Brickworld 2007 Report!

BrickJournal

Issue 9 • Fall 2007

people • building • community

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Events:
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LEGOFest

Model:
The Blackton Intelligence Agency

Interviews, Instructions AND MORE!

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About the Cover:
Matt Delanoy's Mos Pepa at Brickworld Photo by Joe Meno.

From the Editor:

Nine issues, and *BrickJournal* is still going strong. The magazine hit it's highest page count in this issue, and it's because of all the people who want to tell a story.

The LEGO community is full of stories - from the report of an event that just began, like Brickworld, to events that are in Europe, like 1000steine-Land to events in Asia, like Building Asia Brick by Brick. Other events are stories waiting to be told, like FIRST LEGO League this year.

Then there are the personal stories - the builder's story behind their building, from building items that could fit easily in one's hand to layouts that cover tables with buildings and tracks. There are stories about all the people who build, from professionals to the people just having fun.

There's also stories about teaching and passing things to the next generation, whether it be by challenging children in a game, or challenging them to learn to build a robot. For me, these are the strongest stories to share, as they are much like pebbles thrown in a pond...ripples are made.

There are stories about celebration, like the 75th Annivseray party that the LEGO Group had. There's also the fith anniversary of 1000-steine Land and the return of the 501st Garrison to the National Space Centre in the United Kingdom.

All of these stories are threads that become the story of the community. It's a big tapestry that we have created, and as we find more and learn more, it only gets larger. *BrickJournal* has become a keeper of stories to pass to others. Every issue has something new to read and to see, thanks to the efforts of the contributor and staff.

But there's much more to see and much more to tell. For each story we print, there are many more waiting in the wings.

So what's your story? Is it an event, or is it about how you were inspired to start building? Or is it a celebration of the hobby through your eyes? It's your story - so write it!

I'd love to hear it.

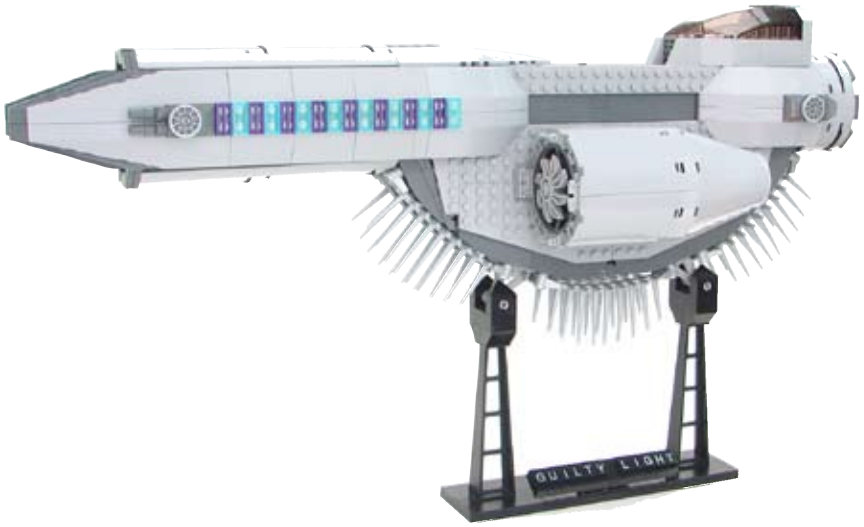
Joe Meno
Editor

P.S. Have ideas or comments? Drop me a line at admin@brickjournal.com. Or go to www.lugnet.com and leave a comment on their forums! I'm open to suggestions and comments and will do my best to reply.

Building His Own Style: Nannan Zhang

Many builders in the LEGO community build in one subject they like, whether it be Space, Train, Town, Technic or any one of a number of other themes. Nannan Z. is an exception. He started as an ordinary builder but ventured into exploring new themes and styles that are nothing short of extraordinary. *BrickJournal* dives into the mind of Nannan and takes a look at his unusual style of building!

Interview by: Joe Meno
Photography by: Nannan Zhang



"Guilty Light"

Tell us a little about yourself.
I'm a college student studying pre-med. My background is Chinese and I've always loved construction toys. When I was very young, I played with wooden blocks and built with plastic bricks similar to LEGO.

When did you start LEGO building?
I opened my first LEGO set in 1997 and have been building ever since. However, I was entirely unaware of the online community until late 2004, and this most fantastic revelation spurred me to take my building to the next level, and perhaps even to the next dimension as of recently. Getting to the point where I'm at right now was far from an overnight process. My early days in LEGO building looked very different.

Your early works show that you built in many different themes, from Bionicle to Space to even Western. You seem to have explored theme building - is this true?
Yes, I used to build scenes from the nostalgic late 90s LEGO themes such as the Adventurers, Wild West, and Rock Raiders (my memory hasn't lived through the old days of Classic Space or even Classic Castle). I crazed out for Bionicle when it first came out and collected every Toa and villain for the first several seasons. I was interested in almost every theme LEGO put out back then. Even now I'm still interested in building multiple themes ranging from space to art.

You have many different recent models, so we'll start with your weapons gallery – the Guns Museum. What got you interested in building minifigure firearms, and how do you build these?
That's a good question. I was trying to come up with a gun design for a minifig back in late 2004 when I stumbled upon the technique of using a minifig's hand for the grip and magazine of the gun. Inspiration struck instantly like a blazing bullet and I worked hastily to come up with other new gun designs. Eventually I found myself with a small armory so I released the first Guns Museum gallery. Because many enjoyed it, I continued with additions to the arsenal.

Almost three years later, Guns Museum v. 5 boasts a total of 76 differently designed minifig-scale guns (my next goal is to have 100). When I made them, I stuck with the philosophy of using non-custom LEGO pieces so that purists can use the techniques and designs without having to modify LEGO pieces or buy custom accessories.

You have taken an interest in building models with the grey color change that happened a few years ago. Many builders were not happy with the change to the new grey, now called bley (blue-grey), but you have highlighted it for yourself... why?
Why me? When I discovered the online community in late 2004, it also happened to be the dawn of the bley "blasphemy". I saw in the new light a sign to start fresh with the shifting tide, so I abandoned my earlier interests in building themed creations and plunged into building Space. The color scheme of light bley and dark bley quickly sank in, for I love the cold metal tech feel of a bley spacecraft. Right now my collection is largely overshadowed by monochromatic bley pieces and black, speaking of which…

"Siren"

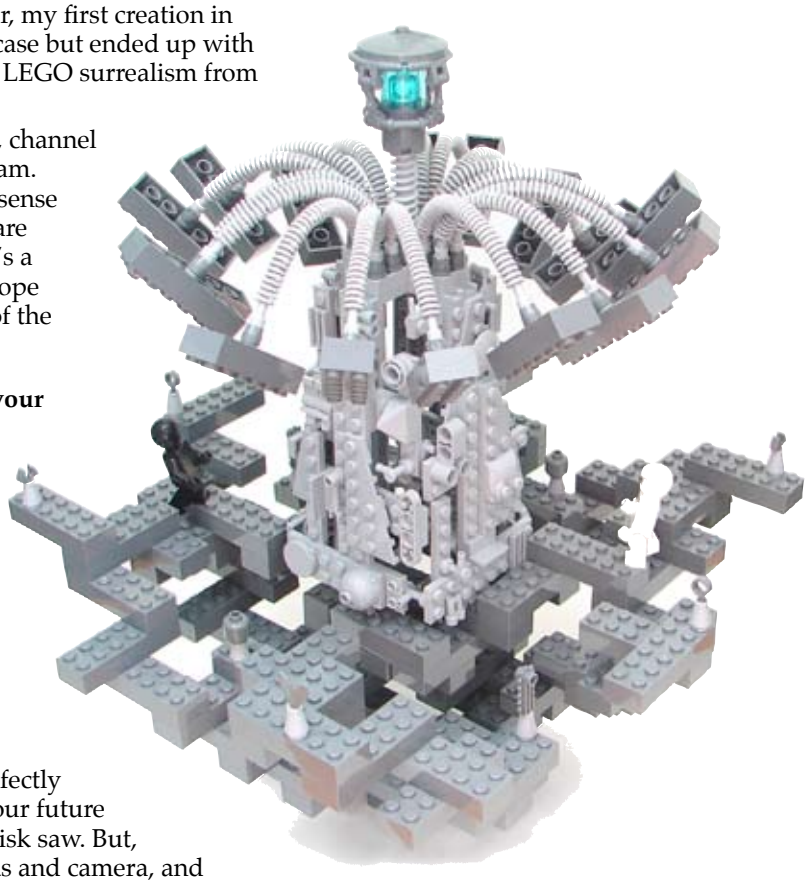
Tell us about your Black Fantasy creations – they are biomechanical and darkly imaginative.
…I had a dormant fascination with dark and alien creatures when I built my first few Black Fantasy MOCs. These creatures resemble a grotesque fusion of organic flesh and machine technology, resulting in a wave of nightmarish biomechanical monsters. When building a Black Fantasy creature, I use only black pieces and transparent neon orange for the eye(s). I also amassed a good number of black tentacle pieces, which are featured in most of those creations.

