

SNAPSHOT

HENRIK LYKKE has the kind of job six-year-old children dream of. The 29-year-old Dane is a model-maker in residence for Lego, and he has just completed an intricate miniature version of London's Tower Bridge to celebrate its 100th birthday yesterday.

The 1.7 m-tall, 1:20 scale model will be one of the star exhibits at Lego World, the toy-maker's £75m, 60 ha theme park in Windsor which is due to open at Easter in 1996.

Lykke is one of 30 young model-makers busily creating scale models of landmark buildings from all over Europe, working at a bright and airy studio in Windsor.

The Banqueting House, St Paul's Cathedral, Trafalgar Square, the Athenaeum Hotel, the Adelphi Club, Big Ben and the National Gallery are just a few of London's architectural highlights that Lykke and colleagues have reconstructed in coloured plastic bricks.

From Brighton there are technicolour terraced homes and the pier; while a stone-coloured Leeds Castle and the sombre grey ramps of the Channel tunnel have also been compiled from off-the-shelf bits of Lego kit.

If an architect has designed it, Lykke can recreate it – and in all its glory, realistic if smaller-than-life. "There is nothing we cannot do," he asserts, adding self-mockingly in his clipped English: "There are only challenges, not problems."

Former car-sprayer Lykke does not take himself too seriously. "We were too poor to have Lego," he jokes about his childhood in Denmark, where playing with Lego is as much a part of growing up as is learning the alphabet.

Lykke began working for the 62-year-old family-owned toy-maker two years ago. His experience in building antique furniture helped him land the model-making job he saw advertised in the local paper. From building a life-sized eagle in Lego, he moved on to cows and mountain goats, and even a 2 m-tall pirate.

He was offered a three-year contract to work on the models for Windsor Lego World a year ago. Many of his



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HENRIK LYKKE, LEGO MODEL-MAKER

Windsor colleagues are new to Lego building. Some have come from architectural practices; others from the world of film and theatre; yet others from clock-making.

His latest feat, the 130 kg, turquoise-and-buff-coloured model of Tower Bridge, took Lykke and his colleague Mark Hamley 500 hours to build. It was not just replicating the mock Tudor arch and turrets that proved tricky – but getting the blue and white drawbridge to retract mechanically like the original.

Modelling Terry Farrell's Embankment Place building will be a piece of cake in comparison. "Yes, it is a bit boring," says Lykke of the arched, riverbank office development. "But you can always make it more interesting in Lego."

Selecting the exhibits for Lego World has also been the job of Lykke and his colleagues, who went out and took hundreds of snapshots of the buildings they wanted to model. "We try to get architectural elevations and drawings if possible," says Lykke. Before going for the large 1:20 models, all buildings are first produced on a 1:400 scale.

"To many people it seems like a dream job," says the model-maker. "And they're right – it is totally enjoyable."

– DENISE CHEVIN