



# First Fridays take a playful turn

Architect's exhibition features collection of construction and building toys

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Most of us loved to play with toys when we were children, but many of us stopped as we grew up.

#### EVENT PREVIEW

### Building Toys

- Winnipeg Architecture Foundation
- 266 McDermot Ave.
- Dec. 6 to Dec. 24
- Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

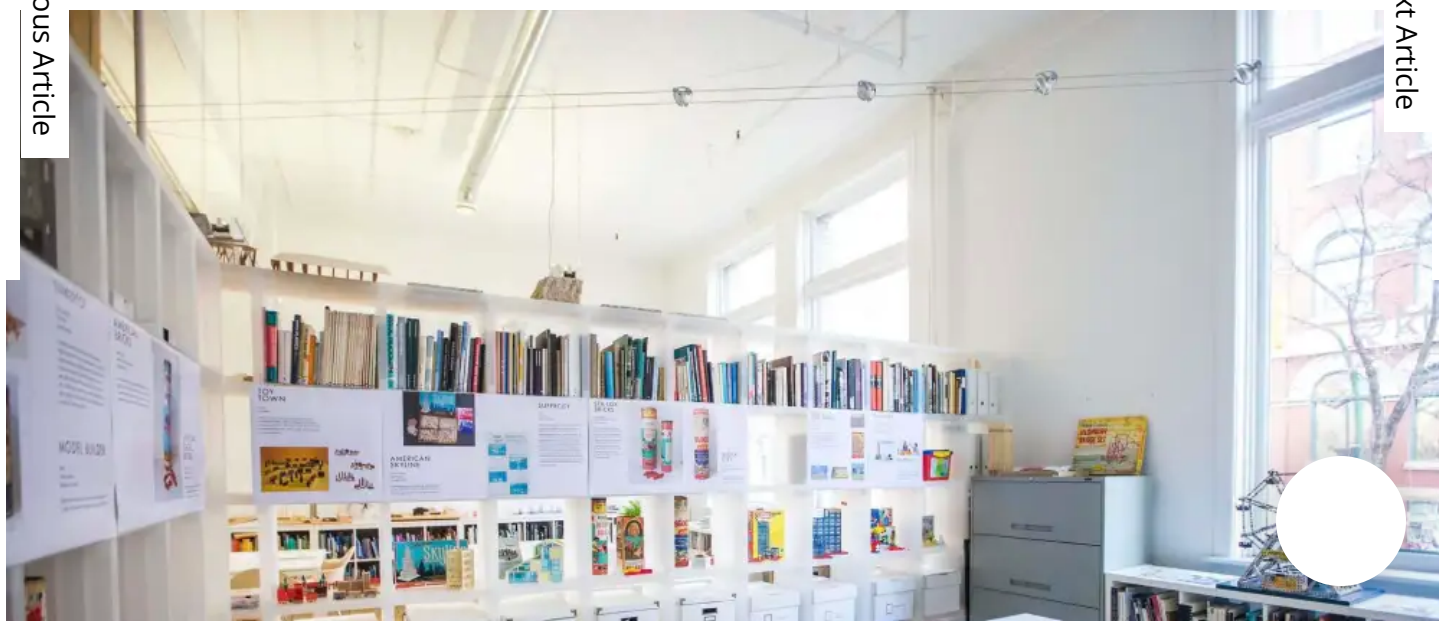
The Winnipeg Architecture Foundation wants to change that with its new exhibit, *Building Toys*, which debuts at [First Fridays in The Exchange](#) .

The exhibit features construction and building toys from the collections of Rae Bridgman, a professor at the University of Manitoba's department of city planning, and James Wagner, an architect with the federal

government.

Toys on display include childhood favourites such as Lincoln Logs, Meccano and Lego, as well as plenty of toys on hand so visitors can create their own works of architectural brilliance.

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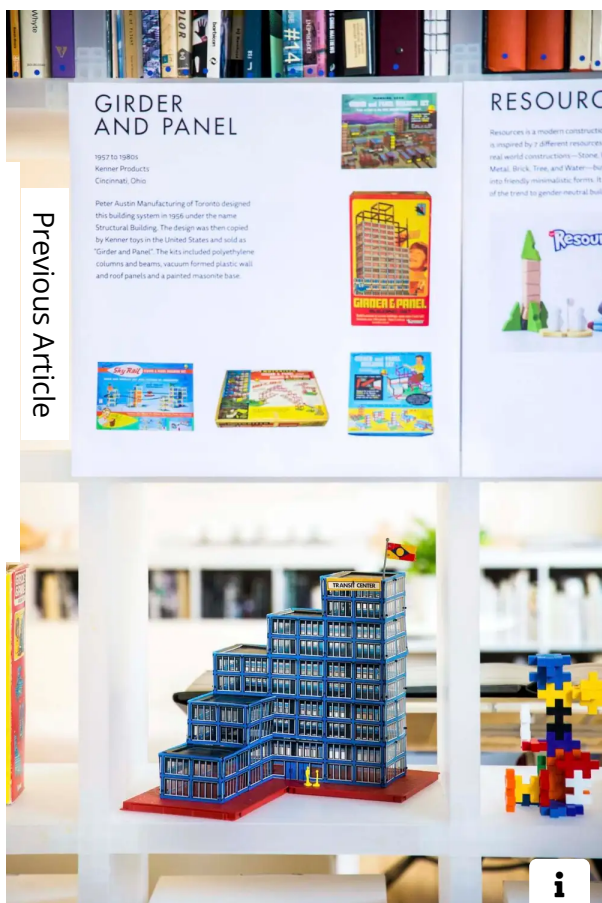


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But the toys aren't only fun: they're also developmentally formative, engaging and involve spatial awareness for those who play with them. That's what attracted Wagner, whose childhood passion for Lego sparked a grown-up passion for architecture — and toys.

"I was always interested in putting pieces together and assembling pieces into bigger things," Wagner says. "As a child, Lego bricks were the toy I had the most of and spent most of my time with. I still have my old bricks at home."



Wagner never set out to become a collector of toys, but a combination of nostalgia and happenstance sent him down the path.

"I happened across a set — the Girder and Panel building set — that I used to play with as a kid," Wagner says. "I purchased it on a whim thanks to the nostalgia factor. Then I thought I'd just keep my eye open for other things I might come across."

While architecture may not always be

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thought of as visual art, Susan Algie, the Winnipeg Architecture Foundation's executive director, says they have a great deal in common.

"Architecture is the most encompassing of all the visual arts," she says. "Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said, 'Music is liquid architecture; architecture is frozen music.' Similar to music, architecture has pattern, rhythm, surprise, and high and low notes, which can be displayed through the choice of size, scale and materials.



"We live, work and play in buildings, most of which are designed by architects. Playing with toys uses many of the skills required by an architect, like creativity, math and spatial awareness."

The exhibition also raises social and economic awareness, highlighting the shift in toy-marketing tactics and the evolution of toy construction materials.

"The person who invented Lego was a carpenter," Wagner says. "He began by making toys from wood. He made

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wood bricks then began making plastic bricks after (the Second World War)."

"Construction sets have existed for almost 200 years," Algie adds. "The early sets were wooden blocks. As technology allowed greater use of rubber, metal and plastic, the range of building sets expanded. At first,



the focus was on toys for boys, but gradually there was a shift to invite young women to also build."

All ages and genders are welcome at the foundation's exhibition to view the creations on display and create some of their own.



"We wanted to host a fun, kid-friendly exhibit for people of all ages," Algie says.

"We want to get people juiced about architecture, and this is a fun way to do it."

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