Earlier this year I came across the writings of H.P. Lovecraft, which further fueled my interest in exploring this new theme of darkness and horror. Black Fantasy is a theme I'm definitely going to develop further, and I already have the basics of an epic storyline and a flash movie planned (hopefully advancing technology will make this feat easier to accomplish). I see the theme as something that others can associate me with in the near future, but recently I've also been known to build in another uncommon theme: LEGO surrealism.

Tell us about this theme of surrealism.
One day I'd like to see a display of my weird works and say the lines "I am surrealism!" Indeed, my surrealist works are inspired by Salvador Dali when I bought a book of his paintings a few years ago. However, my first creation in surrealism came by accident, when I tried to build a staircase but ended up with a set of stairs that looked more like a ribbon. I discovered LEGO surrealism from that day forward.

I build surrealism because it is a way to express my ideas, channel my emotions, and construct the images that I see and dream. In surrealism, I am free to create anything, and the lesser sense it makes, the more it looks right. Some of these creations are deeply personal while others convey universal themes. It's a style that's never been heavily explored in LEGO, and I hope to inspire others to create art and symbolic meaning out of the brick.

The back stories and writings that accompany some of your models such as your surrealist works and Black Fantasy creations are very off-key. What inspired you to build and then write about your models?
Captioning photos of my models feels as good as building the MOCs, and my larger and more significant works naturally inspire me to create a backstory or write something lengthy that further enhances the impact of the subject depicted. I enjoy creative writing as well as free writing. I think a lot and sometimes too much, which as a result makes my writings abstract and seem like mad babblings at times. But I perversely enjoy all the feedback concerning my sanity or lack of. Rest assured, for I appear to be a perfectly sane and sensible young man, right? And I may just be your future neighborhood surgeon wielding a scalpel, and maybe a disk saw. But, (thankfully) the tools at my current disposal are just bricks and camera, and maybe some gadgets in Photoshop.



"Symmetrical Transformation of Locus Amoenus"

"In-Motion"

How do you photograph your models? There's a very nice professional look to your photos.
Thanks, it's actually quite simple, but the process of discovering and perfecting this simple technique took over a year. On a sunny day, I set my models against a white poster board and surround all three sides with presentation boards to block out light from any concentrated source such as a window or lamp. The dim natural lighting of the space around the model then automatically eliminates any shadows cast by the model. I use a digital camera on a tripod to take the pictures, setting the exposure to a high level to offset the low lighting.

I edit my pictures with basic features on Photoshop to crop, turn up the brightness (so the background is completely white), and then tweak with levels to darken the color of my subject. It can take as little as half an hour from set up to having edited photos of a MOC. I believe that the presentation of one's work makes up half of its enjoyment value by the many out there who like LEGO.

Do you work with other builders in the community? How do they affect your building and building style?
LEGO as a hobby wouldn't be the same without the community. I browse websites and forums frequently and interact with friends on Flickr, Classic-Space, FBTB, and Builders Lounge, which is small forum of many skilled and friendly builders. I build for myself and for those who enjoy LEGO, and I strive to build with innovation of style. Back home, I have a close friend who also loves LEGO and we constantly keep in touch and support each other's ambitions to build or collect. Although I've yet to meet my online friends in real life, I hope to attend LEGO conventions in the near future when I can find time and money to squeeze out of college for just a few days. I keep almost every one of my MOCs still intact mostly for this purpose. I'd love to meet you guys out there.

"Cosmic Chaos"

Do you think that you have settled into a niche? What do you like to build the most?
Yes, at the moment I seem to have mapped out my interests. I enjoy building surrealism, vignettes, bley spaceships, and horrific evil black creatures. Most importantly, I take great pleasure in creating something which no one has ever imagined.

One more thing... What's up with the killer rabbit?
Ha ha! Killer Bunny is a comical character I created back in 2004, who wields a chainsaw and carelessly demonstrates his insanity. I am currently using Killer Bunny in my signatures across various forums and I've thought about including him in future adventures, so he's a major player in my whimsical world.

You can see more of Nannan's work at Brickshelf:
http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?m=a-tree

and in MOCpages:
http://www.mocpages.com/home.php/1175

"Killer Bunny"

Placating the Purists

BrickForge's Kyle Peterson (known in the hobby as 'armothe') gives us a closer look at his craft.

Article and art provided by Kyle Peterson

Kyle Peterson and his two boys take a pause from building to pose for BrickJournal.

Ever since the release of the classic yellow castle (set #375 / 6075) I was hooked on the brick. But without the dashing knights upon their trusty steeds I would only have had a pile of yellow blocks. Like most System sets the models are fun to master but without their populous figure counterparts they are lifeless. Minifigs have come a long way since their faceless and armless counterparts of the 70s but still allow us to role-play long after the sets are built.

Not only are minifigs fun to play with but they are also the perfect canvas for expression. Their compact size and articulation make it easy for anyone to make a mini version of their favorite movie star, historical figure or superhero. The art of minifig customization has grown much in the past few years and along with it those who supply the resources to make the craft more enjoyable.

I consider it a privilege to work with fellow hobbyist RedBean to bring to the community custom brick & minifig accessories through project BrickForge. I'd like to take a few moments to take you inside our world and answer a few of the more popular questions we've received over the past two years.

What is BrickForge?

BrickForge is a joint effort between me (armothe) and RedBean to better enhance the minifig customization hobby by providing the community with items like professionally molded ABS accessories, decals and stickers.

How did you guys get into minifig customization?

BrickForge originally began in 2001 as RedBean Studios, founded and operated by RedBean - one of pioneers to professionally mold custom minifig accessories from ABS plastic. Mainly recognized by the AFOL community for his works in the fantasy and superhero genre, Redbean actually grew up playing with Classic Space LEGO sets. It was from his numerous Gundam MG models that he learned the skills of modeling and decaling which he transitioned into sculpting accessories & printing decals for his custom minifigs. Enough appreciation and demand caused RedBean to pursue having his custom works immortalized in plastic and made available to the masses. Although RedBean Studios ceased to exist, following its amalgamation with BrickForge, many of his custom works can still be viewed online at the Minifig Customization Network (www.minifigcustomizationnetwork.com).

armothe renders concepts in 2D vector software.

I began messing around with minifigs as a result of my passion for customizing action figures. In addition to painting and part-swapping I printed my own peel-'n-stick torso decals as well dabbling in a bit of sculpting to create a few custom helmets. I also developed a neat way of designing custom minifig torsos by using removable paper-wrap templates. RedBean and I stumbled upon each other in 2002 and quickly developed a mutual respect for each others work.

Where does BrickForge draw inspiration from?

As both childhood and AFOL fans of the brick there were always parts we wanted to see but were never officially made. I was a pretty big castle fan growing up and I never understood why there wasn't a classic great helm to adorn my knights, or a cow to provide a stable-mate to the horse. We are also both into various fantasy works such as Tolkien, Lewis or Niles and love to give our attention to items where we can be a bit more creative. The AFOL community provides input as well but those usually involve intellectual property and we try not to get too involved in licensing issues.

How do you do what you do?

