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Artist-Designer Taras Zheltyshev Moves His Yoomoota Universe From Tomsk to Thailand

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ICON Siam's 333 Gallery , Bangkok **@Yoomoota**

The work of Taras Zheltyshev, aka Yoom, a multidisciplinary artist from Russia, might not be well known in his homeland, but it has captivated art lovers in Europe and now Asia. Before moving to Thailand, Zheltyshev exhibited his works at international art shows in Europe, showcasing sculptures, paintings, collectible design objects and NFTs.

Zheltyshev was born in 1991 in Tomsk to a family of doctors and architects. He grew up surrounded by sketches and pencil drawings, watching his architect mother work. But when it was time for him to choose his own path, he decided on medicine and entered the pediatric faculty of the local medical institute.

But he did not abandon art. During his free hours he continued to sketch and developed his

skills in animation. At another crossroads after university, he decided to make a radical change. He took an internship with a jeweler, where he drew inspiration from the silver and bronze casting artisans of Siberia. He also developed an interest in interior design. Using his experience with 3D modeling software and the woodworking techniques he had learned in furniture workshops, he explored working with a variety of different materials.

His first extraordinary success was a table lamp called MTF ("My True Friend"), inspired, he said, "by a German mastiff from a Sherlock Holmes movie. I would like to embody the image of the Victorian era, that comfort of home, crackling, burning fireplace and faithful dog sitting and waiting for its master."

Initially, he modeled a digital version of the MTF and then brought it to life in his first small workshop. This work earned him the A'Design Award in Milan. He would go on to win two more A'Design awards for his work.

A few years later at the age of 28, he crafted his first piece of furniture, the Lymphochair. Practical and aesthetically appealing, it won the interior Product category at the International Design Award (IDA) and was showcased at the Collectible Fair 2019 in Brussels. Yoom's work was clearly resonating with audiences.

In addition to design, Yoom began to draw, recalling his childhood dreams and fascination with animation, which he combined with his interest in 3D modeling. Beginning in 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic and living in Moscow, the artist gave life to a new project: the Yoomoota Universe, a collection of sculptures, paintings, mixed media pieces, cartoons, storybooks, and NFTs.

The universe represents a parallel world that, according to its creator, has always existed within us. It somehow recalls the timeless tale of "The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupery, where diverse planets and their inhabitants convey reflections on life.

And similarly, within the Yoomoota Universe, the entities and inhabitants act as mirrors to our bodies and minds. They symbolize the full spectrum of human existence on a global scale, embodying every nuance and phenomenon that defines our being. To this, Yoom added his love for colors — not natural ones, but his own unique combinations: Blue Laugh, Pure Love, Blue Dream, and Red Fear.

The Yoomoota Universe has 23 planets inhabited by various characters symbolizing emotions, body, addictions, pleasures, sins and other aspects of human life. The major characters are: Candy Lady embodying sugar addiction, Pillman representing dependency on pills, Fast Money personifying a devotee of wealth, Game Boy succumbing to a passion for games, and Pure Love — the ardent embodiment of genuine affection.

Yoom's Asian adventures started in 2014 during Beijing Design Week, when he first traveled East and fell in love with the continent's many cultures. When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Zheltyshev and his family relocated to Thailand. Yoom's art aligned with the preferences prevalent in the Asian art scene — cartoons, 3D animation, comics and art toys — and the artist quickly recognized the new potential for the global dissemination of Yoomoota stories.

His recent solo exhibition at ICON Siam's 333 Gallery in September 2023 introduced the eight planets and stations of Yoomoota to the Bangkok art world. The artist is currently opening galleries in Asia and the Middle East.

For more information about Yoom's work, see his site here *and Instagram* here*.*

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