



Infinite LEGO: Reimagining David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest through LEGO

Ryan M Blanck

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It all began on a date night with my wife a couple of years back. We live in a rather boring town, and money was kind of tight, so after a relatively inexpensive dinner at our favorite pizza place we went to browse the aisles of our local Barnes & Noble. We happened upon *The Brick Bible* by Brendan Smith and loved the concept - the entire Biblical narrative retold in graphic novel form, but with the images being LEGO sculptures. Feeling inspired, we enlisted the help of our daughters to launch our own LEGO Bible blog. We got through the book of Genesis and part way through Exodus before the project sputtered and fell by the wayside. A couple of years later, I was working on my proposal for a paper the first annual David Foster Wallace Conference hosted by Illinois State University, and I gave a second read to the "Original Creative Works" call for submissions. Then a thought came to me. "I like David Foster Wallace," I thought. "I like LEGOs," I thought. "So, why not bring those two together," I thought. I selected some of my favorite scenes from some of my favorite stories, and I began to build. Scenes from "Little Expressionless Animals," "Forever Overhead," and "Good People;" along with scenes from the novels: *Broom of the System*, *Infinite Jest*, and *The Pale King*. Even one taken from "This is Water." I built the sculptures and photographed them and assembled the images into a digital slideshow. Then it was off to Bloomington-Normal for the Conference. At the Conference, I was honored to be selected as a featured panelist for my "Reimagining Wallace" presentation. Then I was shocked to see such a large crowd gathered to view my creations on the very large screen. I did not expect pictures of LEGOs to be such a hit at an academic conference. Inspired by the positive response to my presentation, I went home and continued building more Wallace-inspired LEGO sculptures, now focusing my attention on his magnum opus, *Infinite Jest* (Go big or go home, am I right?). As my understanding and enjoyment of Dave's writings continue to evolve, so do my artistic expressions that he inspires. What I love about Dave's writing is that it not only invites serious academic consideration, but that it also invites and inspires creative response. In my case, that has included blog posts, imitative essays, and now LEGO creations. Who knows what will be next... --Ryan M Blanck

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