After we come up with a list of ideas we do our best to group projects by items with similar color/s while keeping the mold as diverse as possible. We then sketch our visions on paper or in some sort of 2D vector art program. This gives us a better idea of whether or not the general shape is simple or too complex. From there RedBean will take his tools and draft a quick sculpt of what we expect the final item to look like. If all looks good we return to the 2D software and take accurate measurements of every line, curve and angle.

We then turn over both the sculpted prototype and 2D drawing to our CAD experts who trace the design in 3D software. This is a very intricate process as we find out whether or not the part can actually be engineered the way we want.

Next, we'll make any last-minute adjustments in the CAD program and begin the injection process. A mold is cut from aluminum stock to make a sample which we use to ensure our parts fit together with other official pieces as well as our own.

RedBean sculpts prototypes from resin to ensure compatibility.

Once we are satisfied with the sample, the colors are mixed (based mainly on the existing LEGO palette) and with hundreds of pounds of pressure the 12,000 lb injection machine spits out hundreds of ABS accessories each minute. During the injection molding process, hot molten plastic is forced under pressure by a hydraulic ram into a closed mold. The mold is cooled to freeze the plastic in the desired shape. The accessories are released, sorted and packed for shipping.

BrickForge's steer, cow, sheep & pig

What has been your most challenging project to date?

Our most difficult project to date has definitely been the barnyard animals we undertook this past year. Having mastered minifig accessories we decided to branch out into something totally different. Who couldn't use more animals for their MOCs? Each animal has a minimum two pieces (left & right) that snap together for a complete assembly. The challenge of getting both pieces to snap together firmly and providing enough 'clutch power' have been pretty difficult, but with successful results. Expect more animals from us in the future.

What's next for BrickForge?

We are already nearing production with our next set of items which many will be happy to know are strictly minifig accessories. This isn't to say we are only committed to minifigs – I think our barnyard animals proved that. As the community begins to take further notice of what we do we really want to expand our items to not only cover a wider array of themes, but also building parts such as bricks and other elements.

BrickForge can be found online at www.brickforge.com.
Armothe's gallery: www.flickr.com/photos/armothe/
RedBean's gallery: www.minifigcustomizationnetwork.com/flexilist/1/23

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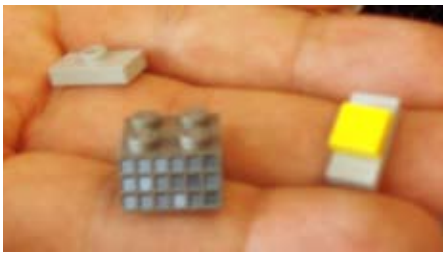
Building Big Out of Building Small

Article by Eric Borrega and Didier Enjary
Photos by Didier Enjary

Eric Borrega is a LEGO builder. He builds cars, railway stations and trains, castles and houses and displays them in layouts. Nothing really original you would say... but all his models are microscale. Let us discover this small world.

Where is this idea born? It came to him when he discovered the 1349 set from the Studios theme (Steven Spielberg Moviemaker set). He found in it two fundamental elements that turned him into a microscale fan : the 1 stud wide car made of a jumper plate and 1x1 tile and the 2x2 decorated bricks with patterned windows to make buildings.



BrickJournal: First, could you introduce yourself?
Eric Borrega: I'm 32 . I live in south of France. I left my dark age when I found a 9V train in a second-hand toy sale seven years ago . I decided to rebuild a LEGO city like I used to do in my childhood. So I switched from train modeling because with LEGO bricks, nothing seems to be stuck in a time warp . You can modify your layout as you want. I also have been a FreeLUG (French LEGO Users Group) member since 2003.

BJ : Why did you decide to go into microscale?
EB: It seems easier to make incredible and various building than in minifig scale. You can create many landscape variations in a small place and a big city with a minimum amount of space.

BJ: What makes you to choose a building or another to be built?
EB: The key element is the choice of windows' colour. I do not want a realistic layout but something coloured and nice. For instance, I try to use parts in an unusual way, in an unexpected purpose. I try to use all the "exotic" LEGO colours. I also create my "miniville" with modular units (48x48 baseplate). To this day , there are 6 units. I plan to add new modules in the future as I have a lot of ideas in my mind.

BJ: Do you use official models?
EB: I have been inspired by two official models - but minifig scale - to create the railway station and the warehouse for trains.

BJ: What's your opinion about the very first microscale LEGOFactory sets ?
EB: I bought two of them (the airport - #5524 & building - #5526). I didn't like the amusement park very much.

I prefer the 5526 for the high buildings and the Statue of Liberty. This set is funny with his cars and the monorail.
It looks more realistic because the cars are bigger than a simple jumper plate and 1x1 tile.

Maybe one day I'll use this size to do a new town. I was inspired by some ideas from the two of them for a building. I hope that LEGO will do some new sets of this kind in the years to come.

BJ: Is there a part you really appreciate as a microscale builder?
EB: My favorite part is the brick 1x2 without inner tube for high and modern construction.

There is also the new minislope (1x1x2/3 slope aka cheese or chiklet slope) and the brick 1x1 with indented stud on one side (4070 - the famous headlight brick AKA washing machine brick) particularly for windows (used backside turned on the front).

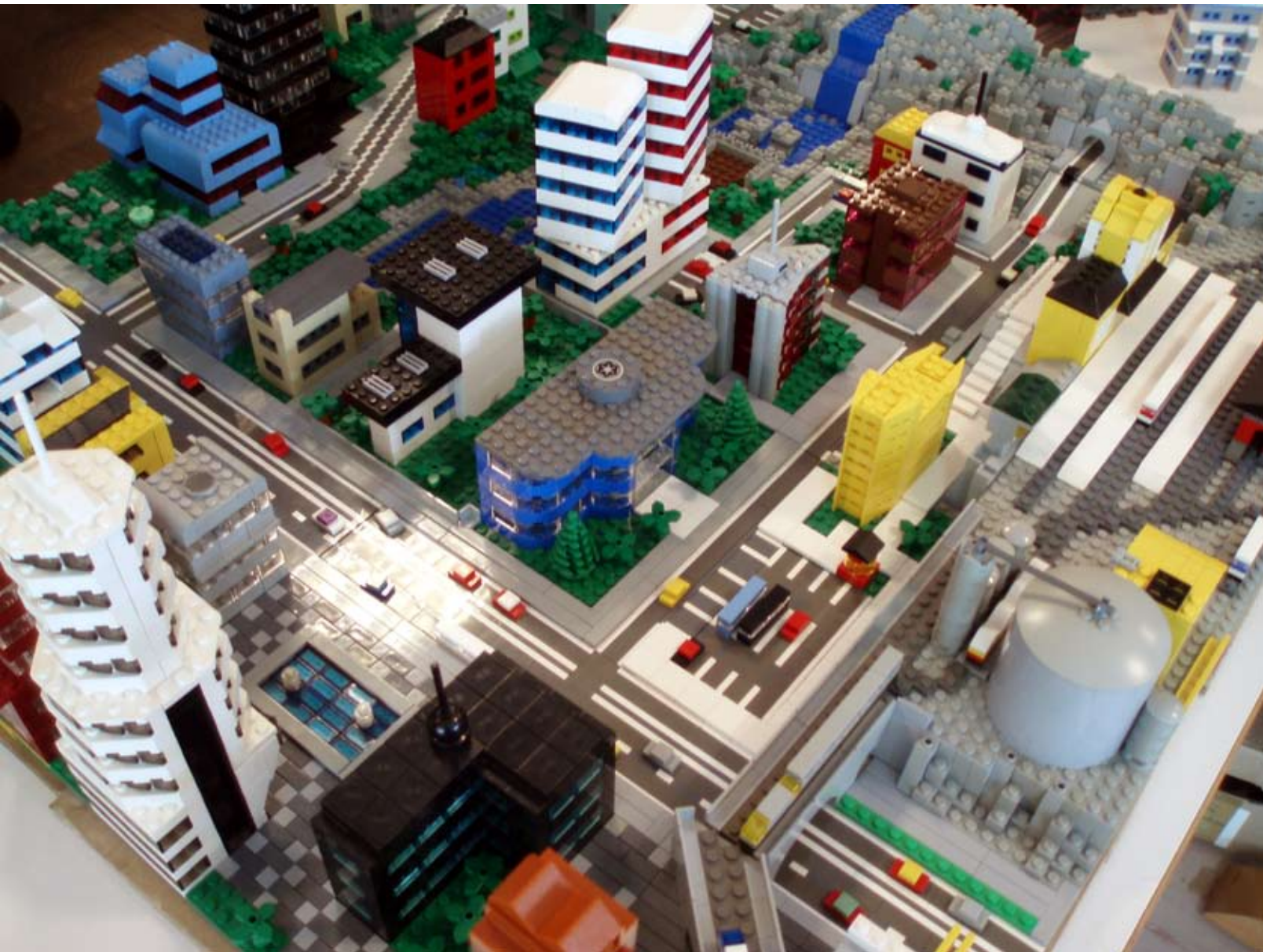
I hope LEGO will produce more transparent parts like the 3x1 curved slope without studs (50950), but was disappointed to find out that TLC reduced the number of colors especially concerning transparent colors.

