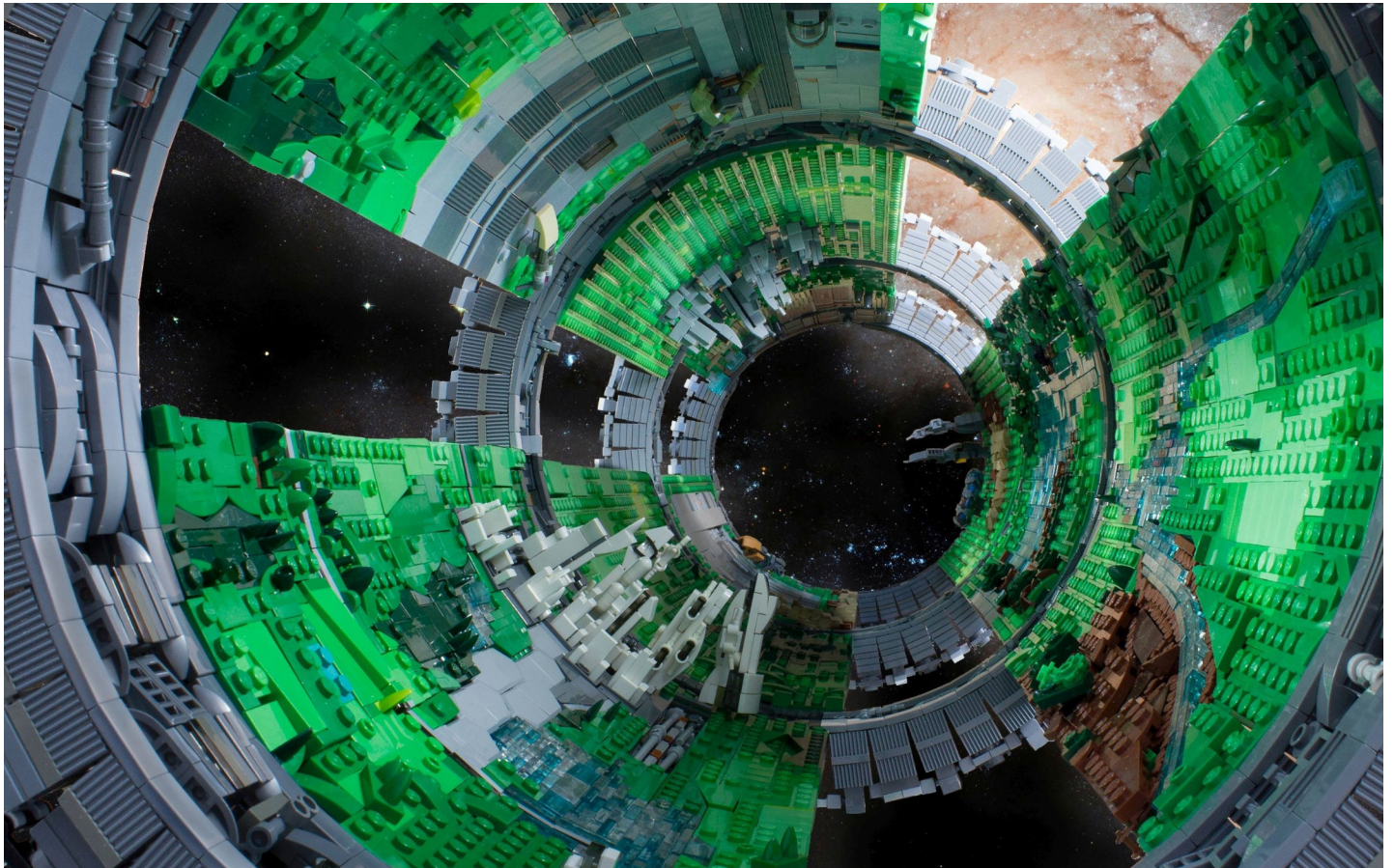




INTERVIEW WITH RALF LANGER

by José Manuel Ruiz Carvajal



Left: My first MOC. Top: The future is bright. Above: The Wood Triptychon—The Tower

HBM: Hi Ralf! It is an honor to be able to have an interview with such a technical and detailed LEGO builder, and we look forward to learning more about your great work. But first, could you tell us a bit about yourself?

