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**First published on Friday 12 March 2004:****Town picked to show boats***by Andrew Moores*

AN AMERICAN artist who is building a 25ft model ship with toothpicks wants to bring his work to Knutsford.

Wayne Kusy, 43, is looking for venues to exhibit his vessels, which have up to 765,000 parts and can take eight years to build.

The Chicago resident contacted the Knutsford Guardian to ask if residents would be interested in his forthcoming tour of Britain.

"I think England and Europe in general have a better appreciation for art," he said.

Last week Mr Kusy admitted he knew little about Knutsford.

Mighty

But he said the area's wealthier residents might be interested in his models, which sell for between £3,000 and £270,000.

"I have been to England four times. One year a friend and I went for a spin in a car and we may have travelled through there," he said.

Mr Kusy said he would like to build the HMS Wren, which was adopted by the Knutsford Rotary Club in the Second World War.

During the 1939-1945 conflict some of the battleship's crew were often entertained in the town after they docked in Liverpool.

"The mighty HMS Wren is not in my fleet," said Mr Kusy. "But, I am more than happy to build one, deck plans permitting."

More than 30 years ago Mr Kusy built his first model boat for a school art project.

In 1997 critics first noticed his unusual craft when he sold a 10ft model of the Titanic to coincide with the film's release. "With each

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project I improved on my technique as they also got bigger with each model," he said.

For eight years Mr Kusy has been building a 25ft model of the giant ocean liner the RMS Queen Mary.

The project, which is almost finished, has currently used up more than 765,000 toothpicks.

The models are built in Mr Kusy's apartment when he is not working or touring as the lead guitarist with punk band Heavy Mental.

"Before you say I am crazy, I just want to say that I do not work on them full-time," he said.

"I have a normal job to maintain and a rock and roll band so I get the most work done on the weekends."

Mr Kusy's models cost about £100 to make only because his glue is sponsored by American brand Titebond 2 and local schools donate millions of toothpicks.

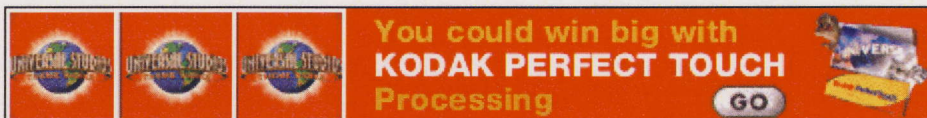
The work has been featured in People Magazine and could be exhibited in England's Southampton Maritime Museum and London Maritime Museum this year. Visit <http://users.rcn.com/kusy/toothpick.html> for more information.

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