

# LEGOS: Piece by Piece

BY KARTHIK RAMAN

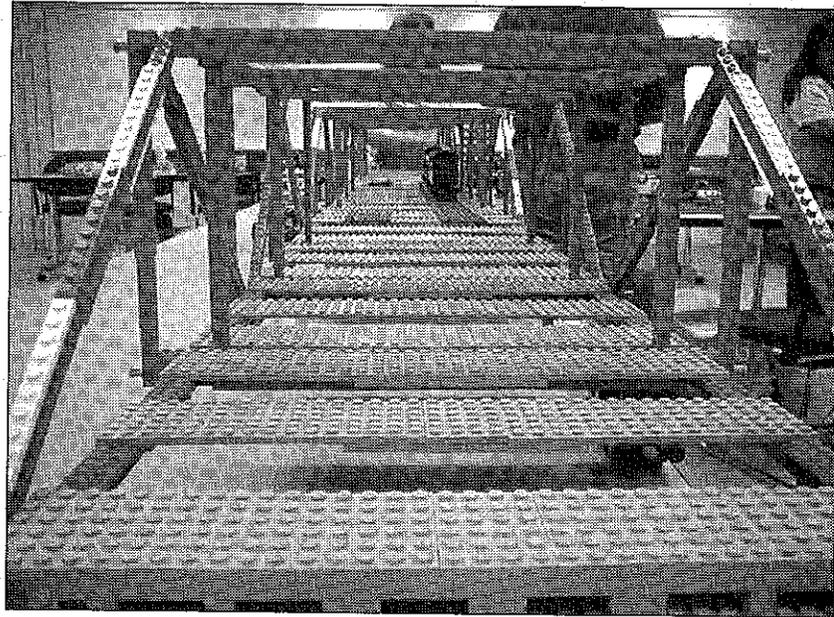
Any shape: houses, ships, trees, grass, shuttles, vehicles, and planes - all of these can be created with Legos of different colored (Gray, black, red, white, yellow, gold, and silver) bricks. This interlocking building toy is popular with people of all ages. It's hard to believe that these plastic model bricks began as wooden toys over seventy years ago. Believe it or not, it's true.

The birth of Legos took place in 1932, when Danish carpenter Ole Kirk Christiansen started making wooden toys and formed a company to manufacture them. Christiansen named the company LEGO, a contraction of "Leg godt," which in Danish means "play well". In the 1940s, the company bought a plastic injection-molding machine (the first in Denmark) and started making the plastic and wooden bricks that were the first Legos. These early toys did not have the interlocking mechanism of today's pieces. It wasn't until the late 1940s that the "socketing principle" was developed and the company started making plastic blocks with the interlocking tubes - the current version of the bricks.

Legos begin as plastic that is melted at 232 degrees Celsius. Once it has reached a doughy consistency, it is placed in moulds and put under pressure equivalent to 25 to 150 tons. After seven seconds, the plastic cools and ejects new elements which become the Lego bricks.

In 1962, Lego wheels and electric motors were created followed by the first Lego people in 1974. The produc-

ers of Lego reached beyond the planet Earth in 1979 and started the first space series. By 1984, Lego had joined with M.I.T. to produce the Lego Technic Computer Control enabling Lego models to be built on the computer. Lego producers partnered with Steven Spielberg in the year 2000, to create movie-themed Lego pieces. The com-



pany's newest series, "The Knight's Kingdom", was released this year.

Legos have long challenged kids and adults to use their imagination and create their own universe. The first Legoland was built in 1968 as a permanent place to exhibit Lego models. Legolands, exciting and fun amusement parks, combine rides and life-size Lego models - California's Legoland is located in San Diego. Besides getting ideas on what to build by visiting Legoland, Lego fans like to share ideas and models with other fans through

Lego discussion groups and clubs.

BayLUG is a Northern California Lego Users club. Club members display a variety of Lego models in meetings and shows. Club membership is open to all ages; annual dues are \$5 for an individual and \$10 for a family. Besides being able to display completed models and exchange ideas with other

Lego enthusiasts at meetings, compete for prizes and members also receive information through BayLUG mailings and have an opportunity to attend and participate in Legos swap meets.

The next BayLUG show will be at the Fremont Main Library at 2400 Stevenson Boulevard on Saturday October 9th. The public is invited to come by and see the intricate designs and layouts made from Lego blocks. For more information visit the BayLUG site at <http://www.baylug.org/> or send an email to [info@baylug.org](mailto:info@baylug.org).

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