



Interviews

Interview: Robenanne - The Old Fishing Store

By HispaBrick Magazine®

Images by Robenanne and LEGO® System A/S



HispaBrick Magazine®: First of all, tell us a little bit about yourself.

Robenanne: My name is Robert (aka Robenanne). I am 51 years young and live in in the city of Almere in the Netherlands. I work as an architectural draftsman. My hobbies are fishing, photography, and designing with LEGO®.

HBM: When did you start playing with LEGO®?

R: I have been building and playing with LEGO® for many years. When I was young I loved to play with LEGO® bricks, and I remember that my first set was the 336 Firetruck [1] (pcs: 77 1968-1970). After having my two sons my interest rekindled and we enjoyed playing together with LEGO®.

HBM: What is/are your favourite theme(s)?

R: I don't have a specific theme. I like, for example, the big sets such as the Sopwith Camel, Red Baron, VW camper, Mini Cooper, Emerald Night train and the Star Wars Millennium Falcons. Also, I collect the Star Wars microfighters and the Batman minifigures. My favorite LEGO® Ideas sets are the Caterham Seven 620R and Wall•E.

HBM: What inspired you to create the Old Fishing Store?

R: I got my inspiration from the HO train model houses, the LEGO® Christmas houses and sea villages. My interest in fishing and my job as an architectural draftsman also provided a lot of inspiration and an eye for detail to create this kind of fishing village theme building project.

HBM: What made you decide to put your project on LEGO® Ideas?

R: After designing some small projects, I submitted them to Digital Designer Gallery [2] because I was not sure about my models. So after some great comments and some different LEGO® MOC sites, I decided to submit some of my projects. I have known about the LEGO® Ideas site for a while and submitted two designs in 2014: the Old Fishing Store and the Boat Repair Shop. But they were both declined, because the images I had made looked like box art. After about a year, around Christmas time, I decided to submit the Old Fishing Store again.



Boat Repair Shop

HBM: Do you have any other projects on LEGO® Ideas? How are they doing?

R: When the Old Fishing Store was submitted and gained a lot of interest from the LEGO® Ideas members, I guess my confidence grew. So I submitted the Boat Repair Shop which also got a lot of support from the LEGO® Ideas members and fans. I got a lot of questions about building projects, whether this would be a complete village, and comments saying it would be a great new LEGO® theme and so on.



Sea Front Village

I have 12 buildings that make up the Sea Front Village and I have submitted five projects. At the moment I am also working on a new theme, let's call it Caribbean projects. The first one is the Creole Inn, which can be seen on my own website: www.ramt-brick-design.com

HBM: The images of your projects look very real. How did you get this excellent quality?

R: I tried different kinds of LEGO® designing software. After designing my first project, the Ice House factory, the software that I used gave a poor quality screenshot, so I had to look for an alternative rendering program. It was a challenge to find the right program that could read and import my files.

The rendering software that I use (LDD Converter and POV-Ray) give me a lot of control over the lighting and color channels, which gives it an excellent realistic quality.



Robenanne with the digital model of the Old Fishing Store

HBM: What impact do you think having high quality digital images has on a project? Do you think physical images have a (dis) advantage?

R: There is a difference between digitally and physically designing projects. If you create big projects, you need a lot of bricks and in the right color. This could be very costly. But there's fun in building your creations physically. Some designers have an area with special lighting or a mini photo studio for taking their model pictures. After taking a lot of digital pictures, you can edit if needed and pick the best ones to submit.

With digital designing you have all the blocks and colors you want to use. But to get the right images you need the right software. It is important that your digital camera is set to the right view for your model. The lighting is also important; there are a lot of settings depending on which software you are using. But this can be a very time consuming venture. So in my opinion there are advantages to both methods. It depends on which quality you are happy with.

HBM: Can you tell us a little about the design process of your projects? (Do you make a physical model before you build digitally? Do you check the digital model against some kind of physical construction...?)

R: I usually start by gathering information about the design that I want to build. This can be very helpful for details and gives you some information about the history of the building. Or you can design something fictional and then look at architectural building sites or whatever else is your source for inspiration. There are other ways to gather information, such as libraries, different internet sites, or even pictures you have taken on vacation.

Start by studying the information before making the sketches on LEGO® graph paper. Try to make many sketches from different angles. If you are pleased with the results you can then add details. I like to place them on different elevations. My first drawing sketches are done without any scale.

After completing my sketches, I will draw the floor plans and elevations to scale with help from a LEGO® scale converter on A4 or larger size paper. When the drawings are complete, I like to determine what color scheme to use on the model after choosing the best general color.

Once the drawings are complete we are going digital. I like to work with LDD (LEGO® Digital Designer). It's a very straight-up software package that is very easy to master: click and play. So after I transfer my sketches to LDD, I can start tweaking or adding and change color scheme. After the model is done, I start placing the details like animals, mini figures, barrels, bushes, scrubs, tools, etc.

HBM: What does it take to create and push a successful project on LEGO® Ideas?

R: I think imagination and creativity will help to create a project. It's hard to find something new and innovative. But if you make a creation that you have a good feeling about, you should submit it to LEGO® Ideas. Then start promoting your project on different LEGO® MOC sites. The whole process is part of the fun, whether your project makes it or not.

HBM: The Old Fishing Store has been approved and the Boat Repair Shop is being reviewed. What has the experience been like for you so far?

R: The Old Fishing Store gained a lot of attention and supporters at a fast pace. This was an experience on its own. I was very pleased with the comments I got and I tried to answer each and every one. After it got approved, another experience started with LEGO® Ideas Billund and their team. And before I knew it the Boat Repair Shop also made 10k supporters. People asked how it felt when I saw it had made the 10k, but I don't know as it happened overnight. But as you can imagine I was very pleased. So far it's been an enjoyable experience.

HBM: Do you think the Boat Repair Shop has less chance of becoming an official LEGO® Ideas set because The Old Fishing Store has been approved?

R: That is a hard question. I guess so, but I can't complain as I have a set that is being developed by LEGO®. But I won't mind if the Boat Repair Shop joins the first model that I submitted.

HBM: It is unlikely that all of your projects will end up becoming LEGO® Ideas sets. Do you plan on releasing (selling) building instructions for the projects that gather a lot of support but don't become official LEGO® sets?

R: I don't think all my submitted LEGO® Ideas sets will become official LEGO® sets, but I don't mind. After you submit a model, there are some rules that you have to follow. So with that in mind, I can't release any building instructions as yet. But I am looking forward to finding the right building instruction creator to release some of my other Sea Village projects.

HBM: Do you have any physical MOCs? Do you display them at any events?

R: I have made parts of all of my creations to try out the construction and stability. The Old Fishing Store was very close to being finished, but then an accident happened (my cat ran over it). Shortly after, I started collecting parts all over the world to get the Boat Repair Shop physically built. I don't go to events, so it's standing proudly in my LEGO® room.

[1] <http://brickset.com/sets/336-1/Fire-Engine>

[2] <http://idd.us.LEGO.com/en-us/gallery>

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Old Fishing Store digital image