RL: Hi, my name is Ralf Langer. You may know me as ranghaal. I was born in 1971 and I work as a software engineer in Cologne.

HBM: How much time do you spend building with LEGO®?

RL: Certainly too much. I try to keep it down but I still underestimate the time it takes when planning a new model. I only use my own designs and trying out new designs is the most time consuming part. Having a clear vision of the result speeds things up a lot but unfortunately I get lost in thousands of micro decisions too often. I don't build every day but it's the major part of my spare time.

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

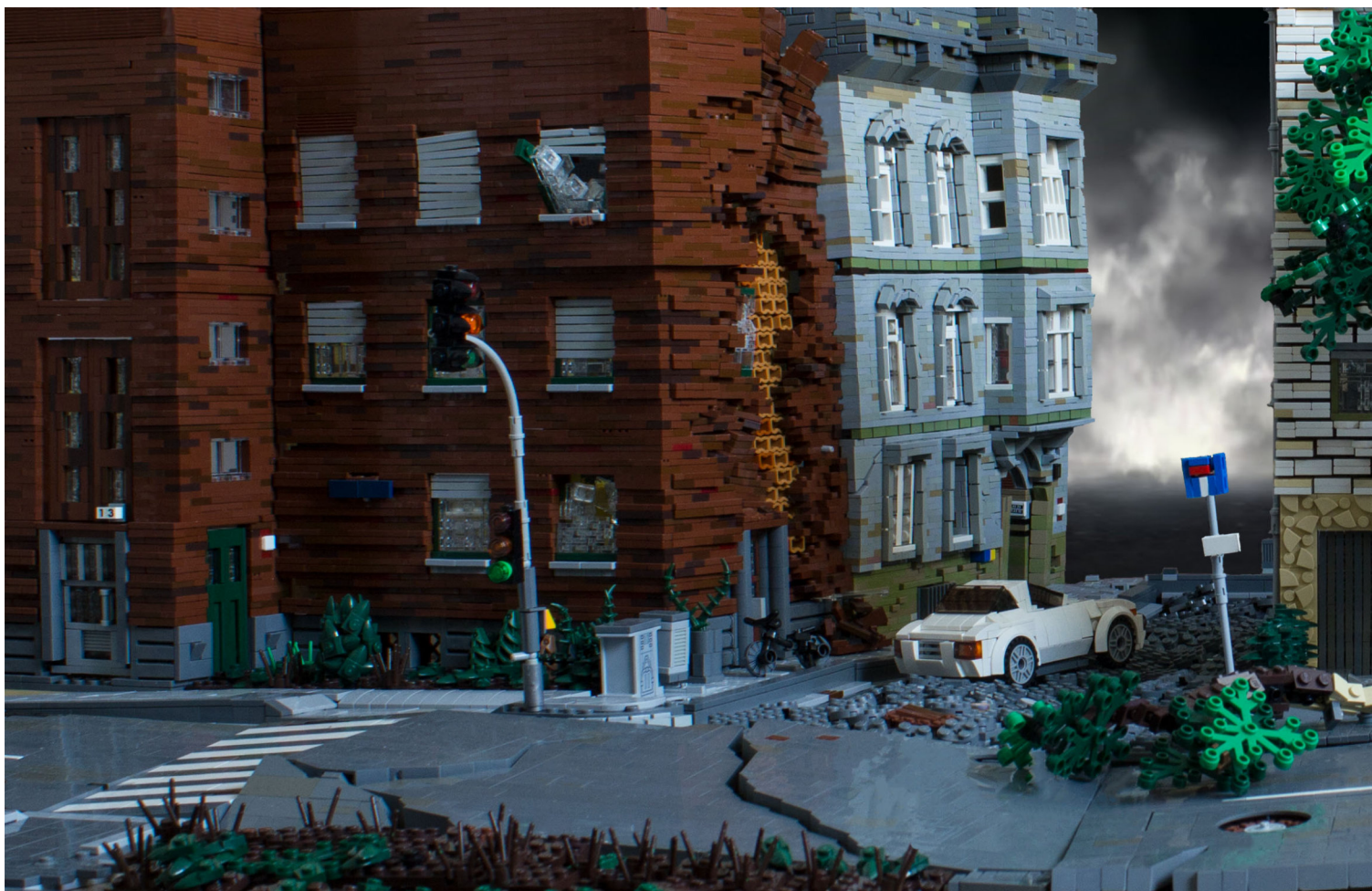
RL: They all know it but most don't care much or at all.

