

Designing Star Wars™ Models

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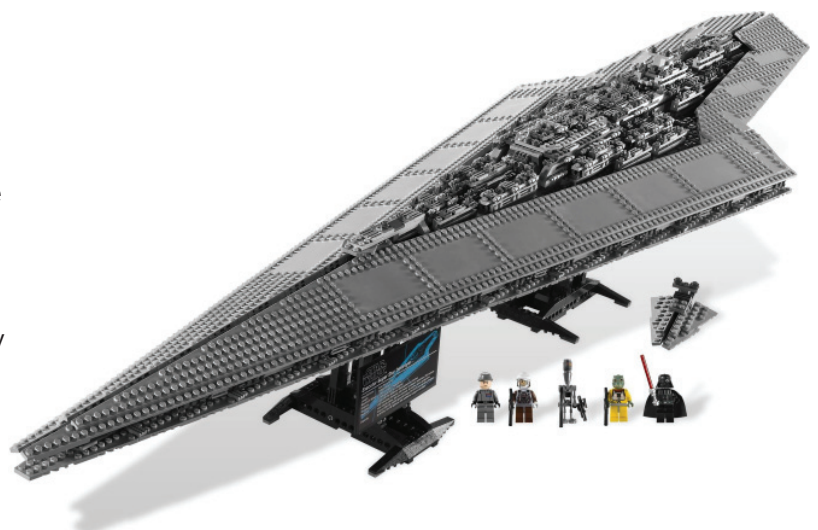
Hardly any 'external' LEGO® theme has been as popular as Star Wars – and its popularity seems to just keep going strong. It has undoubtedly been helped by the official models' meticulous attention to detail visible in the movies, their funny minifigs, and perhaps most of all by the designs capturing that elusive Star Wars aesthetic and touch.

Building something from the existing Star Wars universe does not differ greatly from modelling anything else from basic blueprints, photos or plans. However, those who have attempted to build their own Star Wars creations have certainly faced the challenge of designing not just any science fiction model, but rather one which is distinctively Star Wars-flavoured. To explain what this means, let's go through a couple of official sets and movie concepts, and try to establish some common Star Wars design guidelines.

General ideas

Considering architecture and vehicles - particularly spaceships - sci-fi fans often jokingly say there are just two possibilities: fancy and beautiful at the expense of common sense, and functional at the expense of becoming boring. Star Wars does not distinctively belong to either of those, though it is perhaps closer to the former approach. Or even more precisely, on the large scale it tends to the aesthetic side, while on the detail level it leans towards functionalism.

What does this mean? When viewed from afar, nearly everything in Star Wars is aesthetically pleasing. Few right angles or, even worse, boxy designs. The architecture is based on lots of symmetry, parallel lines, pyramids, slender towers and carefully chosen angles, even when belonging to the antagonists. Likewise, spaceships are often elongated and aerodynamic, featuring large and carefully crafted curves, and always seem to have very powerful propulsion in relation to their overall size. Yet their overall contours remain very simple and pleasing to the eye.



As easily seen in the Star Destroyer, a combination of long, symmetrical lines of the overall model and tiny details within them is a signature of Star Wars

However, when getting down to the level of individual details, Star Wars is almost always bloated with technology. With the exception of a few magnificent exceptions, buildings have lots of ducts, intertwining corridors, openings, antennas, shiny controls, devices roughly mounted on the walls, connectors, and similar fiddly details. Spaceships are even more extreme in that regard:

when their elegant bodies are magnified, they are full of irregular metallic patterns, ducts, mounted devices, pipes, and even remains of rough repair work.



The Sandcrawler is a typical example of using various shades of the overall color to give the impression of wear, rust, etc.

Therefore, should you want to recreate a true Star Wars-flavoured model, perhaps begin with a simple sketch of only a few main lines, probably symmetric, while avoiding right angles as much as possible. This can serve as a basic foundation for the overall design. However, when it gets completed, cover it with lots of small technical parts and patterns, trying not to make it too regular. Do not stray away from the technical stuff, because the art as such is nearly non-existent in the Star Wars world.

Colour schemes

The other important aspect of Star Wars design are its colour palettes. They vary somewhat depending on the faction and time period, but the general approach does not change that much: plenty of grey and heavily washed-out colours do the trick. Antagonists' architecture, particularly the Empire, tends more towards bluish tones (dark bluish gray parts being

perfect) with a good share of black. Smaller details often tend to cooler colours, although the Galactic Empire logo is actually often red.

The Rebel Alliance's craft usually appear in lighter shades of gray, and can handle a slightly larger share of saturated colours, as long as they seem to be independent components like wings, missiles, lasers, etc. But the overall grey scheme, sometimes with details in slightly different grey shades to give impression of age and having been exposed to plenty of heavy use, remains the primary aim.

In addition, Star Wars loves small translucent or backlit details. Craft weapons and blinking wall controls are the most common examples, but actually nearly everything features an abundance of small lights. This may not be as easy to reproduce in LEGO, yet even a few lights should give a craft that Star Warsy look. Note, however, that such lights in buildings are not used for general illumination. To the contrary, the main theme of Star Wars interiors is, more often than not, darkness.



The Millennium Falcon combines many Star Wars design concepts: plenty of detail, tendency towards grey, and carefully crafted main contours of the model

LEGO® Star Wars design in a nutshell

- On the large scale, Star Wars generally tries to be aesthetic – craft somewhat aerodynamic and handsome rather than sensible, and the buildings sturdy and strong. Avoid right angles in all cases.
- At the detail level, there are nearly always many minute patterns, irregular and very techy, spread around all surfaces.
- Star Wars relies mostly on monochrome colours, with some faded colours for details. Vivid colours are used rarely, for faction logos, labels and controls.
- Craft often have patches of varying colours as a result of impromptu repairs, erosion, hard usage, etc.
- The main theme of Star Wars interiors is darkness, with lights used for effect rather than for illumination itself.



Colors are occasionally used, but rather spread discreetly around, rather than as main fuselage color