BJ: Do you create some models virtually ?
EB: Until now, I never have used software such as LDD or MLCAD to create my models. I think I would lose all the pleasure of building and rebuilding .

BJ: What is the main difficulty in building in microscale ?
EB: It is hard to get a large collection of various and small parts to create what you want. I bought some parts on Bricklink , from LEGOLAND park and LEGO services or trade with FreeLUG members. When I started I was not an expert in the different ways of building construction. I learn everyday by using SNOT (Studs Not on Top) and other techniques. It's quite an art to do daring building.

(continued on next page)


HOTEL



BJ: What is your prefered theme beside microscale?
Eric: I like some 9v trains , City , Creator and LEGO Factory sets and LEGO merchandising is something I share with my girlfriend. I also enjoy the old pre-minfig city sets because with a restricted selection of elements, you can find an important variety of models.

BJ: What kind of set(s)/model(s) you would appreciate TLC to release?
EB: After the Exclusive Eiffel Tower (10181), a microscale tower will be a good idea .

A microscale city in the Creator theme (like Bonanza house) will be terrific. It should contain parts allowing people to start with basic micro-town module.
I also hope to see (minifig scale) more modular houses like market street and city sets from the eighties .

I hope you will enjoy my constructions and please visit my gallery to see new constructions:
http://photos.freelug.org/main.php/v/chatpin/microscale/.

Building Classy Rides and Micro Towns:

A Talk With Henning Birkeland

Interview by Joe Meno
Photography by Henning Birkeland

One of the more interesting building challenges is building cars. Usually, a car's curves are too hard to articulate in LEGO elements. One builder, Henning Birkeland, has built exotic cars, which pose unique challenges in building. Along with his auto building, he has also built some micro models in LEGO Digital Designer. *BrickJournal* talked to him about his models and building.

How long have you been LEGO building?
I have built with LEGO almost my entire life. When I was just a couple of years old, I inherited some LEGO from family. I got LEGO for every birthday and Christmas and had a lot of City sets and loved to make big towns and cars. When I was about seven years old I got my first Technic LEGO set, a yellow set where you could make a van, windmill and jeep (set 8020). The next years I just spent a lot of time playing with Technic LEGO and engines, I also made a lot of short LEGO movies using high8 videocam. When I was about 16 years old I sold a lot of my LEGO because I needed gas for my moped, something I regret today. But I have bought a lot of sets the last couple of years and now I probably have more LEGO than I ever had before.

When did you start building automobiles?
I have always loved cars, especially old cars. My father shares the same interest and owns an MGB 1967 that has been

an inspiration to me. In the early nineties I bought a plastic car glueset of a Jaguar SS100 and fell in love with it. In that period I had just started playing around with some 3D software on my computer and the car was one of the first models I made in 3D. Since that time I have always thought it would be cool to make it with LEGO, but I didn't have the bricks for it. Last year I attended the LEGO Factory competition on LEGO.com and it was then I really started playing with LEGO again. A year ago I attended a LEGO competition and got 5th place with a mosaic picture of my wife, the competition was held by the Norwegian community http://www.brikkelauget.no where I later have become a member. The last year I have created a lot of cars and other models. I was recently in Sweden and bought the new Big Rig set for a good price and I loved all the new great bricks that were in the set, and with the bricks from this set I started to build the Jaguar.

Your attention to detail is great on the Lamborghini and Jaguar - how long did it take you to build these, and how did you plan the building?

The first thing I do when I'm about to make a car is to find good reference images on the internet. I also search for blueprints and draw a LEGO grid over it. This often helps me to plan the size. I used a lot of time on the Lamborghini because I took it apart and tried a lot of different solutions. I always try to place the bricks in different directions to get the most out of the bricks. Totally I have used 20-30 hours. The Jaguar I did a lot faster because I know the car so well and the Big Rig set had a lot of good solutions that were an inspiration to me, totally I may have used 15 hours or so.

Your LEGO minis on LEGO Digital designer are pretty impressive too - which do you like to build more - the larger scale vehicles or micro?

I think they are equally fun. I love to put lots of details in my models and with big cars this isn't too hard, but when you build micro sets you really have to be creative and use bricks in a whole different way and I think that is a great challenge. One day I'd love to make a big city in micro style.

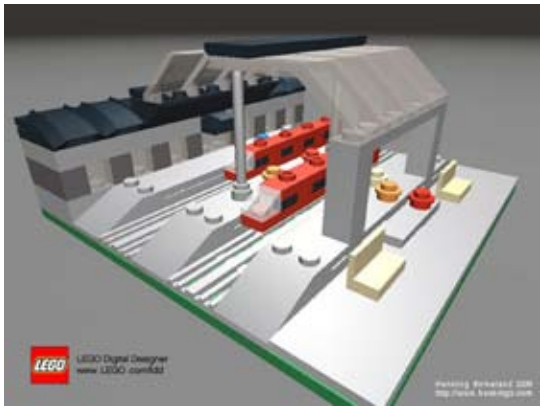
You're a 3D teacher - has LEGO building helped you with designing and visualization? Do you use LEGO models to help visualize a design?

It's more 3D that helps me with the LEGO building, rather than LEGO helping me to do 3D, but of course the urge to build things has been important both to LEGO and 3D. I'm used to working with 3D forms all day long so this is probably helping me to picture the LEGO creations/solutions more clearly in my mind. I don't think I have used LEGO to visualize a design and then do it in 3D. But I have used 3D lots of times to help me building LEGO models. I have among others made the Earth in LEGO where I used the 3D software to decide how to put the bricks to get the round shape.

What would be the dream LEGO set for you to design?

It would have to be a really detailed veteran car or a big micro city.

You can see more of Henning's LEGO creations at http://www.henningb.com or http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?m=henningbirkeland



In his Words: Fanis Dovas

Building Vehicles with TECHNIC!

Article and Photography by Fanis Dovas

I've been building LEGO models for as long as I can remember. My mother had LEGO of her own when she was growing up and, although sadly she did not keep those old pieces from the early sixties, when she had kids of her own she knew what to get to please us. When I was eight years old I built my first model from life, a fireplace. I kept getting more LEGO System sets and building them, sometimes with slight modifications, but it wasn't until I was 15 that I made my first truck from scratch. It was a MAN truck made from memory. I didn't have enough pieces of the same color and the analogies were all wrong, but it was a turning point for me. I haven't stopped building vehicles ever since.

I had already discovered the online LEGO community on the Internet and was inspired by the work of Dennis Bosman, Jennifer Clark and others to build better and more complex models. The owner of a gas station here in the small Greek town where I live saw my first 1:13 trucks and asked me to build models of his two tankers. I did, and when I took them to the gas station to show them to him, the locals' genuine interest encouraged me. Soon it became known that I was good at it and more people started asking me to make models of their vehicles. A lot of those I wouldn't have selected to build, mostly due to lack of specific colors, but

I made them to please the owners. In the past four years I have built everything from four-wheel drives to excavators.