HBM: How did you start with the world of MOCs?

RL: Before building MOCs as an adult I bought some sets in 2014 or 2015.

I tried a Technic car, a large Star Wars shuttle and a modular build (Parisian cafe).

The cafe was the most fun and pleasing to me. I don't use parts from sets for building MOCs.



Top: Broken Home. Right: Fishing in muddy waters. P101, bottom: Arrr.

I started to build up a collection from scratch and it took me years before I could begin.

HBM: What inspires you to create your layouts and MOCs?

RL: Inspiration is everywhere. I am a big comic fan (franco belge style preferably) and I am sure this had a major impact on me.

The initial idea is totally different most of the time. It might be a story, a general graphic setting or mood, some techniques I haven't tried yet, etc.

Just to name a few:

My first MOC—I was just looking for a couple of forms and wanted as many crazy angles as possible.

"Broken Home!"—This was a real incident. A tree fell on my fathers house. I just added a dozen buildings familiar to my surroundings in Cologne where I live.

"The future is bright"—A science fiction cliché. I played Mass Effect before and it also features a tube world.

Sometimes I have a clear vision, other times I just rearrange the components over and over.

"Fishing in muddy waters", "Magnum Opus Fachwerkus" and "Arrr" were more or less done that way.



HBM: What are the most important goals you have achieved in recent years?

RL: I have won the colossal castle contest in 2018.

I have reached 10k votes on LEGO ideas for some of my designs. Feel free to support my

current ones: <https://ideas.lego.com/profile/Ralf%20Ranghaal/entries?query=&sort=top>

Most importantly I am still building large intricate builds.

HBM: What is your favorite commercial LEGO® building theme?





Above: A Light in the Dark. Below: Black world with a pink twist. Opposite: Magnum Opus Fachwerkus

RL: I like Pirates of the Caribbean but my favorite theme might actually be City.

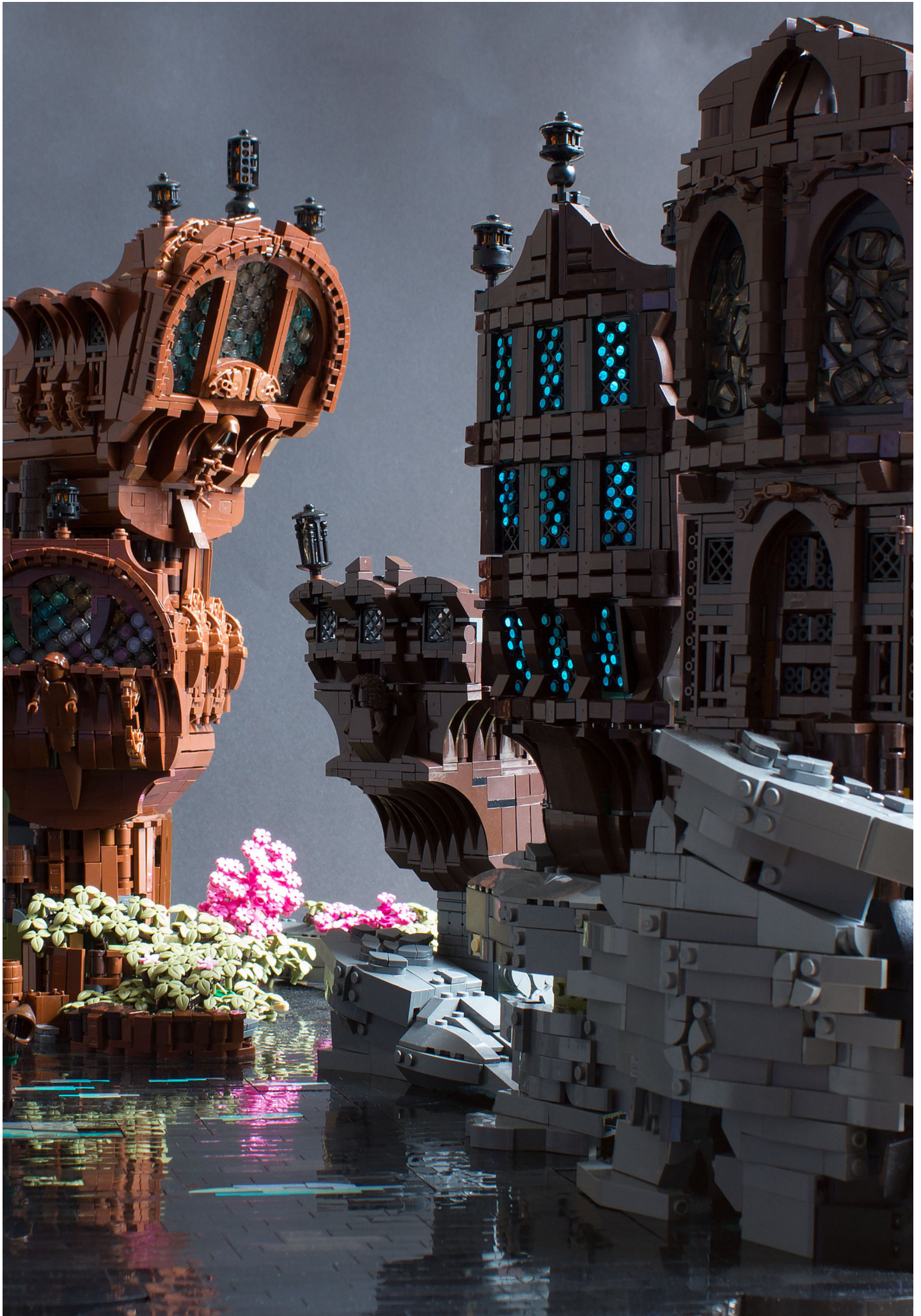
HBM: What is your favorite LEGO® element?

