

another watch magazine

時另誌 with attitude, be different



香港故宮文化博物館
特別展覽
「百樣玲瓏—
卡地亞與女性」

ISSUE 010 APRIL 2023 HK\$50

ISSN 2163-3033 01
9 772789 965009

Collector Series Meeting My First Paper Watch Collector

Gabe L @labeg

Text: Lung Lung Thun



When I first stumbled upon Gabe's Instagram page, I became a fan instantly. His art has a tongue-in-cheek quality that adds lightness to the hobby of watch collecting that is often taken too seriously. I was excited to see Gabe's work in the flesh, but nothing prepared me for what I would feel. Seeing all the pieces up close almost felt like owning the watches themselves. I am still trying to understand why that is, but perhaps the childlike qualities of Gabe's work brought me back to a space where I could feel like a kid, which is also the place my mind drifts to when I look at watches, a special place where I can be illogical and irrational. Below is a snippet of my conversation with Gabe. I cannot wait to see where he will go with his talent in the future.

1. What does LABEG mean? How did you end up with this name and does it play into the way your art looks?

LABEG is my name Gabe L arranged in a way that I thought looked cool. I don't think it plays into the way my art looks, but it came more from a designer's mindset, making things look more interesting and how the arrangement of letters in my name could create something more aesthetically appealing.

2. How did your love for watches begin? What is it about wristwatches you like?

When I was a kid, I always loved how watches looked. I was drawn to Swatches, G-Shocks and Nixon watches. Through studying product design, I grew to appreciate the mechanics of high end watches, particularly watches with complications. I loved chronographs

and how the movements looked so complex. Then moving to Hong Kong, I was exposed to even more watches! Watches were everywhere and going to auctions to look at crazily complicated and rare watches gave me a whole new appreciation for watches. I started to appreciate not only the complication side of watches but the history side of watches.

3. Who encouraged you or what made you decide to start your IG page?

I started my IG page because I wanted a creative outlet from work. I used my IG account to share my passion for watches like so many do, but I wanted to do something more creative and different, more design and art related. I don't have a crazy collection of watches to share on IG, so I started to draw these purposely ugly watches that I thought



were amazing. It was my way of sharing my passion of watches with people.

4. What is the actual process like from start to finish? Do you see the pieces in real life and then measure them? Do you make the dial first? Do you cut out the piece using a paper cutter?

I always start by researching the specs of the watch I'm making. Sometimes I get to see the watch that I'm making in real life, but most of the time I need to use photos for reference. I do my best to make every watch with the correct case size. Then I hand draw the watch and bezel onto cardboard and cut it out with an exacto knife, paint it in white and let it dry. Once it's dry, I draw all the details I can see of the watch and then paint the details.

5. How long does it take to make a piece?

It takes a few days to make a watch because of all the drying time it needs. Sometimes if the drawing doesn't look ugly enough to me then I'll restart. It takes effort for me to draw ugly, I swear my actual drawing skills are good.

6. Before we met, I thought you were literally a little kid because of the way your art looks, how did you settle on this style? Did it take time to discover this look or this is always how you drew?

I always like art that looks imperfect, almost like a kid drew it. I'm also not a great illustrator so I can't do those hyper realistic drawings like those amazing watch artists out there. I tried doing the opposite of what was out there already and found out I could draw like a kid again and it made me laugh, so I stuck with it.

7. What inspired you before to create a piece? And what inspires you now? Or are you just bombarded by orders now?

I love making watches that are unattainable for me. It's my way of experiencing them. Most of the watches I make these days are commission pieces, but I still really enjoy making them because it's a way to connect with people, by making an art piece of a watch that has a lot of meaning to them.

8. Let's talk a little about your own watch collecting journey, what pieces are you drawn to and why?

These days I'm drawn to vintage watches. I love the personality that vintage watches bring to the table. Every watch is different, some good and some bad. The hunt for a vintage watch is so different from the hunt for



a modern watch as well. You look for so many small details when looking for vintage watches. BUT I feel like after making so many cool watches, I'm starting to appreciate more modern complicated watches.

9. What is a grail piece you would love to own?

I love the Patek 5004 in steel but will probably never be able to own it. I guess I'll have to settle for the 5004 in cardboard.

10. What has been the most fascinating thing you have observed from meeting watch collectors or clients of yours? Is there a certain personality trait or quirk you see?

I feel very blessed that all the watch collectors I have met so far are extremely humble and passionate to share their watches with me. I was

surprised that they would trust me with their expensive watch even though it's the first time meeting them. Of course I take really good care of their watches. The quirk I see is that we're all geeks about watches.

11. Where do you see yourself in the future? Do you wish to push this talent of yours into other areas? i.e. I know you are a huge boxing and skating fan, would you say design skateboards or boxing gear?

I'd like to make stuff outside of just watches. I have so many ideas of stuff I want to make that would make me laugh and make people laugh.

12. I always ask artists how they "feed" their mind, some tell me they go for long walks in nature, others travel and look at architecture. What is it that inspires you?

I like to go to auction exhibits or art exhibits to see art and watches in person. Seeing the real thing up close and personal always inspires me because you can see all the details and techniques used to create art or watches.

13. Do you think you have taken any of the skills from boxing (i.e., discipline or others you can think of) and brought them into your life as an artist? Are there any similarities?

There are some similarities that I see, like not judging a book by its cover. In Thai boxing, my Thai trainers were small in size, super friendly and very humble. You would never expect them to have over 100 pro fights under their belt and can beat up every single person in the room. I guess meeting watch people is kind of similar; you never know how crazy their collection is just by looking at them. ©

