



## Modular castle

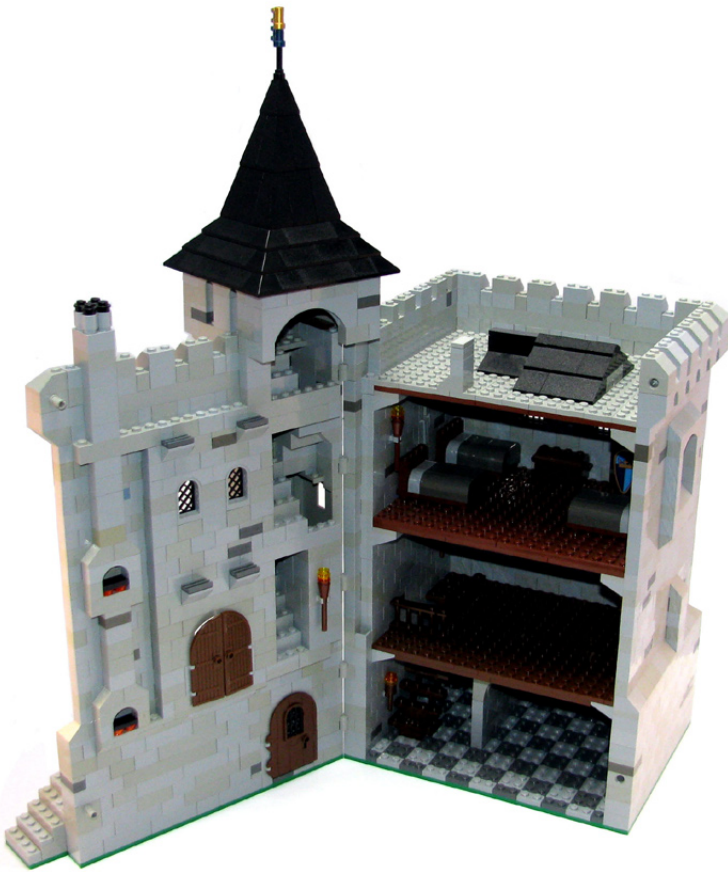
*By Legotron*

One of my favourite elements of LEGO® is everything related to castles and medieval constructions. I have always had in my mind the idea of building my own castles, scenes and cities depicting medieval life.

The first time I saw a castle built with LEGO® bricks was the set 375 Yellow Castle. I was very impressed with it. It was a very expensive set that I couldn't buy, so every time I went to the market place I stood in front of the shop to see every detail of that incredible castle. After passing my "dark age" I started to build new constructions with LEGO® bricks. One of the first things I wanted to do was to build a castle. Fortunately I was able to buy a used set 6074 Black Falcon's Fortress, which I built countless times. Then I began to ponder the idea of building my own castle. The idea was to make a castle that could be gradually expanded, by adding new sections of walls, towers and other elements. Back in 2006 I started to work on the design of my castle. It was going to be a castle consisting of many interchangeable modules.

### **The idea.**

I took the idea for the design of my modular castle from one of my father's magazines of train models. That castle consisted of a big square tower, with the typical aspect of the medieval fortresses located in Central Europe, all surrounded by a wall with many smaller towers. I wanted to build a tower big enough to be the most important and prominent element of the castle. Then I should have to make many modules of the walls and towers to surround that main tower. All the elements around the tower should be of modular design and compatible with each other in order to be able to have countless different designs of the castle. I decided to make all the elements of the wall with a length of 3 studs or multiple of 3 studs, thus I could have all the castle wall elements with even and odd length. This was very important to ensure that I wouldn't have any problems when I wanted to attach new elements to my castle, like entrance doors, towers or other buildings of different lengths. I usually have a tendency towards standardization, to ease the construction and search for parts, and modularity, to be able to store the whole project in a small place, so this kind



of idea is fine to me and there was no problem to apply it to this new project to build a castle.

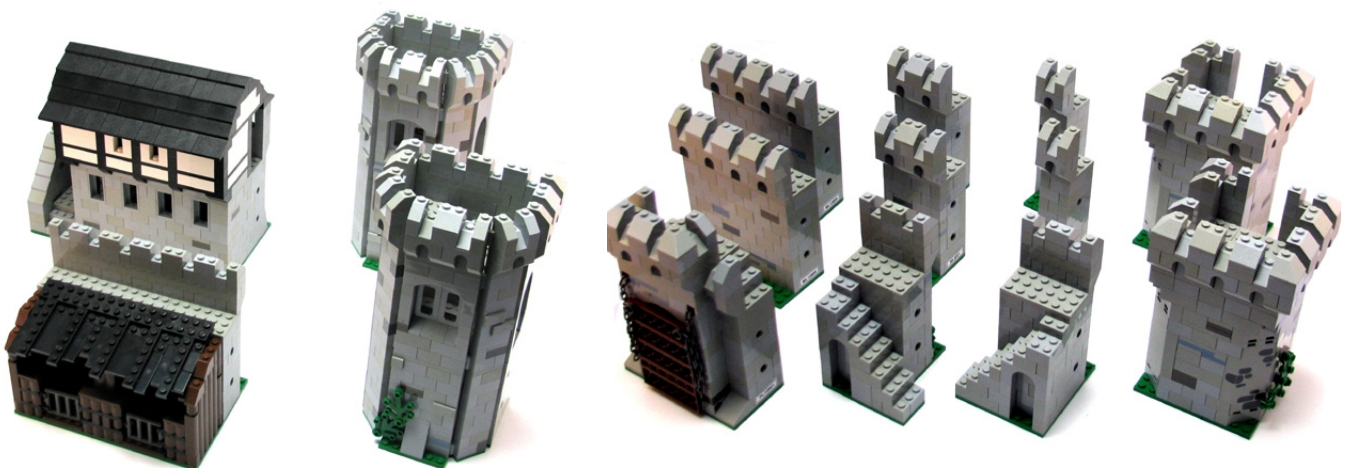
## The design.