Once I've seen a vehicle and checked that its color and curves can be duplicated using the LEGO pieces from my growing collection of over 42,000 items, I take pictures of it and make some measurements. Then I calculate the model's dimensions (all my creations are made at a 1:13 scale, except for the 4WDs that are made at 1:7) and start building it. I've tried working with software such as MLCad but it doesn't really work for me. I only know what I'm doing when I'm physically working with the pieces. I spend six hours a day on average building my models (more on the weekends and school breaks), and it usually takes me about a month to finish each. After it's all done and I've added the stickers I've made on the computer (some with the help of my older brother) I like to take the models outside and photograph them with the originals. Usually the owners are more than happy to oblige. Then I upload the pictures on my Brickshelf gallery (http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?m=fanis). I usually keep a model around for a couple of months, in which period dozens of people see it and handle it. After I disassemble the model, the parts are so dirty that I put them in the washing machine (I will soon be uploading details of my washing method at my personal website, currently under construction). By that time I know what I want to build next, so a new project begins.

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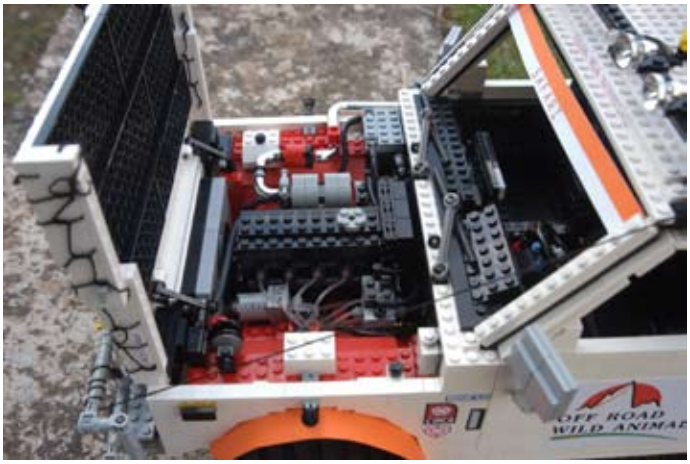


Ever since 2005 I've been adding as much realistic detail as I can, both on the inside and the outside. These are the most challenging parts of the construction, and that's where the TECHNIC pieces come in handy. They allow me to make stronger chassis for the models, make the wheels turn and create gear boxes, differential and suspension systems. The electrical parts provide the engines and motors for my models, while the pneumatic pieces are invaluable when it comes to building excavators and large trucks, either on their own or combined with the electrical systems. All my creations are combinations of System and Technic pieces, and they each have a different function. The System parts add the visual likeness to the originals, but it's the Technic parts that give the models life and movement and make them more than a pretty pile of bricks.

Because most of my models are commissioned by the vehicle owners, I don't always get to make what I want. The biggest compromise I've made so far was building a blue MAN 33.332 truck using red bricks (blue is always in short supply) and then changing the color on the computer. I am also never fully satisfied with the interiors I make. The textures of the soft parts such as car seats are very hard to reproduce, and I still don't feel I have managed to render them realistically. On the other hand I find the whole process of working from life more fulfilling. Soon I will be moving back to Athens, my birthplace, where I hope to have the opportunity to make more trailer trucks, which is where my real passion lies. This summer I also turned 18, so I am a proper 'Adult Fan of LEGO.' In the years to come I am sure I will continue getting inspiration from the great work I see in BrickJournal and on the internet to make more models. There's a timeless quality about LEGO pieces, both in their physical endurance and the potential for new forms and combinations. For me, this is only the beginning.

As mentioned in this article, you can see more of Fanis' work at his Brickshelf gallery: http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?m=fanis

The AFFOL
(Adult Female Fan of LEGO)

Over the past few issues I have searched the world for female fans of LEGO. Many of them have shared with me their views on products for girls as well as what they would like to see in the future. Of course, they've also shown me the amazing models they build and in turn I've shared those with *BrickJournal* readers. It is interesting to read through their answers to my questions and to find many of them fall in certain age ranges, and the fact that few of them want to build with the stereotypically female colors like pink.

While this is a mostly male dominated hobby (boys and men), it is also exciting to see the girls and women being able to build so well and as time goes on, maybe there is hope for more of us girls, yet! Girls throughout the world are encouraged to build and use the LEGO product, and as you can see, age is no barrier. You do not need to be an artist, designer, sculptor or anything else, just be yourself, have fun, and build with your imagination! There is plenty of inspiration out there and loads of fantastic parts and colors with which to build and create some of your wildest dreams!

So, let's hope for more female minifigs, more females in advertisements (personally I think these things are also lacking) and many other exciting things for both boys & girls in the future!

If you are a female AFOL, have a website, Brickshelf folder or pictures of your MOCS and would like to see your MOCs in *BrickJournal*, please email me at: mel@brickjournal.com

People:
Female Fans of LEGO

Mariann

Name: Mariann Asanuma
Age: 30
Country: USA
Your hobbies: LEGO building, reading, Capoeira (a Brazilian martial art), singing, writing, quilting, origami, and drawing
Gallery: http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?m=modelgal

The first LEGO bricks I ever remember getting were a big bag of them from a thrift store when I was about six. I do also remember having the kitchen Homemaker set and getting into the Castle sets at a really young age. Although I had lots of different toys growing up, I always went back to LEGO. Both then and now I usually only built the actual sets only once, preferring to create my own models. I built a lot of houses, mostly multi-colored due to lack of bricks. I did have a few Barbie dolls and a Strawberry Shortcake Mansion, but every birthday and Christmas I always wanted more LEGO sets.

I loved the castle sets, especially the Forest men sets, still do in fact. I loved creating intricate castles and Forest men hideouts with lots of secret doors and furnished rooms. I loved making things as intricate as possible, and as detailed as possible, which is probably why I loved designing things for Miniland in LEGOLAND California, what little girl wouldn't want to build entire cites in miniature?

Why are you an AFOL?

I never had a Dark Age as AFOLs call it. I always had LEGO around and always kept building and playing with it my whole life. In fact, once my brothers stopped liking LEGO I took all their Technic and LEGO too. The types of designs and my interests changed over time, but I kept building.

How many hours do you spend building with LEGO?

At least a couple hours if not the whole day when I get the chance. I do have to admit that while I worked at LEGOLAND as a Master Model Designer I didn't design too much at home, but now that I have changed jobs, I've started on my own MOCs again.

What are your favourite building themes (both what LEGO produce and what you like to build yourself?)

Well, as I said, castle was one of my favorites, but now I don't really have a particular favorite any more. I don't completely buy LEGO sets just for building any more; in fact I buy a lot more from Pick-a-Brick and grab bags when the LEGO stores have them than buying actual sets. I don't really have a favorite theme any more either, after working at LEGOLAND for five years, I can basically design and make whatever I want whatever size I want (limited only to my current stock of bricks). So now I just build and design what I feel like building – animal, house, etc. – at the time that I think of it. I do have to say that my favorite types of building are Micro-scale, Miniland-scale and Mosaic (the not studs-up kind). I got very good at building those types of models at LEGOLAND.

What do you like most about LEGO and their products?

The versatility, the possibilities are endless. That is what has kept me a LEGO fan for my entire life. Even as some pieces are faded out and others are added, LEGO just keeps getting better. I can remember when there were only six colors to LEGO, the colors and pieces that have come out over the past twenty five years, and what you can now do with LEGO is simply fantastic!

5 parts you would love LEGO to produce:

The 1x1 slope in all the colors – mainly tan – that it does not already come in. This is one of my favorite newer pieces and I keep finding new ways to use them. The hinge brick in 1x1 (instead of only 1x2) I could think of a lot of things that could be done with that piece. The tile in 1x3 and 1x5, I don't know how many times I wished that they existed.

What is it like to be as a female in the AFOL world, which is dominated mostly by men?

I never really thought about it before. I know that there are a lot more men than women but I always just took that as the way that it is.

What would you suggest to LEGO to make their products more popular for girls?

Don't make "girl" LEGO sets. I understand that people want the rarer colors like pink and purple, I like them just as much as every one else does. But that shouldn't make that a "girl" set. I prefer sets that appeal to both guys and girls. That is why I like the Creator sets and the new Café Corner. They are for everyone.

Is LEGO doing enough to promote their products towards girls?

