

Great creators of the world: Mariann Asanuma

by HispaBrick Magazine®

pictures by Mariann Asanuma

Mariann Asanuma became the world's first female freelance LEGO® Artist and LEGO® instruction author in early 2007. The first book – How to Build a Round Ball with Square Bricks! – shows readers the techniques and theory of how a Master Model Designer creates a LEGO® ball. Her second book – Beyond the Ball – shows how to add color and design to your LEGO® creations.

Through her series of books, 'Building Secrets from the Masters', Mariann hopes to teach the reader a new way of thinking about LEGO® model-building and design. She understands all aspects of LEGO® building and design and would like to impart that knowledge to the next generation.

HispaBrick Magazine®: Name?

Mariann Asanuma.

HBM: Age?

MA: 41.

HBM: Nationality?

MA: American.

HBM: When did you first start building with LEGO®?

MA: In 1983.

HBM: When did you start posting your models online?

MA: I think in 2005 on Brickshelf.

HBM: What is the last set you have purchased?

MA: Some LEGO® Movie 2 polybags.



HBM: What is your favorite commercial LEGO® building theme?

MA: Forestmen.

HBM: What is your favorite theme for building?

MA: That's tricky, as I have several favorites – mosaics, Miniland-scale, Architecture...



HBM: If you had to choose just one from among all your creations, which would you choose and why?

MA: My MGM Miniland Lion which is on display at LEGOLAND California.

HBM: What is the largest creation you've made?

MA: Also a tricky one – my largest building is the Cathedral of the Madeleine, my largest sculpture of a person is the flute-playing Pirate at LEGOLAND California, my largest insect is a 4-foot ladybug also at LEGOLAND California, and my largest mosaic is a 5-foot-square Google Chrome logo.



HBM: What is your favorite LEGO® element and why?

MA: The cheese slope, as it has so many uses and has changed mosaic building forever.

HBM: Which part would you like LEGO® to produce?

MA: An inverted cheese slope and a corner cheese slope.

HBM: How many hours do you spend building with LEGO®?

MA: I'm not really sure. It depends on whether I have a commission or not, and can be from 40 to 80+ hours a week.

HBM: What do your family and friends think about this hobby?

MA: They support me, and usually think my job is cool.

HBM: Do you draw or use predesigns before you start building?

MA: Sometimes. I like to use brick paper – LEGO® graph paper. It helps, especially with my portrait mosaics. I also use Photoshop and Illustrator to help figure out the design.

HBM: What do you think about the use of non-official parts (stickers, modified parts, non-LEGO® elements, etc.)?

MA: I use them where needed. I stopped worrying about official versus unofficial due to working at LEGOLAND California as a Master Model Builder. I always try to find a way to do it in all LEGO®, but if I need to modify or add other materials to my build to make it look the best it can be, I'll do that.



HBM: What inspires you to create your layouts and MOCs?

MA: Whatever takes my fancy, or if someone asks me to build something. I've done some very interesting builds over the years because I build professionally.

HBM: What plans do you have for future builds?

MA: Well, there's a lot of 'dream' builds that I have a running list of – usually it depends on time and whether I have enough available space to actually build them.

HBM: So far, you are the author of the Model Building Secrets Books, 'How to Build a Round Ball with Square Bricks!' and 'Beyond the Ball'. Can you tell us where fans can find these books?

MA: You can find them either on my website (www.modelbuildingsecrets.com) or at www.foldedfancy.com. At the moment they are only available as E-books.



HBM: How do you see the evolution of the FFOL (Female Fan of LEGO®) phenomenon over the last couple of years?

MA: It has been growing. Women are starting to realize that LEGO® is a fun hobby; a lot of the time it had been thought of more as a 'boy's toy'. The Friends line as well as the Modulars and other larger builds have drawn women in too. There's some like me who never stopped, never had a dark age, but finding people, especially women like that are rare.

I was more into Castle and City when I was younger, and I'd consider myself more of a tomboy growing up. But if I'd had the Friends or Modulars I would have loved those too. It helps that LEGO® has so many more colors than when I was a kid. I remember when there were only six colors that LEGO® was made in. Now there are dozens and dozens of colors. There's also so many more hundreds of elements that didn't exist when I was younger. All the new colors and elements add so much depth and variety in what is possible now compared to even ten years ago.

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