



Kringle Workshops Shares Inside Look at Handcrafted Process Behind Its Wooden Toys

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Kringle Workshops is offering a closer view into the hands-on process that brings its collection of handmade wooden toys to life in a home workshop in Lake Elmo, Minnesota. The small business, operated by Tom Bethke, emphasizes traditional craftsmanship that transforms raw wood into durable, imagination-sparking playthings designed to become family heirlooms.

The workshop process begins with sketches inspired by classic vehicles, farm equipment, and creative play scenarios. Tom Bethke draws on his background in fine arts and design to shape each concept. Materials are carefully selected, including high-quality pine, oak, birch, and maple, chosen for strength, grain, and suitability for children's toys. Each piece of wood is inspected for quality before cutting and shaping begins.

In the workshop, a combination of power tools and hand tools mills the lumber to precise dimensions. Parts are then refined through extensive sanding, with every edge rounded and every surface smoothed to eliminate sharp corners. This step ensures safety for children ages three and older while preserving the natural warmth of the wood. Assembly follows, using water-based, FDA-approved glue and wooden dowels for secure, long-lasting joints, no nails or screws that could loosen over time.

Functional details receive special attention, such as rotating birch wheels, pivoting trailer ramps on sets like the Pickup Truck & Horse Trailer, and articulated elements on vehicles including the Wooden Bobcat, Flatbed Tow Truck with Car, and Excavator. Farm-themed pieces like the Tractor, Combine, and Logging Truck incorporate realistic features that support open-ended play. Once assembled, each toy receives the signature wood-burned Kringle Elf logo, applied with care as a mark of authenticity.

Many pieces are left unfinished to highlight the natural beauty and grain of the wood, creating an eco-friendly, tactile experience free from heavy varnishes or synthetic coatings. A final inspection checks every joint, wheel, and surface before packaging. Each order includes a Certificate of Authenticity, personally signed and affirming the toy was handcrafted in the Lake Elmo workshop.

Tom Bethke, founder and craftsman known as Santa Tom, reflected on the workshop's approach. "Every step in our process is done with intention, from selecting the wood to the final sanding and branding," said Bethke. "These toys are built to be played with actively, pushed, loaded, imagined with, for years, and hopefully passed down through generations, just like the ones my father made for me."

Bethke's journey into toymaking started in his father's workshop as a child, where he learned woodworking fundamentals. Later experiences in art school, theater set design, and more than 47 years as a professional Santa Claus deepened his appreciation for creating items that spark joy and storytelling. This personal history informs the workshop's focus on quality over quantity in a small-scale, home-based setting.

The process supports custom requests, allowing families to collaborate on unique designs while maintaining the same standards of safety and durability. Current offerings include the Pickup Truck / Camper with Boat, Dump Truck, Train, and additional vehicles such as the Classic Hot Rod Car, Fire Truck, and Monster Truck. All share the commitment to battery-free play that encourages creativity, problem-solving, and family interaction.

Kringle Workshops continues to prioritize American-made craftsmanship using sustainable wood choices. Free shipping on all orders makes these handmade pieces more accessible to families seeking thoughtful, lasting gifts for birthdays, holidays, or special occasions. The workshop's methods reflect a deliberate pace that prioritizes care at every stage rather than high-volume production.

This behind-the-scenes emphasis highlights how each toy carries forward traditions of hands-on making in an era when many playthings rely on electronics. By keeping designs simple yet detailed, the toys invite children to supply the power of imagination, creating opportunities for narrative play and skill development through physical interaction.

Bethke added perspective on the workshop's purpose. "It's rewarding to know these pieces are more than objects on a shelf; they become part of family stories, adventures, and memories that last," he noted. The small business remains dedicated to its core mission of crafting safe, sturdy wooden toys that connect generations through quality and creativity.

Founded in Lake Elmo, Minnesota, Kringle Workshops is a small, family-inspired business specializing in handmade wooden toys. Owner Tom Bethke crafts each item personally in his home workshop using natural woods and traditional techniques. The toys are built for durability, safety, and open-ended play, making them suitable for children ages three and up as cherished keepsakes.

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For more information about Kringle Workshops, contact the company here: [Kringle Workshops](https://kringleworkshops.com/)
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Kringle Workshops

Kringle Workshops crafts wooden toys ready to be passed down from generation to generation. All products are made by a small business, right here in America.

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