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WOULD you wine and dine in a restaurant that has ice cream melting on the walls and floor?

Believe it or not, it is happening at the W Kuala Lumpur and no one's cleaning this up until Nov 30.

The ice pops and lollipops on display here are not food. Although the signs say "something to suck" and "something to lick", these are names and not instructions.

So please refrain from licking the artworks.

These brightly coloured sculptures are by French contemporary artist and pop sculptor Hersk, who was in town recently for the exhibition launch and to introduce his new spray paint on canvas collection.

Hersk At The W Hotel, a collaboration between Gallery des Artistes and W Kuala Lumpur, features 16 mixed media artworks, including the world premiere of his works on canvas.

We have seen his work in Kuala Lumpur before, but this is his first solo exhibition here. Earlier this month, he also showcased a series at Art Expo Malaysia 2019 in KL at the Gallery des Artistes booth.

Ask Hersk, now 40, how he started with graffiti art and you will be transported three decades into the past, where the then-10-year-old boy chanced upon spray paint cans in his father's garage.

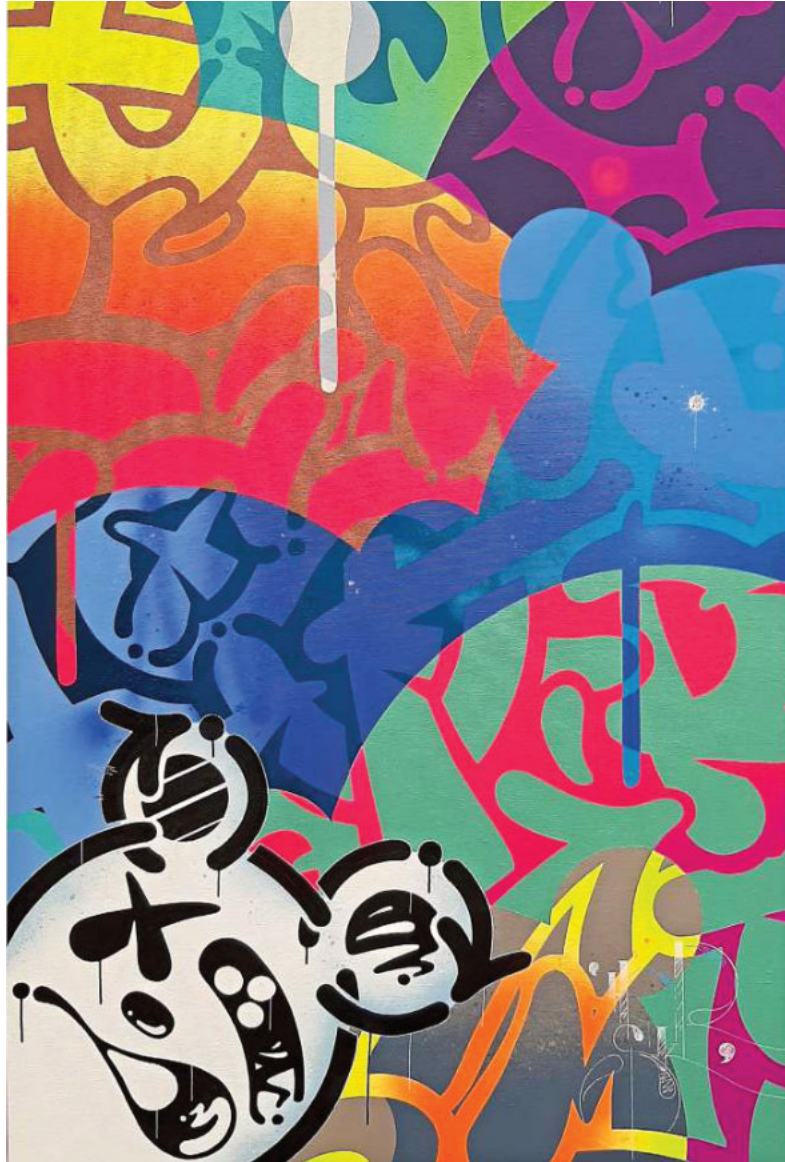
"It was a completely different era then, where graffiti was associated with vandalism. It was a movement linked to hip-hop culture, only accessible to some people via niche magazines. It was not at all considered a mainstream art form as it is today. Since then, graffiti art has evolved so much. What really keeps me going today is the great variety of projects I am involved in – from skate parks to painting cars and handbags," he says.

Besides his personal projects, Hersk is also a teacher of graffiti art and his students are as diverse as they come. He gives classes in schools, holds workshops, and is no stranger to hospitals. Sponsored by the Haemophilia Association of France, he reaches out to patients through art therapy.

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# A spray of street cool

French artist Hersk's graffiti exhibition gives a KL hotel a hint of urban flavour.



Hersk's *Francine* (acrylic on canvas, 2019). —Photos: Gallery des artistes

have in front of them. Whatever the surface, I tell them that they have to go beyond the borders and think of the borders only like a window. Hopefully, that will help them open their imagination to think and create on a bigger scale and not feel constricted by these 'limits'," he says.

And the most wonderful thing about it for Hersk is when they are able to let go and explore creative

instincts beyond the blank slate they are given.

"I have seen people change once they are able to let their instincts pour onto their surface. It is like therapy. That, for me, is the most rewarding feeling," he says.

Edith Ho, founder and director of Gallery des Artistes describes Hersk's visual language as a graffiti artist as "unique in many ways".

"The aim for graffiti artists is to



*Lucette* (acrylic spray on canvas, 2019).



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have their own 'calligraphy' or lettering style that other rival artists/taggers can recognise. It used to be a very territorial way of expression that started in the streets of New York. Of course, it has evolved, but the aim for each artist remains the same: at a glance, the viewer should immediately recognise the lettering," says Ho.

Hersk makes his sculptures from scratch in his studio, working with

an array of saws and other tools in one section of the space, with another dedicated to just painting, spraying and drawing.

"His signature ice creams and lollipops are all hand-carved by him in his studio. He creates his own surfaces whereas many graffiti artists paint on surfaces or sculptures that are already made. In conclusion, Hersk is a totally all-round artist!" she concludes.