

## Lego Magic

BY NANCY STETSON  
[nstetson@floridaweekly.com](mailto:nstetson@floridaweekly.com)



THE IDEA CAME WHILE I WAS IN A STORE, LOOKING at LEGO kits of famous architecture. Depending upon which one you bought, you could make a replica of the Sydney Opera House, The U.N. building, The Guggenheim Museum, Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House or Falling-water, among other famous structures. I thought of an architect I knew and wondered, *What if I gave her a kit and told her she had to design a building with the bricks, but it couldn't look anything like the building on the cover?*

Talk about this

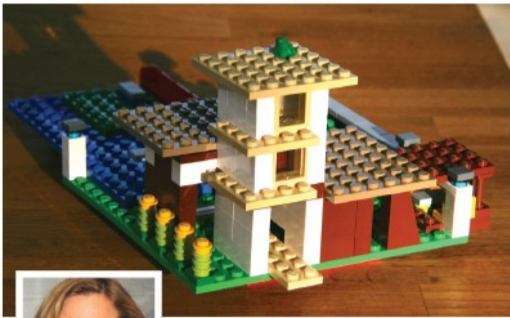
Then next time

The idea even

**STEPHEN HRUBY**

*Architects Unl*

# LEGO MAGIC



OWENS

COURTESY PHOTO  
Architect Joyce Owens's design from an unmarked pile of LEGO bricks.

**BY NANCY STETSON**  
[nstetson@floridaweekly.com](mailto:nstetson@floridaweekly.com)

THE IDEA CAME WHILE I WAS IN A STORE, LOOKING at LEGO kits of famous architecture. Depending upon which one you bought, you could make a replica of the Sydney Opera House, The U.N. building, The Guggenheim Museum, Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House or Falling-water, among other famous structures. I thought of an architect I knew and wondered, *What if I gave her a kit and told her she had to design a building with the bricks, but it couldn't look anything like the building on the cover?*

SEE MAGIC, C4 ►



The first thing Stephen Hruby did was dump out the kit and sort the pieces by their size and shape.

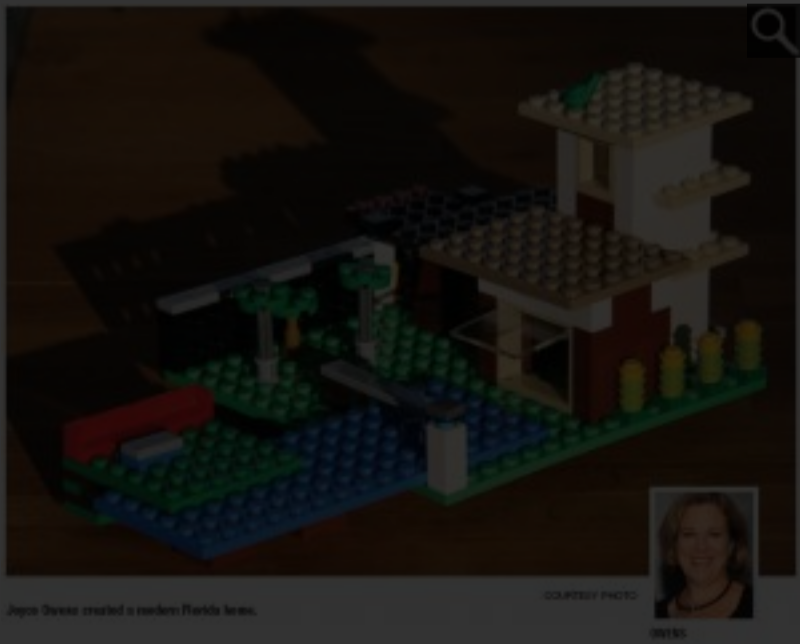
"There were about five different categories," he says. "I looked at them and asked myself, 'Which piece has the potential to make a great space or form?'"

One idea he had was to make a contemporary glass house and use the flat green base as the roof. He also envisioned a little guesthouse off of it, and an extended wall, but there weren't enough bricks.

