

PRESS

INFORMATION of October 23, 2025

Frankfurt / Main



Graphics: Ammon Studio

ARCHITECTURAL CONSTRUCTION KITS

1890-1990

Plenty to play with!

October 25, 2025 – February 8, 2026

at Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM)

Schaumainkai 43, Frankfurt/Main

PRESS CONFERENCE:

Thur, October 23, 2025, 11 p.m.

EXHIBITION OPENING:

Fri, October 24, 2025, 7 p.m.

GUIDED TOURS

on Saturdays + Sundays, 3 p.m.

OPENING HOURS

Tue, Thurs - Sun 11 - 6 p.m.; Wed 11 - 8 p.m.; Mon closed

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ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM) is presenting an extraordinary and extensive collection of architectural construction kits from 100 years – from 1890 to 1990. Thanks to enlarged scale replicas, many of them can actually be tested out: the big interactive exhibition!

Everyone knows Lego. But before the Danish company conquered the international market there were hundreds of firms that from about 1880 onwards produced a variety of construction kits. The DAM has the unique opportunity to draw on the private collection of architectural construction kits by graphic designer Claus Krieger to realize an exhibition that will break through the “glass barrier” that typically divides exhibits (for conservational reasons) from the visitors. They will be able to play and develop new buildings at about eight play stations integrated centrally into the exhibition.

Prof. Andreas Kretzer from the Stuttgart University of Applied Sciences (HFT) and his students have recreated the precious original building blocks of the Ingenius, Bâtiss and Skyline boxes on an enlarged scale to make them “playable”. Moreover, bricks from the Minibrix, Tetek, and Dusyma systems as well as the “Little Large Block Builder” from GDR production await all those who enjoy constructing. It is also possible to immerse yourself in a virtual model world using VR glasses, programmed by students of Prof. Philipp Reinfeld, also HFT. The exhibition presents a total ca. 80 construction kits, which are also featured in an extensive catalog. And of course there will be many dozens of models on display that have been built from the various boxes.

CHAPTER TEXTS

STYLES (1)

Are there any toys today, in 2025/2026, that reflect the architecture of our time? Probably not (apart from computer games). Astonishing! It used to be different. Most of the building kits presented here reflect the new architecture of their time. This begins with the Anker stones, which respond to the richly decorated buildings of the Wilhelminian period (after 1871). Even controversial ideas such as the modern architecture of the 1920s were quickly adopted for children’s rooms. The Ingenius set (1924) anticipates the Moloch of the famous silent film Metropolis (1927)!

STYLES (2)

Is the architecture perhaps even irrelevant to a certain extent, because with most construction kits, it is the (patient) act of playing that is important, not the results? None of the construction kits shown here were ever intended to terminate as a dusty model on a shelf. This is a significant difference to today’s Lego models, which end up as trophies.

Our trophy is the cathedral that consists of 4,000 Architecto bricks. However, they are made of insulating felt, not wood, cut with a computer-controlled blade. Thanks to Impact Acoustic for their support.

CHILDREN

The children on the packaging illustrations often appear highly concentrated and not very happy. The game is exhausting! The building instructions are usually highly complex. Are these toys at all, or are the boxes aimed more at adults? However, the packaging and instructions are clearly addressed to children. They are presented as little adults and encouraged to be “little builders” or “little architects.” With a few exceptions, girls are only bystanders. We discussed this issue at the DAM: Does this exhibition appeal more to a male audience?

ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS

To guide our audience, all the kits on the playing tables have been given uniform assembly instructions in the tried-and-tested IKEA style. The historical assembly instructions, on the other hand, are a real challenge. Many kits are not at all suitable for free play. Without building instructions, there is no sense of achievement. This is surprising, because the original building blocks of the reformist educator and kindergarten founder Friedrich Fröbel (1782–1852) were designed for experimentation and tentative exploration. This exhibition shows what followed once the block game had become established.

SELECTION OF SPECIAL CONSTRUCTION KITS

Architecto-Baukasten, Keller & Sohn, Switzerland, from 1944

The plug-in system of the Architecto construction kit was scaled up to 3:1 by students at HFT Stuttgart. More than 4,000 components made of insulating felt were used to build the cathedral, that is 3.2 meters high. The purchase of the insulation boards was supported by their manufacturer, Impact Acoustic.

American Skyline-Baukasten, Elgo Plastics Inc., USA, 1950s – 1960s

The Skyline construction kits from the mid-20th century enable the construction of US skyscrapers from the 1920s to the 1940s. Unlike the solid structures commonly found in construction kits, Skyline uses a more modern skeleton system. This results in faster construction progress with fewer parts.

„Wir bauen auf!“, Mentor-Baukasten für Großbauten, Hugo Fritzsche KG, Germany (Thuringia), 1950s

The architectural references for this kit have soon become obsolete. The phase of Socialist Classicism in the GDR lasted only a good five years. After Joseph Stalin's death, there was a change of course in the building policy of the Soviet Union and thus also in the GDR in 1954, away from conservatism and toward the industrial prefabrication of "Plattenbauten" (slab buildings).

Plaspi – Der kleine Großblock-Baumeister, VEB Gothaer Kunststoffverarbeitung Germany (Thuringia), approx. 1980

The plastic building blocks from the large-block construction sets from the former GDR can be used to build various prefabricated buildings. With illustrations of a wide variety of houses, the construction set promises a greater variety of prefabricated buildings than was actually the case in reality.

Bâtiss-Baukasten No. 3, Firma Bâtiss, France, 1930s – 1940s

Due to the rather unusual connection system of the wooden building blocks using metal rods, an intuitive building experience with the Bâtiss construction set is only possible to a limited extent. Later, the Baticlub version was released for younger children, which does not use any metal connections at all.