Unfortunately no, every commercial seems to be geared towards boys. Girls like to construct and build just as much as boys do, I'm living proof. Okay, so maybe most girls don't go into Star Wars, Exoforce or Aqua Raiders. I'm into all three, but I buy LEGO sets more for the pieces than the sets anyways.

What would you like to see from LEGO in the future in relation to girls?

More sets like the Café Corner and the Modular Houses. Also if LEGO made more Make and Create type sets like the Animal or the Ultimate Collector sets like the Dragon one that appeal to everyone.

Kecia

Name: Kecia Christine Hansen
Age: 40
Country: Denmark
Your hobbies: LEGO, Gauge 1 and H0 scale model railroading, Music.
Galleries:
http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?m=KC
http://www.adventurers.dk
http://www.brickportal.com

I got my first set at Christmas when I was four or five years old – the 645 Milk float and trailer. But my brother also had LEGO back then, so I played with his stuff too. I played a lot with LEGO as a child. It was one of my favourite things to do. I didn't really have a favourite theme as a child. At that time there weren't as many different themes as there are now. So I just built whatever I liked with the pieces available, mostly Town related though. I've always liked how you can design and construct almost anything you can imagine from LEGO parts. After a "dark age" I rediscovered LEGO in 2000, although I did play with LEGO with my nephew now and then during my "dark age". But it wasn't until 2000, that I really emerged as an AFOL. I got my hands on a LEGO catalogue, and I just had to buy the 5987 Dino Research Compound and 6575 Polar Base. Then I simply realized how much I had missed building with LEGO. So I continued to buy even more sets. I also started searching the Internet for information. Then I found out how many cool sets I had missed out on during my "dark age". Now I find myself with a collection of something like 1000 sets/250,000 pieces. Yikes, I need a larger home! :-)

How many hours do you spend building with LEGO?

Ooh. It varies a lot. Sometimes I can build 8-10 hours in a day (or night!). Sometimes I don't build anything for weeks… I usually gather a whole bunch of parts for my models during a brief time frame, and use a lot of time to build with those parts as soon as I get them. Then take a break for some time before it starts all over again! But I regularly buy new official sets, and build them right away. Apart from pieces from Basic/Creator tubs/boxes and sets I have more than one copy of, I don't use parts from the official sets that I own in my MOCs, but keep those sets complete.

What are your favourite building themes (both what LEGO produce and what you like to build yourself?)

My favourite theme is definitely Adventurers! I like most Minifig themes though, in particular Town, Trains and Harry Potter. But I also like Pirates, Castle, Vikings, Star Wars, Western, and Mindstorms… I mostly build Town, Train or Adventurers related MOCs. I also enjoy building micro scale size a lot. It's a fun challenge to see just how many details you can build into such small models!

What do you like most about LEGO and their products?

How can you not love LEGO, when you're from Denmark?! I mostly like how LEGO is such a creative product. You get to be a designer, architect, engineer, constructor, all at the same time! It's just such a creative toy, and with endless possibilities. I have also been fortunate enough to meet some nice people through The LEGO Group, and I appreciate that.

5 parts you would love LEGO to produce:

1. More parts in dark blue.
2. Doors and windows in more colors.
3. Monorail system.
4. More female minifigs.
5. Tubs/boxes (or Pick-a-brick) with more parts in special colours.

What is it like to be as a female in the AFOL world, which is dominated mostly by men?

It's okay. There are a lot of nice guys out there. But it's still a shame there aren't more female fans, because the ones I know are all super friendly and great! (And we all know, that AFFOLs are just more cool, aren't they Mel?! ;-))

What would you suggest to LEGO to make their products more popular for girls?

Make more parts available in all kinds of different colours, and make it easier to get/buy them in quantities. It can be very hard and expensive to get enough parts for a model when you want to use a special colour. I also would like official sets with more attention paid to small details and interiors like kitchens, furniture, etc.

Is LEGO doing enough to promote their products towards girls?

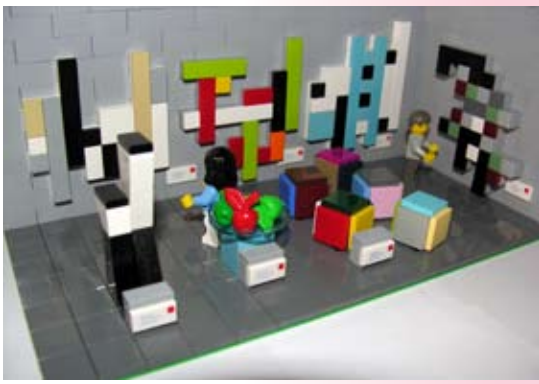
I would say no. But the real problem is there are just so few themes devoted to girls. Only DUPLO and Belville I think, and I'm not really into either…

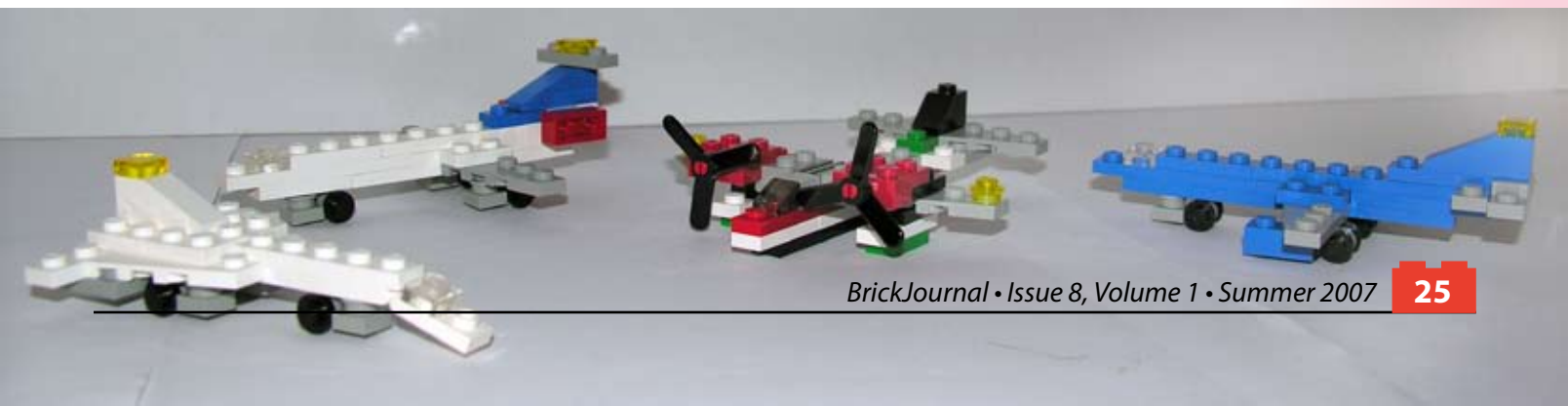
What would you like to see from LEGO in the future in relation to girls?

I would love to see LEGO bring back the Paradisa minifig theme or similar. I love those Paradisa sets! But not necessarily in pink colours. Or maybe release a holiday line. But I also like the new modular town buildings theme a lot. It's great to finally see some different types of buildings. LEGO towns have been flooded with too many police and fire stations… Accessory packs with furniture, minifigs, trees/flowers, food etc, would be nice too. And as I already said, better availability of parts in special colours.

Any other comments you would like to share?

If you're an Adventurers or Indy fan make sure you visit my website! :-) I just can't wait to get hold of those new Indiana Jones sets! And remember - LEGO is all about having fun!





People:
Female Fans of LEGO

Tânia

Name: Tânia Baixinho
Age: 33
Country: Portugal
Your hobbies: LEGO and reading (fantasy, FC) are the main ones but traveling, music and having fun with my family are also a big part of my life.
Galleries:
http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?m=tbaixinho (brickshelf)
http://LEGOficina.blogs.sapo.pt/ (blog with Luís)
http://portal0937.miniancora.com/ (0937Community site in English too)

LEGO catalogues and bricks are things that I remember since very early.

With two older sisters I inherited all their LEGO sets. During my youth I played mainly with Basic Building sets, Legoland and some Castle sets, my favourites. I also had a few houses; they had enough slopes for me to make the roofs of my buildings, which I remember well!

