



Mattia Zamboni and his book.

TINY LEGO WONDERS

BUILD 40 SURPRISINGLY REALISTIC MINI-MODELS!



MATTIA ZAMBONI



Tiny LEGO Wonders: A Discussion with Mattia Zamboni

Here at *BrickJournal* we've always had a soft spot for micro-scale LEGO building, so when we heard that Mattia Zamboni and our friends at No Starch Press were releasing the book *Tiny LEGO Wonders* we jumped at the chance to obtain a copy and chat with Zamboni about his latest work.

Tiny LEGO Wonders represents Zamboni's solo authorship debut, yet his co-authoring experience as a vehicle guru in the LEGO Build-It Book series is evident. Whereas the subtitle of his volume is "Build 40 Surprisingly Realistic Mini-Models," it should more accurately read, "Build 40 Surprisingly Realistic Mini VEHICLES."

Packed within the 208 pages are building instructions for trains, planes, cars, trucks, ships and spacecraft of nearly every variety. Every page is rendered in edge-to-edge color and the instructions are clear and thoughtfully planned. The list of parts needed to build

Article by Ashley Glennon

Some models from the book.



each model is provided at the start of each set of instructions along with both wire-framed and fully rendered images of each creation.

Zamboni excels in his ability to create and curate models that are quite small, yet accurately capture the design language and shapes of much larger creations.

Contributor Liam Bates' lowriders have long, sleek tail fins. Zamboni's own muscle cars have air scoops and an aggressive stance. Peer Kreuger's and George Panteleon's F1 cars are amazing and Robert Heim's excavator and cement mixer contain details that mimic their real-life counterparts, right down to their logos.

It was a set of these tiny models, according to Zamboni, that inspired him to write this book. Jarek Ksiazczyk created a fire engine and a bucket truck (both included in the book, of course) that contained so much detail that Zamboni thought it would be cool to create a collection of similar-sized models.

"I am fascinated by tiny models," said Zamboni, "because I consider it way more challenging to design a tiny but instantly recognizable model than a bigger model which allows you to include the model's traits more easily."

And of course a great attribute of being mini means there's a smaller parts count. A quick browse through the book implies that many of the models have fewer than 100 pieces.

You might think that a book featuring mini-models would be small, but *Tiny LEGO Wonders* is a hefty, hardbound book, measuring in at nearly 9x11 inches. The book is divided into 10 chapters and features eye-popping dioramas between each section that feature the models you can learn to build in the pages ahead. The book opens with a fantastic construction scene and moves to a train station, an airport, car dealership, racetrack, harbor scene, moonscape and more.

"These ten scenes were created by two amazing designers: Alexander Bugiel and Matteo Russolillo," according to Zamboni, "by rendering the scenes using a VERY powerful



Art from the book. Amazingly, these are not real models - all of these are renders!



Instructions are prefaced by a render and partlist.



One of the layouts rendered for the book.



Meet Seraphin. He's not so easy to find in the book.

workstation (with 16 CPU cores, a huge amount of RAM and the most powerful graphics card on the market)."

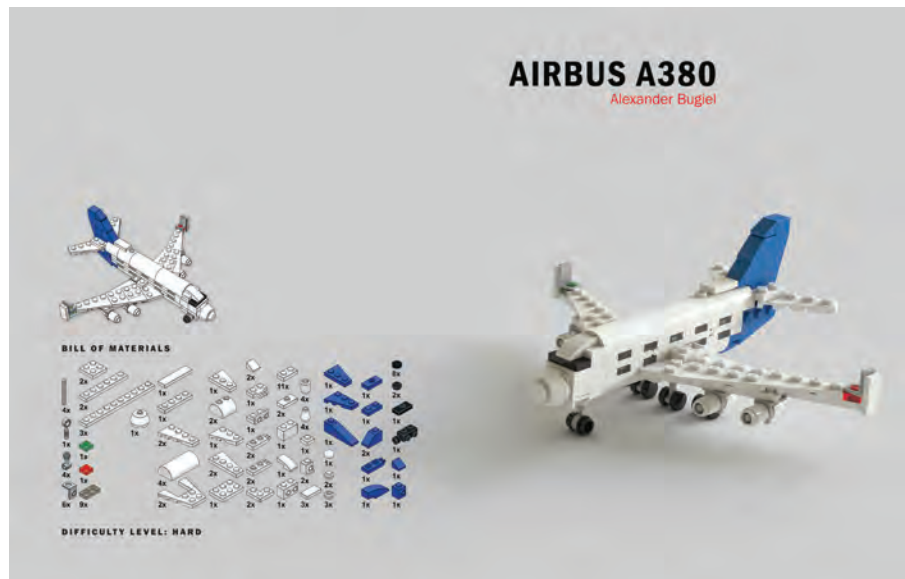
And these scenes contain a secret that Zamboni is sharing only with *BrickJournal* readers: "Tiny LEGO Wonders is full of surprises... and one of them is that... there is a character hiding in the dioramas named Seraphin. So who is Seraphin? He is a mischievous boy who always ends up in trouble. He likes to sneak around and he is pretty good at hiding. Spot him in the dioramas! Just a couple of tips: He is present in all dioramas except for one. He is always wearing his red hat, except in one scene in which it is a different color."

