

voices

THE WEEKEND TOURIST
BY LINDA KOUTSKY



BRICKMANIA TOYWORKS // 1620 Central Avenue NE, Suite 117 (enter on 18th Avenue NE) // Open the second Saturday of the month, 10 a.m.–4 p.m., free admission.

One piece at a time

No, you're not too old to play with toys. Really — it's OK, what else are we supposed to do with all these house-bound winter hours? Plus, many toys and games were invented right here in Minnesota. Our history includes Twister, Cootie and Magnetic Poetry ... all Minnesota-made and our creativity just continues to blossom and grow; it's in our genes.

Did you love Legos as a kid? Do you have a stash of colorful plastic bricks in your desk drawer? Do you have a table piled high with your own medieval castle surrounded by a moat with a drawbridge and protective Ninja warriors on the perimeter? If you answered yes to any of these questions, this is the place for you.

Kids of all ages were swarming throughout the vast warehouse space when my friend

Roz wandered into the building. We went up to a guy working the nearby snack bar and said we had never been there before and wondered what to do. He said, "Welcome to Brickmania." Then he pointed around the open space and said, "You can look at the models over there, buy kits over there, and that's the play area."

Brickmania Toyworks is the brainchild of Daniel Siskind, a designer of limited-edition Lego kits. Though he was originally known for designing Lego-produced Blacksmith Shop #3739, today he has an international following for historically accurate military models including Jeeps, tanks, helicopters

and artillery pieces.

The nondescript Northeast Minneapolis building is home to Brickmania's office and warehouse, but one day a month the space is open to the public. There's a small retail area and a play area for kids, but the gargantuan, colorful, amazingly detailed Lego constructions blew us away! There's apparently a large contingent of adult Lego-builders. And they like trains too. So inside the warehouse are huge model railroad displays by two different local groups: Twin Cities Lego Train Club and Greater Midwest Lego Train Club.

Freight trains, passenger trains, streetcars and light rail — entirely built by Lego bricks — chugged through landscapes textured with mountains and lakes, passed over bridges and into dark tunnels, and glided in front of urban districts



PHOTO BY LINDA KOUTSKY

One of the many fun lego displays at Brickmania Toyworks.

built with architectural precision. We recognized Landmark Center, the Hiawatha light rail station, Main Street, a snowy Alpine village, Copenhagen Square and a Japanese pagoda with blooming cherry blossom trees. The level of detail and visual puns were exhaustive. It was a breathtaking amount of work — millions of tiny plastic pieces each clicked

into place. Members of both clubs were happy to talk with visitors about construction techniques and their life-long interest in Legos. Smaller side displays showed military reenactments from WWII and Vietnam complete with helicopters with rotating blades.

Boys, girls, young and old can't help but be captivated by the displays — we were there nearly

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 13; May 11; special Art-A-Whirl weekend, May 17–19 (check Brickmania's blog for guest artists and attractions)

two hours. And if you're ready for more, pick up Brickmania's WWII German tank with rotating turret and opening hatches that you, yourself can assemble from 681 Lego parts — retail price \$120 (tank commander sold separately). For more information, visit brickmaniatoys.com.

Tips or comments?

Write to WeekendTourist@mnpubs.com or follow the Weekend Tourist on Twitter (@WeekendTourist).

Add more power to your day.

The Power to Run

The Power to Lift

The Power to Stretch

The Power to Push

The Power to Bike

The Power to Curl

The Power to Press

The Power to Dance

The Power to Soar™

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
MINNEAPOLIS

For our current monthly promotion please visit www.ywcamppls.org/power

GET A FREE BEER BEFORE THE TWINS GAME WHEN YOU MENTION THIS AD

OPEN 11AM - 2AM DAILY
LUNCH & DINNER UNTIL 10PM

WE'RE NICE
FREE BEER & \$.25 WINGS
FIRST QUARTER, PERIOD OR INNING OF A MN PRO TEAM GAME

SOME RESTRICTIONS MAY APPLY:
EXCLUDES FRIDAY, SATURDAY & SPECIAL EVENTS

The POURHOUSE
EST. 2012

THE POURHOUSE | 612-843-2555 WWW.THEPOURHOUSEMPLS.COM
LUMBER EXCHANGE BUILDING - 10 SOUTH 5TH ST. MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402