

A.W.E. : An MB&F and Laikingland collaboration

It gives the MB&F M.A.D. Gallery a huge amount of fun to showcase the smile-inducing kinetic art of the British creative partnership Laikingland.

Laikingland was co-founded in 2008 by two lifelong friends from the north of England, artist Martin Smith and engineer Nick Regan. Together, Smith and Regan work closely with invited international artists and designers to help transform their ideas into beautifully-crafted, limited-edition kinetic art pieces.

'Laik', from the Old English 'lác', means 'play' in parts of northern England, and part of Laikingland's philosophy is about injecting a touch of playfulness into the lives of those who come into contact with a Laikingland creation.

Smith says: *"We set out to make beautiful kinetic art, but what's its purpose? To make people smile. Our creative practice is concerned with making kinetic devices that investigate themes of humour, nonsense and futility."*

Such themes are evident in the array of Laikingland's masterpieces being showcased until early 2014 at the MB&F M.A.D. Gallery in Geneva. Including the specially-commissioned *A.W.E. (Automated Winding Engine)*, the *Applause Machines* and the *Fingers Mk III* you will find a selection of unique pieces such as *Just About Now*, *Light A Moment*, *The Party Popper Machine* and *Story Time*.

A.W.E. – Automated Winding Engine – is a unique piece created especially for the M.A.D. Gallery. The kinetic robot will be truly analogue in its control and operation as A.W.E. is a marriage of old and new technologies, craftsmanship and thinking.

Motion sensors trigger the robotic arm into life. Rising slowly, the lower arm extends and rotates towards the observer. It allows an increasingly intimate encounter with the timepiece on its 'wrist', before moving the watch through different planes to rotate its automatic winding rotor. The robotic arm then slowly retracts, folding back neatly to its starting position. An AWE-inspiring way of winding up a watch!

"A.W.E. exhibits many of the skills that we can mould into a Laikingland piece," says Regan. *"A strong concept and design direction from Martin Smith; the engineering of the industrial robot body; the technical solutions of cam driven motors, gearboxes and safety sensors; the 3D printing of the elbow joint; and the exquisitely sculptured forearm."*

"It's really exciting to show this piece and present it as the first Laikingland project that was initiated by a client, MB&F, rather than one of our own pieces."

Playtime at the M.A.D. Gallery with a selection of kinetic objects 100% British

The Applause Machine, again by Martin Smith, is a whimsical innovation that sees two hands clap together rhythmically when its button is pushed. An original and playful way of saying *"Bravo!"*

"I initially designed and made The Applause Machine to gently poke fun at myself: 'Artist makes self-applauding machine'," says Smith. *"Then I presented Nick and his wife an Applause Machine on their wedding day as a beautiful way to say 'congratulations'. This gift sparked an idea in Nick's head that he could work with me to re-engineer the piece for production!"*

Fingers Mk III by Nik Ramage is a fantastic, impatiently-tapping mechanical replica of Ramage's own hand. At the flick of a switch, the realistic digits in distinctive dark black iron drum rhythmically, until the motor is turned off again. Ramage has been a good friend of Smith for many years, describing himself as *"a mechanical sculptor who makes useless machines and invents contraptions that the world didn't know it needed"*.

Just About Now by Maarten Baas is a sand timer that indicates the passing of time with the sounding of a gong. The device starts by scooping sand from a bowl into a glass funnel. The sand then trickles down into a brass cup attached to a beater, before leaking back into the bowl, causing the beater to strike a gong once the cup is empty.

"I wanted to create a timer that bangs a gong more or less after the amount of time desired," says Bass. "Knowing the exact time is often irrelevant. A coffee break, a meditation, a nap, a business meeting... they could all take a few minutes longer or shorter than an exact amount of time."

Light a Moment is an exclusive candle lantern, the result of a collaboration between Joost van Bleiswijk and Kiki van Eijk. A soft and romantic ceramic form holds a traditional church candle reflected a thousand times through fragmented mirrors built in a constructivist shape. The shell of mirrors opens in a slow movement allowing the observer a moment to reflect and appreciate the act of lighting the candle and living in the now.

The Party Popper Machine by Martin Smith continuing his theme of devices of celebration for Laikingland. In homage to the humble plastic party toy – and to satisfy his thirst for 'loud bangs' – Smith has developed a nonsense machine that elaborately assists in the firing-off of party poppers.

Story Time by Atelier NL is a clock, but by no means an ordinary one: it doesn't tell the time as a sequence of 24 hours. Rather, it tells a sequence of events, a story. Each Story Time is a unique piece, with the owner able to customise the text on a ribbon zigzagging round the gears powered by a motor and custom electrics. For the writer, it could be the story of their perfect day; for the poet, a selection of their favourite sonnets; and for the historian, the chronicles of time.

Summing up the Laikingland philosophy, Smith says: *"Our creations are essentially about mischief. They're something to brighten the mood. For us, that is important for the soul."*

We invite you to brighten your mood and nourish your soul by discovering the playful creations of Laikingland at the MB&F M.A.D. Gallery until early 2014.

About Laikingland co-founders Martin Smith and Nick Regan

Laikingland combines the respective talents of Martin Smith and Nick Regan who work together with invited artists and designers. The pair have been friends for nearly 30 years, having first met at secondary school in West Yorkshire in the north of England where they grew up. Smith later went on to art college while Regan studied mechanical engineering.

Smith still lives and works in Yorkshire and now has 18 years' experience as a practicing artist, with work ranging from small kinetic devices to large-scale gallery commissions and architectural interventions. In his role as Laikingland art director, Smith has overall responsibility for the design selection process, and curates the product range and collaborates at the concept stage with each artist and designer.

Now living and working in Utrecht in the Netherlands, Regan is Laikingland engineering director. He has 17 years' product development and engineering management experience in the global automotive industry and has worked with many of the world's leading automotive companies in Europe, USA and Asia.