



# CRUSADERS CASTLE

Interview with Juan Ruiz Tablada by Rafa Muriel

I still remember that exhibition organized by Antonio (aka Legotron) in Mungía where he told us that he had been at an event days ago in Asturian lands organized by the LUG Asturbrick. There he had met an AFOL named Juan who had an impressive castle full of details. "He told me that he will come to pay us a visit at our expo if he can," said Antonio. And indeed, there he came and we spent a long time talking about constructions, parts, purchases... just like all AFOLS gathered in their sauce of bricks.

Commenting on what articles could be made for this medieval issue, José proposed this interview in a very successful way, so in this article we wanted to show you his castle—which, by the way, was 2021 MOC of the year in the HispaLUG community. We hope you enjoy it as much as we did.

**HBM:** Hi Juan, tell us something about yourself.

**JRT:** Hi! In the networks I make myself known as Blackfalcon81, I am 40 years old, born in Segovia, but Asturian by adoption!

**HBM:** How did you start in this LEGO thing?

**JRT:** My first LEGO set was 3654 from Fabuland (Lisa Lamb's House, 1982), a gift from my uncles when I was 3 years old. From that moment on, LEGO sets became my favorite birthday and Christmas gifts: medieval, space, pirates... what great memories!

**HBM:** I guess you would have had your "dark ages" like almost all AFOLs, right? Or are you one of those lucky ones who never stopped enjoying bricks since their earliest childhood?





**JRT:** Hehe, I had my “dark ages” when it comes to building, but I was always aware of what LEGO was doing and I bought some small Star Wars sets to stay in shape, LOL.

**HBM:** I know for a fact that you have an excellent stock in light grey, dark grey, and green. . . Very medieval I would say. Not to mention some very beautiful armies. Apart from medieval, do you also build in any other themes?

**JRT:** Gray is my downfall, because in addition to being valid for castles, it is also valid for Star Wars, another of the themes in which I build.

Medieval is my weakness, that’s how it is, but to be honest I really want to make a pirate creation. . . with a good ocean built from

thousands of trans blue tiles. . . I get excited just thinking about it.

**HBM:** Speaking of themes, what are your favorite official themes, and why?

**JRT:** LEGO Star Wars for the minifigures and LEGO Ideas for the techniques, since they are aesthetically very successful sets. LEGO, if you read this, then #bringbacklegocastle

**HBM:** You like MOCs built at minifig scale and although you are not very fond of instruction books, you have some constructions built based on them, especially from Star Wars. What does construction give you without a manual in front of you?

**JRT:** This is going to sound weird, but I build

very little with manuals, and when I do, I almost always want to modify things, extend it. . . so building without instructions allows me to do what I want, with only the limitations of available ABS—although the same thing happens to me with instructions as without them, I always want to modify things. . . What is this disorder called? :)

**HBM:** With construction in general, what do you prefer? Quality, quantity, or both?

**JRT:** For me, without a doubt, both. Although, for a single constructor, making a MOC of more than 12 base plates, although it is possible, causes many details to be lost. Or you do not reach the degree of detail that you would like in all the parts.

**HBM:** If you had to choose just one part, what would it be and why?

**JRT:** Aesthetically I love tiles, but without hesitation the chosen part would be a 1x2 plate since with several you can replicate practically any brick, even with three we already have a 1x2 brick. . . and so on ad infinitum.

**HBM:** What do you think of the extensive catalog of parts that fans have today? Do you think it is a success to add new parts year after year, or do you consider yourself a bit of a purist lover of the classic inventory?

**JRT:** For me it is a success, since it allows construction to evolve more and more, and the possibilities are infinite. I only wish that when LEGO produces new molds, it would not be limited to only using the colors of the set where that new part is included.

**HBM:** Focusing on your medieval diorama, what led you to make this beautiful castle with that level of detail?

**JRT:** As a good Segovian I grew up seeing the Alcázar. This, added to the memory of my LEGO castles and finding out how loose parts could be bought, were the three key ingredients for starting this project.

**HBM:** How much time have you dedicated to it? And do you plan to update it in the future?

**JRT:** It’s hard to calculate, because this is the





third version, and each one took me about two months. In addition to modifying the castle, I build a new exterior diorama after every two exhibitions (more or less) to avoid repetition.

What follows will not be an update, it will be a reboot. Until now I was reusing parts, walls, towers, etc. The next castle is going to be similar only in colors, which is all I can say at this point.

**HBM:** Have you rebuilt some parts? If so, why?

**JRT:** I'm never satisfied, as I was saying: raise the rock that supports the castle, improve the interiors somewhat, expand it...

**HBM:** What do you base your models on? Do you do research to give more realism to the construction?

**JRT:** For this castle, the build was based on a real Templar castle (I have the photos but I don't remember the name), where you have to go around the side of a mountain to enter and the entrance door is located in the back. I do not use historical documentation, except for basic knowledge of the moat, drawbridge, towers, walls, etc.

**HBM:** What have you enjoyed the most in this build?

**JRT:** Above all, to be able to see little by little how I managed to do what I had in mind and of







course to see the result of so much effort—it's a great feeling!

**HBM:** Which part of the medieval diorama are you most satisfied with?

**JRT:** What I like the most is the keep and the building with a roof.

**HBM:** You are a builder who gives importance to both content and presentation. A good example is this castle. . . by the way, I haven't asked you, does this diorama have a name or title?

**JRT:** Crusaders Castle (I just made that up :)). Then I'll do the Black Falcons castle next which will be mostly old Light Grey.

**HBM:** We know you are familiar with the MILS system. Do you build MOCs in MILS?

**JRT:** Yes, I have adapted the MILS system to my needs. I put my armies in MILS bases to keep them well organized. Starting from the same approach, I am currently making modules of 64x64 studs, because they are just as versatile but allow me to transport them better (whereas before I would have to put together 4 modules of 32x32).

**HBM:** What benefits do you think the system has for your constructions?

**JRT:** Being able to collaborate with other builders, and in my case being able to transport





them, since it is much more stable than building on a baseplate. Also all the advantages it has when making reliefs and playing with bricks built high on the baseplate.

**HBM:** You have also revealed yourself as a great lover of classic Transformers robots. Transformers, LEGO... the formula can be easy to come up with but difficult to solve, we know you're working on it. We will be very attentive to the result that is already promising according to what has been seen. We thank you very much for your time and the dedication you have put into this space since you have had to rebuild the entire base of the castle for the images in this article, as well as some additions that will be enjoyable for all to see.

**JRT:** Well, first of all, I would like to thank the entire HispaBrick Magazine team for this great opportunity to share what I do and who I am with other LEGO fans. For me it is a dream, and although I am far from the greatest creator, I strive every day to learn more techniques and improve my MOCs little by little. You can follow my creations (not only medieval) on my instagram @blackfalcon81.

Thanks to Muriel for his efforts and Javier @f2studio for the photos, Alex @lexdreamphoto for the battlefield photo and @eowyn\_afol for the vintage photo.

