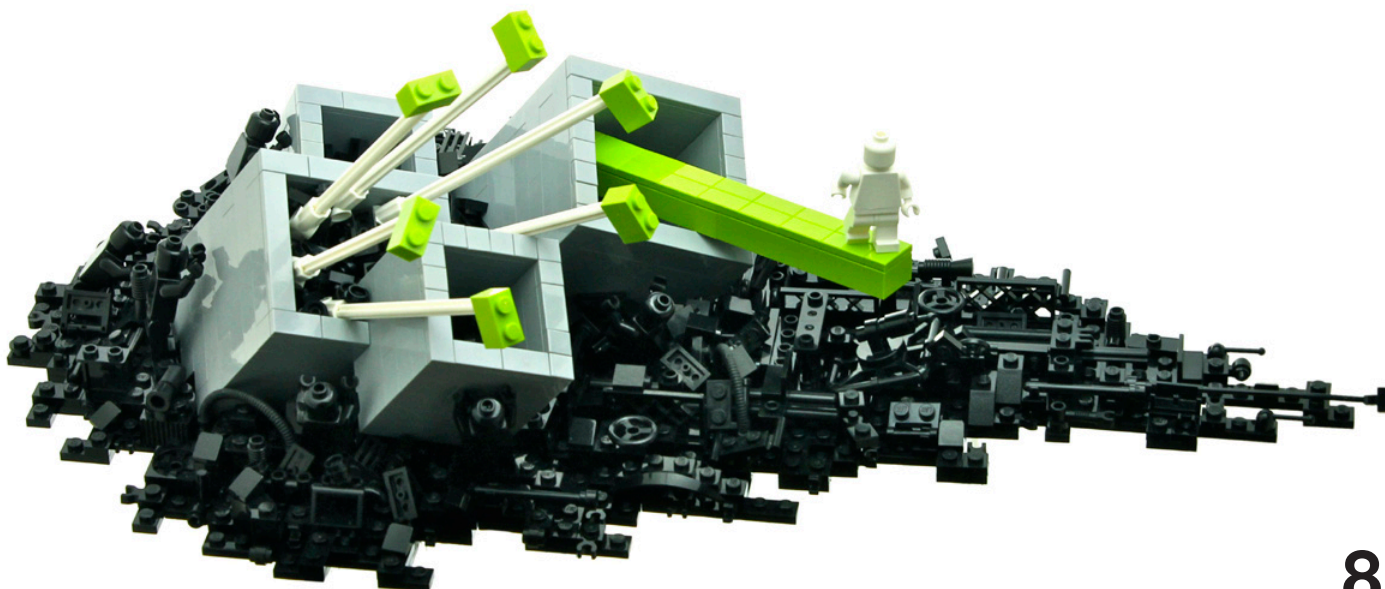
PV: I'm currently a student at Wheaton College, a small Christian liberal arts school in the suburbs of Chicago. I do freelance photography and videography in addition to LEGO commission jobs.

HBM: When did you first start building with LEGO?

PV: Like most builders, I started out building as a kid, dropped the hobby for a time, and drifted back in 2008 after buying the 7658 Y-wing Starfighter set. In addition to being an amazing LEGO set, it opened the door to the world of modding, Brickarms, and eventually the broader online LEGO building community.

HBM: When did you start posting your models online?

PV: After I discovered the world of MOCs and builders who shared their work online, I started posting pictures of minifigures and vignettes to MOCpages in 2009. Greatly inspired by the work of Mark Kelso, Jordan Schwartz, Alex Eylar, Tyler Clites, and Nannan Zhang among others, I started exploring a little bit more, trying new genres and styles. I attended Brickworld Chicago for the first time in 2012 and got to meet a lot of the builders I really admired. That experience really added a new dimension to the community side of the LEGO building hobby, and it's been cool to see how those connections have developed into friendships and collaborations.







HBM: What is the last set you have purchased?

PV: I think the last set that I purchased was the ten dollar 70123 Chima Lion set for a parts draft at Brickworld 2014. Because so much of what I now do with LEGO® involves specific bulk purchases from Bricklink, I don't often purchase sets. I was, however, very lucky to get a large number of the new ball joint elements from that parts draft of the Lion set. It was well worth my ten dollars.

HBM: What is your favorite commercial LEGO building theme?

PV: I've always been a fan of the Star Wars franchise. It's not the most useful for custom building, but I've got fond memories of making sprawling dioramas and battles with my various Star Wars sets.

