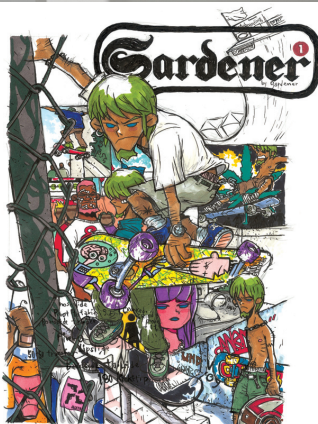




Shots courtesy of Art Toy in Seoul



ART TOY: THE WORK OF MICHAEL LAU

Through April 14th, 2013 at Sejong Center

We see them everywhere: the human symbols of street culture, whether it's the adrenaline-seeking skateboarders and wakeboarders, the daredevil graffiti artists, or even the musically-inclined hip hop rappers and DJs. They all paint the essence of a movement that has defined a generation. Now, Michael Lau, a Hong Kong-based artist and designer known for initiating the trend of urban vinyl art toys in the 1990s, is hosting an exhibit that explores the diversity and uniqueness of this street culture world through his handmade toy figures.

With hip hop and rap beats setting the mood, visitors begin their tour by exploring Lau's sketches, drawings, and models that eventually inspired him to create and design his popular 12-inch toys known as the Gardeners. Each Gardener has a distinct personality, attitude, and passion. They inhabit a world called Gardenergala where they interact freely with others, developing relationships, working, and living their day-to-day lives. Using simply their clothes and accessories, Lau attempts to convey how each Gardener reflects or signifies some aspect of street culture. It could be the shoes by DC, the trendy summer fashions by Alphanumeric, or the Burton snowboard, but with each figure it is evident just what Lau is trying to

demonstrate. Lau has purposely omitted descriptions of the Gardeners in this exhibit, in hopes of encouraging visitors to use their own imaginations and creativity to determine how each Gardener may live and play.

Although the majority of the Gardeners are fictional characters, some Gardeners are in fact based on real people. A toy figure of Michael Jordan is designed wearing the Nike Air Jordan shoes—a status symbol in both hip hop and basketball. Many other Gardeners have been based on very influential people in street culture and art. The Womax Gardener represents James Lavelle, the founder of Mo Wax Records, while the Jan Gardener depicts the actor Jan Lam. Some of Lau's newest Gardeners, Hope and TVXQ, have been inspired by the iconic Obama poster and K-pop stars, respectively.



The exhibit ends with a special Gardener named Scultura M. David MMXIII, which Lau specifically created for this particular show in Seoul. David, a figure that mimics the marble texture of the famous David statue in Florence, Italy, is shown holding a skateboard in one hand and sneakers in another, both symbolizing the spirit of the culture on display.

Aside from its 113 Gardeners, the exhibition heightens its appeal with entertaining comic strips and 14 remarkable paintings featuring the various Gardener characters. These artworks are a great opportunity for visitors to obtain a better understanding of the characters' personalities and interactions with each other. Also, scattered within large display boxes throughout the exhibit, there are a plethora of 6-inch Gardeners and Lau's other art toys branded with names like Disney and Paramount. Upon leaving the show, another memorable sight is found in the towering statue of an iconic Gardener known as Tatto.

This is Lau's largest and first-ever Art Toy exhibition in Seoul. Sejong Center near Gwanghwamun Stn. (line 5, exit 8). Hours: 11 am - 8:30 pm. Admission W6,000 - W12,000. Visit sejongpac.or.kr or call 1544-1887 for more information. michaellau.co.kr

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