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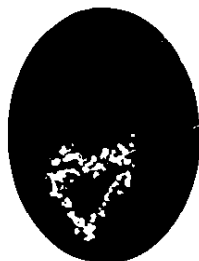


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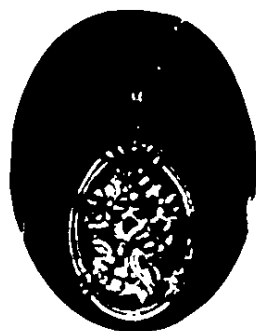
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# Hobby hounds find fantasia of gift ideas

It seems an inborn human paradox that winter, the most barren season of the year, sparks the drive for creative expression more than any other. Those who've wheeled away their summer lounging about the pool and patio, cold drink in hand, turn busily to hand-made crafts and hobbies as the days grow shorter.

It's grown increasingly clear in recent years that suppliers have been riding the crest of a hobby and handmade crafts wave. Whether because of the energy crunch, widespread yearning for a simpler lifestyle, or just disenchantment with TV's newest season, handmade leisure occupations are luring all ages in all walks of life.

Georgene Grattan, who with husband Hubert runs Rochester's Trackside Hobbies, says model trains and radio-controlled boats, planes and rockets are popular sellers.

And for Santas unabashed at never having grown out of a fascination with the tiny chugging toys, there are vintage model trains, enough to warm the heart of the oldest collector.

If Christmas at your house is the time to replenish your son's or daughter's supply of scale models, most hobby shops offer an array of models designed to please all ages and tastes.

Some are ideal for history buffs, like elaborate likenesses of Old Ironsides, the USS Constitution, the ill-fated Bismarck, or Jacques-Yves Cousteau's romantic Calypso.

Still others teach the marvels of physiology through facsimiles of the human body, the brain, lungs, eyes and other organs.

Other models opt for the fantastic, like models of Star Trek's Starship Enterprise or the menacing Klingon vessel.

Youngsters who have outgrown their fear of the dark will relish putting together and displaying glow-in-the-dark characters of Midnight Movie fame, like the "Mummy for the Creature."

Fast glue, brushes and other materials for putting kits together are available at most hobby shops.

Grown-up hobbyists will appreciate other do-it-yourself projects like kits for making your own Christmas ornaments or gifts with leaded glass, which are as easy to put together as baking cookies.

Sophisticated model makers with a taste for whimsy will enjoy putting together non-functional contraptions of propellers and wheels made from brass wire or curling snippets of cloth and dried flowers into a fantasy arrangement.

Charm your children with presents you make yourself, like a three-story, nine-room Victorian-era doll house of paper and cardboard. Or, knot a necklace or set of wind chimes with twine and ceramic beads.

Christmas Eve is even brighter by the glow of candlelight, especially from those you've molded yourself with materials and kits available at most hobby shops.

Know a plant buff (and who doesn't)? The perfect present for the person who doesn't need yet another leafy growth in his south window is something you can make yourself with leaded glass and terrarium materials.

If the listed hobbies still haven't struck you as the ideal gift for your favorite person this holiday season, stop by a hobby shop and browse. You're sure to find a fantasia of hand-made ideas to make this year's gift-giving the most meaningful yet.

—PATRICIA HINSBERG