

Barrington teen's Lego creations on display at Brickworld Chicago



Luke Horwath, a Barrington teen who builds Lego creations, displays a few of his handmade creatures. *(Brian Hill / Staff Photographer)*

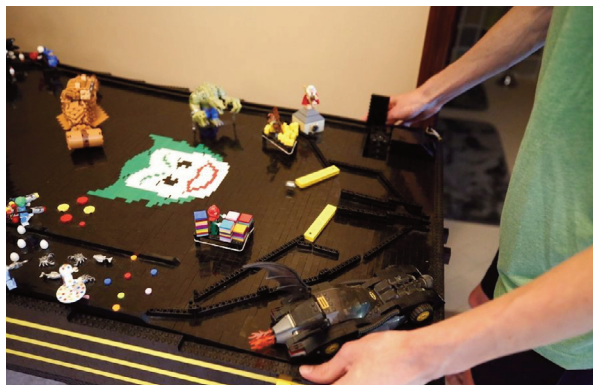
By Eileen O. Daday
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At the wise old age of 16, Luke Horwath of Barrington is a veteran designer whose "builds" have attracted more than 900,000 views on his YouTube channel and more than 3,000 subscribers.

His medium? Lego bricks, and lots of them.

At this weekend's Brickworld Chicago, opening Saturday, June 15, at the Schaumburg Convention Center, Luke will be one of the exhibitors. Among his creations will be a full-size, working pinball machine made from more than 7,000 Legos.

"Of all the shows I've been involved with, I've not seen a working pinball machine," says Mark Larson, Brickworld marketing director. "That's pretty amazing."



Luke also plans to bring his newest creation, a claw machine, typically found in an arcade that retrieves stuffed animals. It has a control console that Luke used Lego software to code and build.



"There are always a number of arcade machines that fans can play with during the show," Larson adds, "but I've never seen a claw machine either."

Patrons at the show will also see a skate park Luke designed, with all of its different elements, as well as nearly 30 action figures.

Luke figures he started designing the movable superheroes and villains back in sixth grade. That was the first time he mixed sculpting with clay and painting into his elaborate Lego designs.

"Building with Legos is such a creative outlet for me," says Luke, who just wrapped up his sophomore year at Barrington High School. "I'm limited only by my imagination, which I think is really fun."

He is among a growing number of Lego enthusiasts who are increasingly becoming involved in robotics, Larson says.

Consequently, spectators should look for a lot of robots at the show, including ones that can jump, pull, lift and fight.

This will be Luke's third time exhibiting at Brickworld. Last year, he brought a 36-square-foot city, complete with buildings, vehicles and different settings, that took up an entire room in his house. The skate park he will be displaying this year was just one vignette in last year's city.

At the Lego exposition, Luke will be among hundreds of enthusiasts whose creations will spread out across 100,000 square feet of the convention space.

"This is one of the earliest established shows, so it has built up quite a reputation," Larson says. "We have displayers coming from across the country and from Australia and Norway just to be in this show."

Patrons will not only be able to see all of these creative builds, but they can take part in interactive activities, such as the Lego and Duplo play brick areas, as well as see fighting robots and watch how a great ball contraption works.

One mainstay in the show is the gigantic train city displayed every year by members of the Northern Illinois Lego Train Club.

Luke says he loves being around other hobbyists, and enjoys talking shop with these designers.

"Brickworld is my single biggest inspiration," Luke says. "I love showing my builds to people. It's really fun to tell them about the building process."

Of course, designing with Lego bricks is more than just child's play. Luke's evolution from working with Lego sets to designing custom-made machines has him thinking about how these skills might be transferable in the future.

"I love the whole process of creating, designing and building something," he says, "so, down the line, I'm thinking about engineering."

