

Architectural Toy Collection



National Building Museum

THE COLLECTION: In 2006, the National Building Museum acquired an architectural toy collection. Assembled by a U.S. collector over the past 30 years, this extraordinary Collection includes over 2,200 objects, dating from the 1860s to the 1990s. Although universally recognized as “toys,” these building sets represent much more than play; they offer a variety of educational perspectives on the built environment.

From log cabins to skyscrapers to suburban homes, the sets address design, engineering, construction, planning, and materials issues, and foster creative problem solving in math, science, and social history. Even the legendary architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, attributed his play as a young child with Froebel blocks, purchased by his mother, as formative to his understanding of spatial concepts.

Whether in pristine condition or well loved, these toys engaged, informed, and educated generations of young people, bringing the built world into their realm of thought and imagination.

THE COLLECTOR: Over the years, the collector developed a very sophisticated appreciation for the objects, determining their relative value and significance. In order to upgrade the quality and importance of the *Architectural Toy Collection*, he refined his collecting criteria and actively sold, bought, and traded sets. These efforts contribute to the Collection’s reputation as one of the finest in the country.

Another important aspect of the collector’s activity was his long-held desire to place the Collection in public trust—within a museum—for the pleasure and edification of a wide audience. While he was interested in specific sets for their rarity and/or particular niche in the Collection, he was equally concerned with the visual impact a set might have on the general observer. As a result, the Collection not only holds value from educational, social, and historical perspectives, but from an aesthetic one as well.





PLAYING AND LEARNING: Gallery space in the National Building Museum will be dedicated to the presentation of this Collection, and a small selection of toys is currently on view in the long-term exhibition *Cityscapes Revealed: Highlights from the Collection*. There are enough artifacts in the *Architectural Toy Collection* to refresh exhibitions and displays regularly.



To protect valuable, rare, and highly delicate objects, some pieces will be exhibited behind glass. However, since a natural impulse is to want to touch and play with these toys, a portion of the dedicated gallery space will be designed to promote interactive, hands-on activities in order to further engage the visitor. While this space may include such contemporary toys as LEGO®, the intent is to replicate some of the antique toys and offer unique play experiences. The interactive components will be designed to appeal to both youth and adult audiences, thus providing an attraction for visiting families.

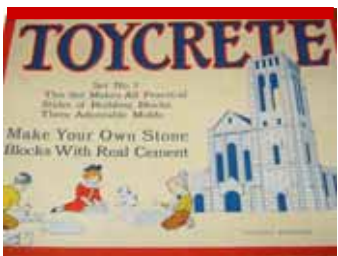


The Museum also plans to bring the *Architectural Toy Collection* to a national audience by organizing travelling exhibitions, publishing a catalogue, and creating an educational website.



SUPPORT: The mission of the National Building Museum is to inform and educate visitors about all aspects of the built environment: architecture, engineering, construction, materials, planning, and design. The *Architectural Toy Collection* provides a perfect, ready-made means of access to all of these issues and will appeal to people of all ages. The Collection will become a “must see” attraction for many visitors to Washington, DC.

Fundraising will occur in two stages. Phase One will support the acquisition, shipping, cataloguing, researching, and conservation of the Collection, as well as the integration of select objects into current Museum exhibitions. Phase Two will support the development of the long-term *Architectural Toy Collection* gallery, along with educational programming and conservation.



With financial support, the *Architectural Toy Collection* exhibition could open to the public in 2010. **For additional information and sponsorship opportunities please contact the National Building Museum Development Office at 202-272-2448.**