ForeWord Reviews

CRAFTS & HOBBIES

Marvelous Transforming Toys
Jim Makowicki
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This well-presented How-To book is Makowicki's second publishing foray for those readers who have always dreamt of building long-lasting wooden toys for or with their children or grand-children. What makes this book decidedly different from the first, Heirloom Toys (1996), is his departure from making single toys. Instead, he concentrates on system-based toys that can be easily transformed by a child by moving only a few pieces; pieces easily recognizable—unlike Tinker Toys or Legos. There are some cautions from Makowicki, however, before getting the materials to begin one of his six projects: "These toys are small, but that doesn't mean they are simple. Patience and precision are essential. Cutting and drilling small parts can also pose serious safety hazards." Fortunately, details are provided in the first chapter, Techniques and Materials, on how to handle the trickiest cutting or drilling as well as what materials to select and why—something often omitted in other craft and hobby books that is important not only for safety during building, but most of all for the safety of the end-user: the child.

After reading about techniques and materials, the next six chapters are organized by increasing complexity of the system being built: Boats, Trucks, Houses, Planes, Vehicles, and Ships. All are organized in similar fashion: an introduction with photos of the finished system's configurations, then schematics, components lists, and detailed directions for each of the systems' parts. Along the way are detailed photos of machining set-ups and hints to guide the construction. At the back of the book is a resource guide for getting toy parts as well as finishes that are non-toxic and durable. The directions are concise without being cryptic and additional line drawings help to clarify what the end result of certain steps should look like.

The only thing that this book takes for granted is that the reader already has a basic working knowledge of tools such as a drill press, lathe, table saw, band saw, and scrollsaw. These deficiencies, however, can be remedied easily through the number of lumberyards and do-it-yourself megastores that offer free informative, hands-on classes for those who are eager to learn how to operate tools and build their own projects. Overall, Makowicki has provided

readers with a challengingly delightful project book that will provide years of fun for toymakers and the children who are lucky enough to receive these system-based toys.

Nelly Heitman