

Victor van den Berg: The Castle Lounge

*Article and Photography
by Victor van den Berg*

Victor van den Berg does a lot - he works with children in afterschool programs. As 'Vicbrick' he teaches them all kinds of building techniques with LEGO. With them, he builds robots, future cities, castles and much more. He also has a small webshop with LEGO-related gifts. Additionally, he works as a 'Professor' named von Frobel for an organization called Mad Science. There, he teaches science to children and does all kinds of exciting stuff with explosions and smoke! He also does promotional shows for Mad Science.

Victor has been LEFO building all his life. His mom thought it was the perfect toy to play with. He recognized some sets from the '70s he had, but doesn't recall where they went. At the age of 14, he entered his Dark Age and stopped building when he started dealing with adolescent matters.

He returned to building when he turned 45 and started to buy and build some Star Wars sets and immediately remembered the fun of building. A lot of stuff



was happening in his personal life and Victor found out that building set his mind at ease and was therapeutic.

In terms of favorite themes, Victor has no specific LEGO theme. If he had to choose, it would be Star Wars, but the funny thing is that he hasn't built much from Star Wars in his creations. There has been an idea of building something awesome for years, but it hasn't worked out yet. He also has some Lord of the Rings sets, but he rarely does sets because he likes to build his own creations.

Victor started building his own models after seeing the most amazing things other people were building online. One day, he started collecting LEGO parts and at a certain point, it became quite a number of parts. He just started building. At the beginning, building is a process: he couldn't really do anything wrong, and he learned a lot from it.



An overhead view of the lounge.

The inspiration for this build was to create a large lounge room with impressive windows and a good looking fireplace. For Victor, this is how a project begins: a vague idea and then researching online for pictures and photos of things in real life. From these references, he takes out elements and starts building.

Building a model takes a few weeks for Victor. For him, it's a process of building a few days a week and then spending time to gain some new ideas. His average build time is 3 weeks, but he doesn't know in advance how long or how big his final model will be.

Another view showing the fireplace.



For Victor, building a floor can take him a day. He can focus on the floor that day. Adding furniture is another task that takes one or two focused days. There is some planning based on the day - he wakes up thinking about making a wall in his building. Sometimes he has collected online examples or ideas for the wall, and he just starts building. If he doesn't finish that day, he continues and comes up with new solutions while building. He always takes the time to build and complete each task. This lets him end a task on a positive note so he can start fresh with another task on his model.

One of the hardest models that Victor has built was of a dragon that laid on a pile of gold. The model was set underground with a cave that led from the forest above. The challenges he had then were mainly the number of parts and the size of the structure. Because he didn't know how to solve some things but he didn't want to give up, he left the model alone for a few months. He finally picked up building again and completed the model. Now with much more experience, Victor could easily solve these difficulties he had.

LEGO building for Victor is his life. Not only building MOCs, but also professionally for his company where he often builds with children at schools. It has come to the point that sometimes he is somewhere and looks at something and immediately sees it in LEGO bricks. He is already building it in his mind and he always hope that he will remember it and quickly convert it into a model.

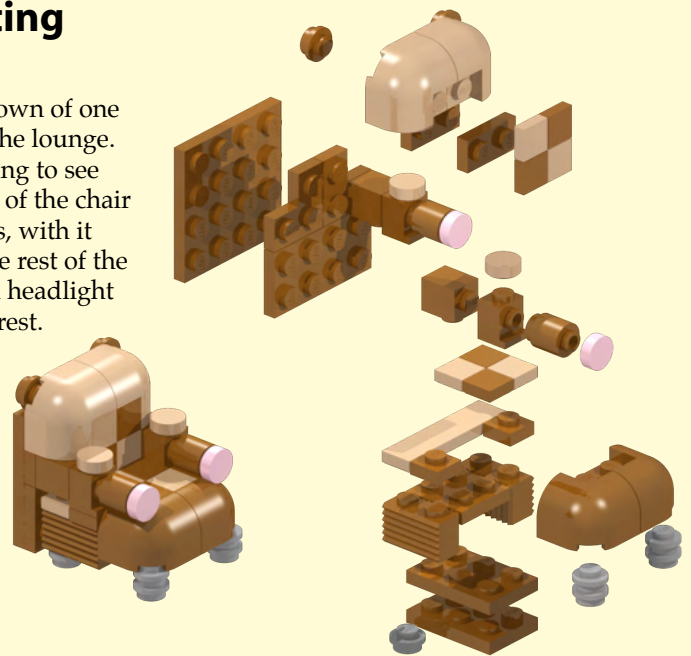
More details of the lounge.