As my sisters were older and twins, I spent much of my playing time alone, so my parents used to buy me LEGO very often (in those days it was very easy to find LEGO sets at the stores in Portugal and with great variety too). I liked to make big constructions (as today) and I remember a great boat, a kind of Titanic style that took ages to be built and stayed for a long time on the top of the fireplace at our house (my mother was very proud of it J). With the amount of LEGO parts growing, my mother decided to buy me a Storage Cloth and that was enough for me to stop losing parts. Beyond playing outside, I liked to do puzzles and to see/ read books on old civilizations, about the sea, new inventions, travelling, always about old and very distant places. I was a happy and quiet child.

The bad news came a few years later after moving to another house, I was already on my dark age but keeping all my LEGO parts in the closet, when I found out that my mother gave all my LEGO away, it was a very sad moment. Nowadays I have thousands of parts more but still I miss my old parts.

Shortly after I started living with my husband in 2000, he left his dark age. LEGO started to be a regular presence in our lives and home. At the beginning I spent a long time touching the parts, to hear their characteristic sound; building up sets and seeing Luís building his MOCs. I found out that I didn't forget how to play with LEGO and I started to build my own creations, with much pleasure and amusement, building a small medieval village :).

Later I became a small LEGO retailer giving some financial support to this expensive hobby.

How many hours do you spend building with LEGO?

Not as many as I wish, that's sadly true.
For instance, at vacation time I can spend up to 3 or 4 hours per day, at this time I'm already building up one MOC for the next Colossal Castle Contest and I'm also improving and preparing my Heavy Water Ruins (MOC) for the trip to LEGOWorld, in October. If there's a deadline for an event, I've to reorganize the family/domestic/work schedules to be able to stay 5 or 6 hours building.

Good were the times when I could be up building till I am tired, meanwhile the family grows and you end up having much less free time…On the other hand, I can stay up to one month or more building nothing, which is very frustrating, LegOficina (our LEGO room) is a few steps away.

What are your favourite building themes (both what LEGO produce and what you like to build yourself?)

Well, Classic Castle was my first love! The parts, the design and the harmony are so attractive to me; this is one of the few themes that I became a collector of. Legoland (70s) is also a dearest theme by the innocent memories that brings up.
From the most recent themes I like Creator, the freedom to imagine and build over and over again and clearly also for the used parts and colours that later are used in my MOCs. Some City sets are also very interesting; the new modular buildings carried through one old desire of civilian buildings, this modularity has great potentialities.

Ah! This doesn't mean that I don't have other themes like Star Wars, 9v trains, Vikings, Legoland, City, DUPLO, Bob the Builder, Thomas and Friends (my daughter is crazy for them) and practically I own one or another set of all the themes that had been available in Europe since 2001, I like to try them all.
I buy sets if the parts interest me, mainly all the earth colours, (like brown, greens, tan, etc) and foliage that I can use on my medieval landscapes. Medieval with a touch of fantasy, that's my theme!

What do you like most about LEGO and their products?

The endless possibility to create; to be able to look at an element and imagine tons of applications in lots of different themes. Using parts older than myself but still in great shape. To see and hear the public in an event: "This is all built out of LEGO parts?!?" Disassembling to build something better, to overcome the limitations and to be happy with the end results.

Some of LEGO related products are also very funny, they bring a more colourful touch to AFOLs life's, homes, offices, etc. Our friends and guests are always stunned and amused by the many LEGO products beyond the bricks that they find here, at home.

5 parts you would love LEGO to produce:

A pulley; how come LEGO never produced one?
More variety (style and colours) of foliage and flowers (of course);
More variety of doors and windows (style and colours);
More variety of household objects (sadly the scale from Belville stuff is not the same)
Decorated tiles (I don't like to use stickers)

What is it like to be as a female in the AFOL world, which is dominated mostly by men?

Hmm…nice I suppose, I never felt left out. I have a few nice female partners in my Community and then there are the girlfriends/wife's from the rest of the guys. Pretty much balanced in events and meetings. But still I wish more females would show their LEGO work because I know there are a lot of them who don't share their MOCs with the rest of the community.

I think that all the females who share their lives with AFOLs, could try to start building, because I know that many of them build up sets, so why not MOCs?

What would you suggest to LEGO to make their products more popular for girls?

Stop producing good vs. evil stuff, where the masculine warlike inclination prevails! There, I've said it!

Themes don't have to be pink to be popular for girls, maybe more generic sets like business buildings (hairdresser, bookstore, sports shop, etc) for the City

theme or civilian buildings for Castle, so they can start building up their princess story without too much death in the middle.

Instead of launching each year a new fire station or police station why not a restaurant? An amusement park, a kindergarten building, and what about a farm line? Our displays would be much nicer and girls would love them.

We've a good example: DUPLO. The theme has lines for both and it sells well, my experience at my toy store gives me the credit.

How come the recent hospital theme sets never add a female minifig? Nowadays is easier to find females working in fire and police departments, so LEGO, where are the girls?? Ok, Café Corner and Market Street are good examples of how LEGO can improve but please don't stop there!

Is LEGO doing enough to promote their products towards girls?

No, not even to promote LEGO toys to boys and AFOLs in my country ;)

The promoting task towards the general population is done by the AFOLs community. For example, the mosaic sets are so cool and I'm pretty sure girls like them, we just don't have them in our shelves.

What would you like to see from LEGO in the future in relation to girls?

A fantasy (maybe medieval) world with natural colours is probably a good theme to start; it would appeal for both boys and girls. I'd like to see Clikits for sale in Portugal too (not only trough S@H because the majority of the population is unaware of its existence). I don't think that there should be themes especially dedicated to girls or boys. It would be much more interesting to see themes that could be appealing to both, working on the social, playing together, like a farm line.

Any other comments you would like to share?

I'm aware that TLC is a business, a big and profitable one. I'm happy to see that, even so, AFOLs have a major role in the contribution to the success that LEGO is reaching at this time. AFOLs promote LEGO, invest money in their collections, help LEGO in whatever they can and they also hope to see some of their wishes come true. These are a few very reasonable things being asked by the world community, please LEGO think about them, ok?

Building Hope in Jamaica, One Robot at a Time

BrickJournal talks to Marvin Hall, a man who is doing the seemingly impossible...with help from a few LEGO NXT sets!

Interview by Joe Meno
Photos provided by Marvin Hall

Marvin Hall has a mission. Talking to him in a phone conversation, he makes it sound like a simple task: to bring robotics to his homeland of Jamaica. However, it's not easy at all.

Jamaica may be known as a vacation destination, with beaches and resorts, but for many of the citizens, it's not as beautiful. Civil and gang war has made the inner city dangerous, for most people, including the children.

This would be a nearly impossible mission to most. Marvin, however, takes it in stride. His voice is rich with enthusiasm and determination – qualities that have been tested in many ways.

The Mission Begins

Marvin started his mission five years ago, while he was teaching Mathematics and Information Technology at an inner city high school in Jamaica. While in his Master's program, he contacted Mitch Resnick, a professor at the Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) about finding out ways to teach computing skills to Jamaican children "besides Microsoft Office," as he explains. "Mitch sent me some options, and I got to meet him face to face on a trip to Singapore," says Hall. It was there, while attending Singapore's ITopia celebrations, that Marvin saw the Robotic Zoo; an exhibition that was in one of the local elementary schools.

The robotic animals inspired Marvin, as well as seeing schoolchildren using robots they made to compete against each other. The robots were made with LEGO MINDSTORMS sets, and seeing the children working on them gave Marvin the means to pursue his mission.

In the fall, Marvin had started teaching at the American International School of Kingston, Jamaica and instead of teaching a course in web-design he proposed a robotics program. LEGO MINDSTORMS sets were a way to make technology accessible, and it would also be easy to invest in as the MINDSTORMS sets were relatively inexpensive. He wanted to create a curriculum that would produce competitive kids who were grounded in technology. For older students, he delivered an elective using curriculum materials provided by LEGO. For the youngsters, he decided to create an afterschool robotics club aiming to prepare Jamaica's first FIRST LEGO League (FLL) team.

