fter four years into the process of creating “Jungle Gym,” Michael Jackson commissioned the sculptor of the project, A.J. “Buddy” Obara, Jr., to add Jackson’s personal touch to the work by producing a custom cast gold-leafed bronze plaque that featured a personal message from the singer, expressing a “magical” wish. The handsome plaque with a classic storybook design was attached prominently to the jungle tree as a central object of the sculpture group.
“Once in a lifetime, a rare and magnificent group of bronze works like Obara’s “Jungle Gym” becomes available for a discerning collector to acquire. The availability of the original, complete set of these hand-crafted works created by a recognized world class sculptor is a truly unusual circumstance, and is an exceptional opportunity to obtain a one-of-a-kind sculpture series with a built-in common denominator that always is delightful to view and comes with a famous pedigree.”

– Bruce Helander, curator and critic for Sculpture magazine, One Art Nation, The Huffington Post, and Simply the Best; and former Editor-in-Chief of The Art Economist.

Jungle Gym
From The Collection of
MICHAEL JACKSON
NEVERLAND VALLEY RANCH
The artist A. J. “Buddy” Obara, Jr. in his Pennsylvania studio, circa 1993, as he worked on the finishing touches to the preliminary clay models for “Jungle Gym”, prior to the bronze casting process.

The Michael Jackson Bronze “Jungle Gym” Collection

The Michael Jackson bronze “Jungle Gym” Collection created by master bronze sculptor A. J. Obara, Jr. is a remarkable and completely unique collaboration between the celebrated and internationally renowned sculptor and the legendary musical talent, both motivated by a great cause. The project came together after four years of discussions and intensive foundry work on this group of sculptures, initially created to enrich the lives of terminally ill children while they visited Michael Jackson’s famous Neverland Valley Ranch in California. After a tireless schedule of designing initial sketches for a composition of eighteen life-size objects and then carefully building the support mechanisms to accommodate the hot orange liquid bronze poured into the molds for the foundation, the raw figures, after a long tedious casting process, were skilfully sanded, chafed, sandblasted, polished and patinaed to bring the family of exotic full-scale animals to life. The project also included a Michael Jackson bronze plaque with a message featuring an excerpt from a favorite poem offering hope and strength.

The portfolio of sculptures was produced by master bronze sculptor Obara at his illustrious Brandywine Studio in Unionville, Pennsylvania. He works in the manner of prominent French sculptors of the 18th and 19th centuries and casts each bronze using the traditional cire perdue “lost wax” process, and is particularly well-known for his exquisite patinas. Obara hand finishes each sculpture with precision and care, and is world famous for his spectacular recreations of wild life subjects; he is considered the premier living sculptor of nature. Jim Fowler, the host of Mutual of Omaha’s Wild Kingdom and former President of The Explorers Club said, “Buddy’s incredible ability to capture the images of nature in bronze contribute greatly to our respect and admiration of our natural world.” Jacques-Yves Cousteau observed, “…Brilliant interpreter of the beauty of our friends—the marine mammals.”

A.J. “Buddy” Obara, Jr.’s sculptural works are in numerous prestigious collections around the world including: His Majesty King Fahd, Saudi Arabia; Her Majesty, The Queen Elizabeth II, Buckingham Palace, England; Jacques-Yves Cousteau, Monaco; Grand Ducal Highness Princess Charlotte of Luxembourg; Windsor Castle, England; His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; and Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales. Other notable collectors include King Juan Carlos I, Spain, and NASA astronaut Joe Engle, who carried an Obara sculpture in the rocket capsule (which traveled
18 million nautical miles in interplanetary space). Other prominent collectors include actor James Stewart, F. Ward Gillett, General Norman Schwarzkopf, President and Mrs. Ronald Reagan, Paul Newman, Tony Bennett, Michael Jackson, Hubert H. Humphrey (Palm Beach), Parker Rockefeller, President and Mrs. George H.W. Bush, Bobby Orr (Quebec, Canada) Mr. and Mrs. Laddie Merck, E. J. Duhart Donaldson (Cody, Wyoming), Christopher Du Pont (Sun Valley, Idaho), Geoffrey Rothschild (Lungau, Austria), Lily Pulitzer, José “Pepe” Fanjul, Curt Gowdy, The Duke of Westminster, Sigourney Weaver and Senator William V. Roth. In addition, former NASA astronauts Dr. James van Hoften, Col. Richard O. Covey and Dr. William F. Fisher are among the distinguished collectors of Mr. Obara’s life-like sculptural works.

Past exhibitions and permanent locations where Mr. Obara’s work has been displayed include Norton Museum of Art (West Palm Beach), The Society of the Four Arts (Palm Beach), World Wildlife Fund (Washington, D.C.), Smithsonian (Washington, D.C.), George H.W. Bush Presidential Library, Saint Louis Zoo, The Reagan Library, Zoological Society of Philadelphia, National Art Museum of Sport, and Oceanographic Museum of Monaco.

The artist’s works also have been placed in the British Embassy, Chicago, Illinois; the Oval Office at The White House, Washington, D.C.; Salmagundi Club, New York; The Tryon Gallery, London; Metropolitan Opera, New York; Delaware Art Museum, Franklin Mint Museum, Pennsylvania; Mainami Boeki Co., Tokyo, Japan; Pennsylvania State Capitol Building, Harrisburg; Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, Wilmington; Van Cleef & Arpeils, Palm Beach; Coca-Cola Corporation; and Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware, among others.
Right: The train station and flower design clock serve as a backdrop to the Jungle Gym.
“Mr. Obara’s life-like wildlife bronzes are an excellent example of the great versatility of this ancient medium. His use of color and texture is remarkable, and are particularly appealing in his birds.”

– The late Russell W. Peterson, President, National Audubon Society, Former Governor, State of Delaware.
NOTABLE COLLECTORS OF A.J. OBARA’S WORK

OBARA’S “JUNGLE GYM”

Obara’s “Jungle Gym” consists of a major series of bronze sculptures:

BAOBAB TREE (Gym) with:
GECKO LIZARD, MOUSE, PYTHON, SALAMANDER, SNAIL,
TARANTULA, TOUCAN and VERVET MONKEY;
also includes MICHAEL JACKSON PLAQUE

In addition to the “Baobab Tree” also included are the works:

CROCODILE
GALAPAGOS TORTOISE
GIRAFFE
HIPPOPOTAMUS
ORANGUTAN
OSTRICH
WARTHOG
ZEBRA

Exclusive Authorized Agent: Bruce Helander.
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