I have been using tons of quarter tiles lately. Easily my most used special part besides 1x2 tiles and plates. You can see, for example, in my MOC "A light in the dark" how I use this part for walls and texture.

HBM: You are specialized in creating MOCs about medieval and above all in the use of techniques that seek the greatest realism in construction. How was your first MOC? How has this approach evolved?

RL: My very first MOC was all about forms and weird angles. The more angles the better. There







was hardly a brick that wasn't connected to a hinge. I didn't use consistent techniques. Every brick was like adding a new hinge, having a new angle and painful trial and error for every step. It took me months.

I changed my style a few months later. My MOC "The wood triptychon—the tower" features more realistic textures and less form.

"Magnum Opus Fachwerkus" was the peak of realistic textures. I didn't realize it consciously but I was trying everything to make it look like it's not LEGO. I used parts as small as possible, tiny bends all over, discoloured and worn pieces. Most pieces were put on hoses or hinges and there were tiny bends everywhere.

I knew I could never top that one so I toned down afterwards.

It might not occur at first glance but the

following builds like "Fishing in muddy waters" or "A light in the dark" were actually quite a bit simpler and more conventional.

HBM: It's always wonderful to see your medieval houses. . . . Do you plan to provide them with interior details in the future?

RL: Not really. I feel more like a painter and I don't really care for play features. I like to design. I don't play with my models.

Interiors in minifigure size are always flawed. You can do either a great looking interior or a great facade/building. When combining both there is a huge problem with the proportions. Take a look at a regular modular build. The interior looks tiny. It would have to be many times larger. But then you would end up with a monstrously large building.

HBM: What MOC are you most proud of?

RL: Very tough question.

"Magnum Opus Fachwerkus" is technically by far my hardest effort.

My most important model to me might be "The future is bright". It was so weird and complex and allowed me to do a couple of round tube models.

HBM: What other theme do you like to build in?

RL: I don't really think in terms of themes. I like landscapes and architecture.

HBM: Do you have any suggestions for new MOCers?

RL: Use social media to connect yourself. A lot of people are willing to help.

HBM: Are you currently working on any MOCs or other LEGO related projects?

RL: I have been working on a texture driven build for a few weeks now. Hopefully it should be finished soon.