"I thought I was getting one of those architectural models," he says. "Those have a lot more building bricks. I was surprised (when I saw the kit)."

"I sorted out the pieces that made sense to me (and) worked with maybe about a third of the pieces in the kit," he says. "I took the ones that were big, bold, architectural pieces."

Some blue shapes that were possibly pieces of roof in the original design appealed to him.



Joyce Owens created a modern Florida home.

Joyce Owens created a modern Florida home. COURTESY PHOTO

"They pitched out very nicely and made this very nice shaped space with wonderful articulated space inside," he says. "I thought: This could be a church. I started piecing them together, putting them on angles, moving them around."

The result: "It's a modern-looking church or chapel with cantilevered spaces, lots of open spaces. It's not your traditional-looking nave with a spire and two front doors and gothic stained glass.

"I'd love to do the challenge again," he says. "It was fun."

### JOYCE OWENS

*Architecture Joyce Owens Fort Myers and Naples*

Joyce Owens built a home she's calling "A Tropical Modern House for the Florida Indoor/Outdoor Lifestyle in the New Millennium."



Stephen Hruby's little house of worship.

Stephen Hruby's little house of worship. TIM GIBBONS / FLORIDA WEEKLY

"Originally, I tried to do something very cool and horizontal," she says, "but there weren't the right blocks to do that. Then I thought I'd do a big tower, but I only got two stories tall before I ran out of blocks. So that wouldn't work either. The bag you gave us didn't have many bricks. It had a lot of pieces, but not straight building blocks."

So she built her indoor/outdoor home, including landscaping and a swimming pool with diving board.

"It's quite sweet," she says.

As for the challenge, "It was fun to do, I really enjoyed it," she says.

Follow

Where's the story?

4 Points Mentioned

Where's the story?

4 Points Mentioned

She found the experience was very similar to designing a real building. She asked herself many of the same questions: What are the materials available? How do you put it together?

“You still have to deal with all the things you’re doing when designing a real house ... proportion, balance, etc.,” she adds, “but it was much less stressful. I didn’t have to worry about all those nerdy details you have to worry about as an architect. As an architect, you want it to look good, and it has to function for the client and the climate, and it can’t leak.

“People think they can design because they can design things that are symmetrical, but buildings don’t have to be symmetrical,” she says, then adds, “There’s nothing symmetrical about my building.” †

LEGO facts:

LEGO products are on sale in more than 130 countries.

The LEGO Club has nearly 5 million members worldwide.

On average, every person on earth owns 94 LEGO bricks.

With a production of more than 500 million tires in 2013, the LEGO Group is one of the world’s largest tire manufacturers.

Laid end to end, the number of LEGO bricks produced in 2013 would reach more than 20 times round the world.

If you built a column of about 40 billion LEGO bricks, it would reach the moon.

Over the years, approximately 700 billion LEGO elements have been manufactured.

In 2013, the LEGO Group achieved a global production of more than 55 billion elements — equivalent to approximately 105,000 elements a minute or 1,750 elements every second.


Creating the cult of LEGO

The name LEGO is an abbreviation of the two Danish words “leg godt,” meaning “play well”. The LEGO Group was founded in 1932 by Ole Kirk Kristiansen. The company has passed from father to son and is now owned by Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, a grandchild of the founder. It has come a long way over the past almost 80 years — from a small carpenter’s workshop to a modern, global enterprise that is now, in terms of sales, the world’s third-largest manufacturer of toys.

Concept and product development takes place primarily at the company’s Billund headquarters in [Denmark](#). The LEGO Group also has a listening post in [Los Angeles](#) to help monitor the latest trends. The creative core is made up of more than 180 designers representing 24 nationalities. Most of the designers have trained at schools of design, art or architecture.

The LEGO brick the company’s most important product. The products have undergone extensive development over the years — but the foundation remains the traditional LEGO brick. The brick in its present form was launched in 1958. The interlocking principle with its tubes makes it unique, and offers unlimited building possibilities. It’s just a matter of getting the imagination going — and letting a wealth of creative ideas emerge through play.

**[Return to top](#)**

 Share / Save