Building furniture and fireplace.

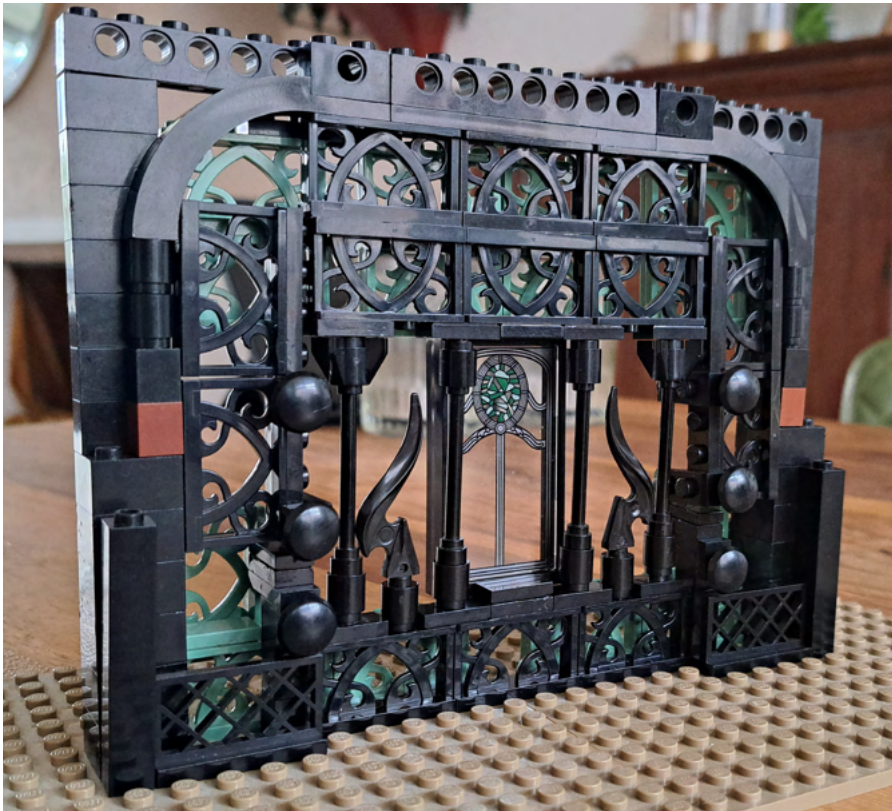
Constructing a Chair

Here's a breakdown of one of the chairs in the lounge. What is interesting to see is how the back of the chair is built sideways, with it connecting to the rest of the chair by use of a headlight brick in the armrest.



Victor's dragon den layout.






The main window in progress.

It's also about coming up with things Victor hasn't seen before or improving things and sharing it with others. The real fun is hearing this from his social media followers and viewers and respond positively. It remains a challenge to him to surprise people with how simple or how fun it is to make something (with sometimes very few LEGO pieces) that no one has thought of. Imagining something and seeing it grow under his hands and sometimes surprising himself remains the most fun and always puts him in the right state of mind. Hopefully, he inspires others with his work.

Future projects include making small builds with some nice minifigure scenes to make into postcards. And Victor is still thinking of a big build, maybe something with Star Wars!

His advice for builders: Just start and gain experience building and become familiar with the many LEGO elements that are available. Build up a stock of parts so you never get stuck, above all, experience how good it is for your mental well-being to create something and be proud of. 

Window Dressing

Here's a breakdown of the main window. The black fence pieces are used right-side-up and upside down - the row of fences above the rocket fins are upside down. The rocket fins allow this to happen as they can be placed on the antenna pieces inversely as well as the 1 x 1 round bricks.

The parts used to make the round sections are train bumpers from LEGO train sets.