I began the design of the castle with the main tower. I looked at some pictures of other castles made with LEGO® bricks, and I realized that it was a nice thing to make interior details. This feature would make the design more complex, in order to grant access to the interior of the tower, but the final result would be worth it. I was buying bricks for several months to have an adequate stock in order to prepare the building of the main tower. Meanwhile I started to plan the design for the tower. The first designs were based on a system of floors, one over the

other but they were all but satisfactory. Another idea was to make one mobile wall, attached with hinges so that it could be opened to access to the interior. I tried many different designs to get one that was nice. The main tower was a very important part of the project, as it was the main feature of the castle. In my opinion it is very important to define some elements to focus the work when you start a big LEGO® project. If you try to finish all the project in one session, and you fail due to minor details you will stop the entire project. But, if you have some elements to design that don't go ahead and others in which you are successful, you will be able to continue in those things and to resume the stopped designs some time later. It is very important to be motivated when faced with a major project. So I also began to design the walls and towers of the castle. I wanted the walls to be very thick, in order to put minifigs in the top of the walls and look realistic, so that the top of the wall had to be as thick as the bottom part. The castle sets from LEGO® have walls that are only one stud thick, and the top parts are 3 or 4 studs thick. So my designs of walls had to be 4 studs thick. I also wanted to have the proper stairs to climb to the top of the walls. Those were the first modules with a finished design. I didn't want to have very complex modules so I discarded rounded elements or curved walls, but I would try to get as many different elements as possible to build a nice castle.

## The building process.

I had decided to use a large amount of 1x2 bricks for the construction of the castle in order to obtain a stone built appearance. In the same way as the design the building process, I began with the main tower. The first floor was the basement of the tower with the dungeon. Three of the walls were fixed while the front wall was attached to the body of the tower with hinges. More hinges were added to that mobile wall as the tower increase in height. At the beginning I focused my work on the structure of the castle, and I left the interior details for later. As the main tower was rising I began to build some wall modules of 6 and 12 studs long. When I finished a floor of the main tower I relaxed a little by building some wall elements, that was fine as the work in the tower was very slow. When I finished all the floors of the tower I began to make the towers of the wall in order to have some corners. These towers were slightly higher than the wall, and had 7



sides. They were attached to 2 wall elements with 90 degree orientation, to get the corners of the external wall.

After several months of construction the famous grey colour changing came and I had to stop the project, as the price of the old grey pieces began to rise considerably. I was not sure whether to continue with the old colour or to start with the new one. So I decided to use the available parts to finish the current modules, and I finished the main gate part, but then I realized that the height of the wall was too low, and the gate was very ugly. After one year I was almost finished, I had almost completed the main tower and I had built enough elements to close a little perimeter of walls around the tower. At that point I decided to resolve the problem of the colour of the bricks. I used a mix of both colours, with a little quantity of other colours to make a mottled appearance. The result was very nice, but I had to take everything apart to apply the mix of colours. I carried the castle to some AFOL events and I put some pictures on Internet. There were some people complaining about the main gate element. Yes, it was everything but nice, so I had to change it. I realized the problem was the height of the wall, too low to have that door. I had to take it apart again, but I had to decide which was the height I had to increase in the walls. I wanted to add 4 bricks height to the wall modules. But the boxes I store the modules of the castle in, allowed only to add 2 additional bricks. So 2 bricks was the height increase. When I rebuilt all the modules I changed the colour ratio so I used more light bluish grey bricks and less of light grey colour. This meant that I didn't have to buy new bricks of the expensive old colour to convert all the modules. Finally this was the design I used to build all the modules of the castle. The new gate design was better than before and I continued building new modules till I ran out of parts.

For several years I halted the castle project in order to focus on other projects, and I started to populate the castle with minifigs and medieval houses. I made some minor efforts to complete the interior of the main tower. The Fantasy Era sets were very nice for this task, as I got many troops and peasants for the castle, with the colours and decorative elements of the Royal Crown faction, so I decided to convert the castle to Royal Crown. In 2009 the project was resumed and I began the construction of new elements of the castle, such as the defence towers of the wall of the main gate. The new set 10193 Medieval Market Village was a milestone in the castle project, as it was used to complete the village when I bought it. So in 2010 I made my first full diorama of a medieval city [1]. This was a great boost for the castle and I decided to add a new element, the barracks of the guard. I had many elements for the castle, so I stopped adding new elements.

## Future developments.

One of the remaining tasks in the castle is to finish the decoration of the interiors of all its rooms. The new Kingdoms sets are very interesting for this purpose, as they have a lot of furniture and decorative items.

The current structure of the castle is completely square and full of straight elements, so some of the ideas for the future are to provide the castle with some rounded towers and curved wall modules, as well as elements of different heights. Furthermore, by adding new buildings I want to give a more realistic look to the castle. I also want to increase the size of the internal parade ground, in order to recreate the famous jousting scenes in the interior of the castle, much like the fantastic set 10223 Joust Kingdoms.

References:

[1] Gallery with pictures of the medieval display of 2010 with the castle: <http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=447186>

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**Panzerbricks**