HBM: What is your favorite theme for building?

PV: I can't say I have a particular theme that I really enjoy building in over other themes. I started out building a lot of vignettes, most of which were in historical genres. More recently, I've really liked working with characters, abstract science fiction, and some surrealism. As my building style has matured over the past couple years, I've begun treating the hobby a little bit more like an artform. I think my creations have followed that trend, at least to some degree. I've begun to focus more on things like texture, color, and composition than actual representation.

HBM: What is your favorite LEGO element and why?

PV: I have a particular affinity for olive green cheese wedges. They truly are beautiful elements. I keep a case of several hundred of them on my dorm room desk here at college just to brighten my days. My passionate—if not obsessive—love of olive cheese has become more of a joke than anything, but I try to use the element in my builds as frequently as I can.

HBM: Which part would you like LEGO to produce?

PV: I would love to see The LEGO Company produce a 1x1 plate with a stud on the top and the bottom for easy stud reversals. Part of me feels, though, that that would make some things too easy, and I do appreciate the challenge of the medium.

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

PV: College has definitely had an impact on the time I have to spend building. Unfortunately, I haven't had more than a couple hours of building time for the past several months. I'm waiting for that perfect assignment where I can break out the LEGOs and call it homework.

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

PV: Thankfully, two of my closest friends are also LEGO geeks, so I have a lot of common ground with them. And though my friends and family are supportive of my unique attraction to plastic bricks, I still get the occasional raised eyebrow when I tell people I do "LEGO art."



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

PV: It depends heavily on the project. I rarely pre-plan my small, personal projects. "Star Wars Relativity" was one of the few personal projects that I drew out on paper several times before I started fitting the bricks together. For my commissioned builds, I will do extensive drawings or parts estimates, often building the creation in LEGO® Digital Designer so I have an idea of how much the build will cost. My "Cair Paravel" castle creation, for example, was built digitally in its entirety before I placed the first order for parts. In other instances, like my model of the Charlevoix Public Library, I had the blueprints for the library and grounds printed out at the scale I was building and built the model right on top of the blueprints. For the collaborative projects I've participated in, we do a lot of drawings and sketches before we start, and measurements are critical so that our sections fit together.

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

PV: I really love building at the smaller end of the scale spectrum. I love the challenges of microscale, but I've somewhat neglected macro and miniland scales. Those would certainly be scales to explore in the future.

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

PV: I've had the chance to build some really fun, large-scale projects like "Cair Paravel," "Charlevoix Public Library," and





“Star Wars™ Relativity.” As far as the process goes, these larger projects and commissions are definitely my favorites. That said, if I had to choose one favorite from my own creations, I would probably choose “Parenthesis,” a small, surrealist piece that I admire as a product, not for its process. “Parenthesis” is the sort of creation that I would like to build more of. It’s simple, natural, balanced, and a little visually arresting.

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

PV: I sympathize with both sides of the argument. If you’re treating the process of building MOCs as more of an art form, I really have no problem with the use of 3rd party accessories, stickers, or modified parts. I have grown, though, to appreciate the challenge that the limitation of the LEGO system naturally imposes, so I tend to lean more in the purist direction. That said, I have a growing appreciation for multimedia art pieces that incorporate LEGO. This was the motive behind the Symphony of Construction experiment and the motive behind a collaborative project that I’m working on with my good friends Max Pointner and Ian Spacek that is a synthesis of sound design, LEGO sculpture, and a unique visual-manipulation technique called projection mapping.

HBM: Tell us something about the Symphony of Construction project. How did the idea come about, what does it consist in and what does it mean to you?





PV: Symphony of Construction is a seven turn game of artistic telephone that alternates between two mediums: LEGO® sculpture and music. It's an experiment in inter-media interpretation. A LEGO creation inspires a piece of music, which in turn inspires a LEGO creation, which inspires another piece of music, and so on. Each round lasts around four months and features the music and sculpture of some of the best names in the LEGO building community. I wanted to find a way to merge LEGO composition and music, and the idea of using music to inspire LEGO artwork was intriguing to me. After talking with several other builders at Brickworld 2013 who were equally intrigued by the idea, we started the first round. I continue to find it remarkable how, in each round, there is a certain mood that carries through all of the artwork. The experiment teases out the line between subjective interpretation and objective motifs, even across mediums. I'm looking forward to exploring more places in the future where mediums, community members, and styles intersect.

You can view the past three rounds of Symphony of Construction at www.paulvermeesch.com/symphonyofconstruction
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