Anker-Steinbaukästen, F. Ad. Richter & Cie. KG, Germany (Thuringia), from 1884

Based on the building blocks invented by kindergarten founder Friedrich Fröbel, brothers Otto and Gustav Lilienthal developed a play set around 1879. The blocks, named after their later manufacturer Anker, were made of sand, mud chalk, and linseed oil. The model built here consists of new blocks, since they are still in production today. Otto Lilienthal became an aviation pioneer in 1891.

The New City – Ingenius-Baukasten, Ingenius Technische- und Handels-GmbH, Austria, 1924 to presumably 1929

The Ingenius construction kit was developed by architect Wilhelm Kreis in collaboration with Carl August Jüngst. According to the manufacturer, the system is not only suitable for children, but also for designing

film sets and thus as an alternative to the construction of large film sets. Wilhelm Kreis' monumental architectural designs proved to be compatible with his later career in National Socialism.

Projektor-Baukasten, Max Schäffer, Österreich, ab 1930

The Projektor construction kit is an almost complete imitation of the Ingenius box. However, there is one crucial difference: instead of a single tongue-and-groove row as in the original, this model has two such connecting rows. This change was made to bypass the Ingenius patent.

COMPETITION

A competition was launched even before the exhibition began:

How small can architecture be?

Replicas of buildings and cities are welcome, as are completely original fantasy constructions.

Thirty models have already been submitted.

Out of competition, visitors can view a model of Frankfurt city centre built by Frankfurt author Florian Wacker ("Zebras in the snow").

Terms of participation

- > No minimum size. Whoever creates a building with as few bricks as possible: Bravo!
- > Maximum base area: 16 x 16 studs (12.8 x 12.8 cm)
- > Maximum height: 30 cm
- > You can build with LEGO® bricks as well as with bricks from other manufacturers
- > Gluing the bricks is not allowed, only sticking!
- > First send in a photo to DAM.Digitaltools@stadt-frankfurt.de (from now on), then send in the model by post after the DAM team has preselected it (between 24.10.2025 and 31.12.2025 — the sooner, the longer it will be on display)
- > The selected works will be exhibited in the museum until 8.2.2026. Each work will also be presented on the DAM's social media channels
- > The return shipment will be made by the museum from 9.2.2026 (no guarantee can be given for any transport damage)
- > The best three works will be voted on by all participants — the prizes are T-shirts with the three highest-placed models

PUBLICATION



111 Architekturbaukästen Sammlung Claus Krieger

Erschienen beim JOVIS Verlag, Berlin / 2025

Hrsg.: Claus Krieger

Broschur 21×25 cm, 272 Seiten, 500 farbige

Abbildungen, Deutsch

ISBN 978-3-98612-274-4

Mit einem Vorwort von Kurator Oliver Elser.

Im Museumsshop und im Buchhandel erhältlich für
38,- EUR.

CONINCIDING PROGRAMME

11.11.2025, 4 – 8 p.m.

Bring your Baukasten!

Open forum for all collectors. If you would like to bring and present a kit: Register by Nov. 4 at
DAM.Digitaltools@stadt-frankfurt.de

18.11.2025, 4 – 8 p.m.

Bring your Microscale MOCs!

Open forum. If you would like to bring and present your MOC: Register by Nov 11 at
DAM.Digitaltools@stadt-frankfurt.de

15.01.2026, 7 p.m.

Florian Wacker: Liebling, ich habe den Römer geschrumpft – Wie ein Klemmbaustein-Modell im Micro-Scale-Format entsteht.

The author ("Zebras in the Snow" – Frankfurt Reads a Book 2024) talks about his hobby

28.01.2026, 7 p.m.

Oliver Tessmann, TU Darmstadt, DDU – Digital Design Unit:

Stecken, Klemmen, (De-)Montieren – vom Fügen in der (realen) Architektur

On the astonishing parallels between large prefabricated parts and small construction kits

In the DAM Auditorium or in the exhibition. Admission €7, reduced €4.

IMPRINT

ARCHITECTURAL CONSTRUCTION KITS 1890-1990. Plenty to play with!

October 25, 2025 – February 8, 2026

at Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM), Frankfurt/Main

Curator: Oliver Elser
Director: Peter Cachola Schmal
Deputy director: Andrea Jürges
Exhibition design: Rahlwes.Pietz (Olaf Rahlwes, Yvonne Pietz)
Collection: Claus Krieger

Student Assistant: Ida Mainz
Graphics of flyer, poster and banner: Ammon Studio

Registrar: Wolfgang Welker
Press and PR: Brita Köhler, Anna Wegmann
Education: Confiyet Aydin, Nienke Wüst, Ruth Schlögl
Model conservator: Bernadette Krist
Paper conservator: Paula Argomedo, Heike Schuler
Librarian: Christiane Eulig
Guided tours: Yorck Förster
Administration: Inka Plechaty, Katharina Neugebauer, Victoria Morhard
Museum technicians: Daniel Sarvari, Giancarlo Rossano
Front desk: Ieva Paegle
Instalation team: Paul Haas, Patrick Keaveney, Ömer Simsek, Gerhard Winkler under the direction of:
Daniel Sarvari

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Press images for announcements and reports during the exhibition period at www.dam-online.de/press

PREVIEW

Out of storage – Focusing on acquisitions by the Friends of the DAM

November 22, 2025 – March 1, 2026

DAM Preis 2026 – The best buildings in/from Germany

January 31 – May 3, 2026

DEUTSCHES ARCHITEKTURMUSEUM

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