

The MB&F M.A.D. Gallery is delighted to host an exhibition by Chinese artist Xia Hang. His kinetic sculptures are stainless steel alien-like creatures and tubular, otherworldly 'vehicles' but most importantly playful. The recurring theme of 'play' is infused in Hang's sculptures, with the talented artist encouraging a palpable interaction between audience and artwork. Growing up in a world that was constantly changing, he didn't just want us to stand and admire his sculptures as purely static pieces of art. Therefore, he managed to make us to touch them, interact with them or even transform them to eventually bring a smile on our face.

Hang's scintillating sculptures aren't only gracing the M.A.D. Gallery: Hang also designed the unique power reserve indicator in MB&F's new Legacy Machine No.1 Xia Hang in the miniaturised form of one of his iconic 'comma men' creations. All of Hang's creations will be launched by February 27th.

Xia Hang was born in 1978 in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, China. He started painting when he was just 10 years old and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts before going on to do a Master of Fine Arts within the sculpture department of China's Central Academy of Fine Arts.

It was during his studies that Hang created a cluster of comma-shaped men in mirror-polished stainless steel and these laid down the blueprint for what would become his signature, alien-like sculptures. "*Commas do exist in Chinese writing,*" he says. "*For me, my 'comma man' represents a chubby little boy.*"

The comma men's well-proportioned forms and silvery appearance make these little fellas look like they could be distant relatives – or even pets – of the shape-shifting, liquid-metal baddie from Terminator 2. At the M.A.D. Gallery, we have eight such comma men: *Being Angry; It's Mine; Not Far, Having a meeting, I'm Coming, I'm Full and Who else brick.*

Hang's comma men are pretty modest in size compared to some of his other sculptures. The imposing *Coming Soon*, for example, is certainly not for the faint-hearted. This piece measures an impressive 180cm (6ft) x 80cm (2.5ft) x 170cm (5.5ft) and might be described as a tubular stainless steel, inverse tricycle. *Coming Soon* increases Geneva's pedal-powered population by two, thanks to the beautifully crafted pair of comma men on board who are evidently enjoying the ride. Along with *Coming Soon*, the M.A.D. gallery is also showcasing other 'vehicular' sculptures by Hang: *Going Home*.

Depending on what mood you're in, *Coming Soon* can be presented in at least two configurations. This is emblematic of Hang's efforts to subvert the established definition of 'sculpture' – a term usually connoting a static quality – by offering multiple possibilities for the extension of the creation's form. Indeed, Hang believes his sculptures should be considered like toys. He wants people to touch his art, to play with it.

Highlighting this philosophy, Hang's 2008 Beijing exhibition was called "Please ~~don't~~ touch", with the "don't" crossed out. It was an expression of his frustration with the golden rule of most museums and galleries around the globe. He says: "*When I see an exhibition of artworks, there is always a little sign in the corner saying: 'Please don't touch'. I feel this sign generates a distance between the artwork and the audience. My purpose is to bring art closer to us, to create toys as sculptures, and sculptures as toys. I love various types of games and toys, and these are the source of my inspiration for my sculptures.*"

It doesn't come as a surprise, then, to learn that, unlike some compatriot artists, Hang has no pretensions to be a social activist or political critic. "*I must be lying if I say I do this job because of a sense of mission to make history or the social responsibility of being an artist. I just love it,*" he says. "*Besides, if it can make me a decent living, that's enough.*"

Since he began sculpting, Hang has had an affinity for steel, attracted to it by its strength and high polish. He explains: "*Perhaps I am drawn to the shine of metal and its durability. Metal is much stronger than stone or wood, yet it is still very malleable. I think that the changeable dynamics of metal are similar to the characteristics of humans.*"

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MB&F founder and creative director Maximilian Büsser was first introduced to Xia Hang a few years ago by a Chinese art collector friend, and visited Hang on the outskirts of Beijing in his workshop. *“I was like a child in a toy factory!”* says Büsser, who quickly proposed that the artist present some of his work at the MB&F M.A.D. Gallery in Geneva. Hang jumped at the chance, and says: *“The M.A.D. Gallery is a unique gallery with very special characteristics. The art of mechanics is one of my favourite topics.”*

The rapport struck up between Hang and MB&F led to him collaborating on Legacy Machine No.1 Xia Hang. LM1 Xia Hang retains all of the 19th century pocket watch-inspired features of the original LM1, but with a twist: The power reserve is now indicated by a tiny, highly-polished aluminium comma man designed by Xia Hang. The man sits up straight when the movement is fully wound (Mr. Up) and gradually slumps over as the power diminishes (Mr. Down). LM1 Xia Hang is accompanied by a pair of full-size sculptures of Mr. Up and Mr. Down in polished stainless steel and signed by the artist.

“In curating these amazing artists at our M.A.D. Gallery, it has opened a world of possibilities for co-creations with MB&F's Machines,” says Büsser. *“Legacy Machine No.1 Xia Hang is the first time – and hopefully not the last – that there has been a cross-pollination between an MB&F M.A.D. Gallery artist and an MB&F watch.”*

Whatever you do this year, don't miss Xia Hang's kinetic sculptures at the MB&F M.A.D. Gallery in Geneva.