Whereas finding the cylinder fig "Seraphin" may be difficult, building in micro-scale does not have to be. Zamboni offers the following advice to builders of all skill levels wishing to try micro-scale.

"Probably the best advice I can think of is to be aware, as much as possible, of all the existing LEGO parts. Building a micro (or mini) scale model doesn't necessarily require less time than building a bigger one. You sometimes need to invest a lot of time in trying multiple combinations in order to get the best shape in a specific spot of your model. These models are so small that it is crucial to get the most significant traits right. If you are scaling down a bigger model, you might want to use graph paper. For tiny models, the focus should be on representing the key traits as accurately as possible, rather than making the proportions one hundred percent correct."



Another tiny model.




Another model spread.



When Zamboni is not building, he can be found working as a researcher in the robotics lab at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland.

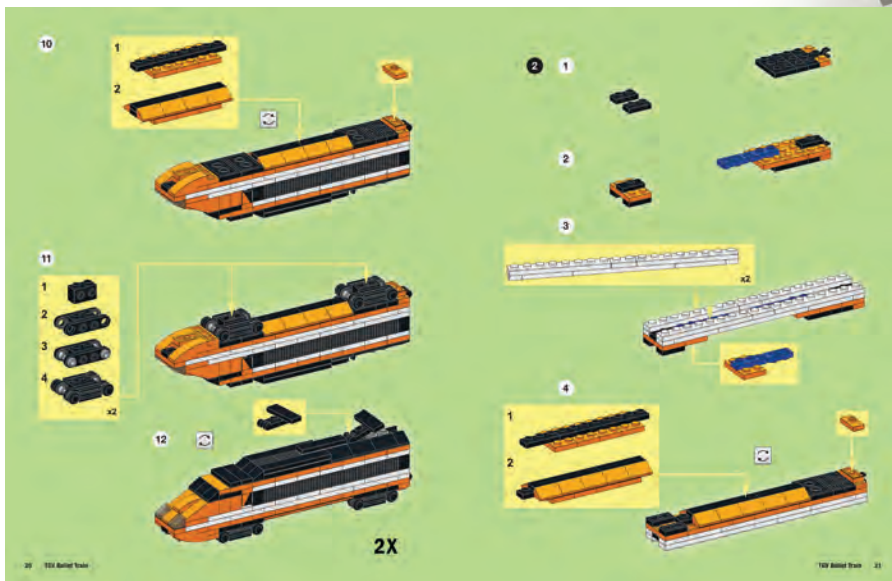
“In the lab, we design innovative industrial robots as research projects. These are custom but flexible robots that perform multiple tasks to help automate manufacturing processes that are still manual because of low production volumes. As an engineer, I am of course interested in technology, especially mechanics and electronics (a.k.a. mechatronics). LEGO is a fantastic way to play with all of this, especially with Technic and Mindstorms. It is far from uncommon when designing a new prototype at work to first test out my ideas with LEGO bricks!”

We’re thankful Zamboni created this great book of mini LEGO creations because six weeks prior to his deadline, he was involved in a horrific motorcycle accident that could have cost him his life. He smashed his head on the windshield of a car that crossed his path, was battered and bruised all over and broke his femur. According to Zamboni, this turn of events required him to stay home from work while recovering, which in turn gave him time to complete the book.

Tiny LEGO Wonders (ISBN: 978-1-59327-735-2) is available online and in-stores now and is a wonderful book of micro-scale building instructions for ages 9 and up. The book covers a wide variety of interesting and realistic vehicles, but ironically, there’s no ice-rink diorama and no Zamboni. 



A mini Osprey.



Instructions are clear and easy to follow.