In January 2003, a team of three students travelled from Jamaica to Florida to compete in the Sunshine State tournament at the Florida Institute of Technology. This first FLL team placed 13 out of 30 teams and was the highest scoring debut team at the competition. With this start, Marvin was encouraged to continue.

"I left school to get more exposure," he explains. "I was able to expand my scope by starting my own institution for robotics. I developed a summer camp and afterschool programs." His creation was The Halls of Learning, and he started with one-on-one tutoring to help support the summer programs. " I did my pilot robotics program at my old high school," he recalls. The first summer program offered 1-week courses in robotics and digital music creation. With the financial challenges, he managed to offer 8 scholarships to students. "I got $2500 from Vickers One, a Canadian sponsor," he mentions, and there is a touch of pride in his voice.

Marvin's mission is two-fold – children need to be exposed and involved with technology. Jamaica also has to be competitive in technology and computer skills in the global marketplace. His mission is one that sees no class distinction - it sees only the children.

On his own, Marvin went to the Carnegie-Mellon Robotics Academy in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to get MINDSTORMS training. "Their computer-based curriculum worked really well," he states, "because it was engaging and taught at an independent pace." From here, he got the tools needed to take his mission to a higher level.

By summer 2005, Marvin's mission had taken root and other sponsors stepped in to help out The Halls of Learning and its Creations Labs which added courses in 3D Animation and Video Game Programming in collaboration with the DigiPen Institute of Technology. The number of scholarships offered swelled from eight in

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2004 to 100 in 2005 for the labs. He also set a goal to take a team of inner city kids to a FIRST LEGO League tournament in California. What was the team's name? LEGO Yuh Mind.

A team was formed in fall 2005, and worked on the robot game and research presentation for the 2005 FLL Team Challenge: Ocean Odyssey. However, even with all the preparation they could not have anticipated the obstacles the team would encounter. During practices and preparation, the neighborhood in which they were teaching was a war zone for gangs. Before the Christmas Day meeting, a drive-by shooting left five dead in the neighborhood bringing to total to over 50 persons during the fall season. Two team members, both girls, were absent from the meeting because of fear Marvin and those who arrived continued their practice. In a place where hope was seemingly lost, one classroom kept it within its doors.

Just over a week before flying to California, there were other problems. No funding had been finalized, and when the team and parents arrive at the US embassy to apply for visas, five of the applicants were found to have out of date birth certificates. After two trips to the Jamaican Registrar's Division, five new birth certificates are received that same night. Other visa issues slowed the process, but ultimately, visas were issued to the team thanks to the help and efficiency of the US Embassy and Jamaican Registrar.

The funding was a different problem, as the financial figure could not be finalized until there was a final count of people participating. A proposal was quickly set up and sent out, and calls were made. With just over a week before the trip, financing was looking difficult, but as Marvin recalls, " Somebody is going to help us."

With all the calls was one to Scotiabank (a major Canadian bank) - this was a call recommended by an old school mate of Marvin. Unfortunately, the CEO of the bank received the request while in meetings and couldn't see the proposal, much less approve it, until 3:30 that afternoon.

At 4:30, Marvin was called by Scotiabank and informed of the good news - they will finance the entire trip! One week before the trip, everything was ready.

The FLL state tournament in San Jose proved challenging for the team's robot. Out of three rounds, the team's highest score was 117, not sufficient to rank. However, there was reason to celebrate - LEGO Yuh Mind was awarded a unanimous Judge's Award for being the team that " came the furthest and overcame the most obstacles to be at the competition." Marvin recalls with pride that, "it was our proudest moment."

Top left: One of Marvin's students gets a visa. Second from top: Marvin gets the call from Scotiabank. Middle right: LEGO Yuh Mind receives a Judge's Award. Below: The team at Google's campus in California. Bottom Left: The team with the Judge's Award

In 2006, Marvin was one of seventeen people selected for the Reuters Digital Vision Program at Stanford University in California. The program (the purpose of which is to provide resources to Fellows who work in technology in underserved communities in developing countries) served as an incubator and magnified the impact of his ideas. His initial plan was to establish a permanent robotics learning center in Jones Town, Jamaica.

Fresh from his Reuters Fellowship, Marvin has planned to expand the Halls of Learning. One of his goals, taking a robotics team to the World Robotic Olympiad in Taiwan, has become a priority. His mission has also spread, with plans to offer more robotics workshops around the country. With classes to add in digital filmmaking and photography, the students themselves will spread the Hall of Learning's stories. Through collaboration with independent filmmaker, Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi, a documentary will be made to share these stories with the world.

There is still much to still do. Halls of Learning needs to become sustainable in order to expand. "Revenue streams need to be developed", Marvin states, " and I need to find passionate people to keep the programs moving forward." He has also started to collaborate with LEGO Education in Brazil to create a magazine for the students that would be a workbook and teacher's resource, using LEGO to teach the school curriculum through 'learning by doing' . The Brazilians already have a magazine called Zoom - Marvin's goal is to create a Jamaican version of this magazine.

Through all the trials and tribulations, Marvin has kept his optimism. "Some people have told me I was blinded by the light," he says, referring to the idealism that he holds in his mission. "But for me, it is the light that gave me the vision," he concludes. His mission has been to bring robotics to Jamaica, but there's a deeper mission: he wants to give hope to the underserved children of Jamaica. As he says, "if I spend one million dollars in three years giving underprivileged children hope, I will recover. If I don't, many of the children will never recover and stay on collision course with a negative future."

You can go to the website of Halls of Learning at: www.hallsoflearning.com

You can see videos from Halls of Learning at: http://www.youtube.com/hallsoflearning.

Also, there is an interview with Marvin that can be seen at: http://www.cbtv1.com/interviewdetails.aspx?Interviewid=52

Halls of Learning's blog is: http://hallsoflearning.blogspot.com/

Below: Marvin teaching his students

These are words from a man on a mission, a mission that has brought the best out in him, his countrymen, and their children. Hope begins and prospers here, and it will turn the tide of despair and war for Jamaica, slowly but surely.

For all peace and hope starts at a hall of learning.

Star Wars: A New Universe to Build

Meet a couple of the LEGO builders that build and expand the LEGO Star Wars universe!

Article by Joe Meno
Matt De Lanoy Photo by Kevin Lauer
Other Photos by Joe Meno

The designers of the LEGO Group are not the only builders of Star Wars inspired models. There are many fan builders who make their version of the Star Wars settings, characters, and vehicles. And the models are different sizes, from spaceships that can fit on a finger to models that are several feet long! *BrickJournal* talked to a couple of Star Wars builders.

Matt De Lanoy, known online as Pepa Quin, is well regarded for his Star Wars models. From building a spaceport layout to making miniscale droid models, Matt has built much of the Star Wars universe. His best models are a series of Millennium Falcon models built in different scales, with the largest version in minifig scale and including an interior.. Matt's work has been seen in conventions and displays in the Illinois area, most recently at NMRA in Detroit.

BrickJournal spoke with him about his models and why he builds.

When did you start LEGO building? And when did you start Star Wars LEGO building?

For me, LEGO building started way back around age 5 when my aunt gave me a large box of loose brick for Christmas. It was a hand-me-down from my older cousins who were now 'too old' to be playing with toys. My collection grew from there. It started out with Town sets, perhaps one or two Castle, but Space predominated. That was when the original Futuron sets came out, and I got as many sets as I could up until Space Police II. The sets lasted only so long in their original form. They were quickly broken down and added to the growing pile of parts from which I spent many happy summers building entire Space worlds of my own design.

With the exception of a large Ice Planet set, I didn't do much with LEGO during my Jr./ Sr. High School days. It wasn't until late college, when a few good friends and I were at a local superstore. We passed by the toy aisles and I spied the first Star Wars X-wing set. I was stopped in my tracks, leaving my friends to walk ahead without me. I bought the set without thinking. Over the next few weeks, my dorm room became littered with the new Star Wars sets.

It wasn't until years later that I started making my own creations. My first creation was a small vignette of a hallway in the Rebel Blockade Runner. I used that to make a short, shaky stop-motion movie. Proud of my work, my movie aspirations grew - but I knew I'd have to create much bigger sets and models. My first real custom model in over 14 years was the first version of my Millennium Falcon (shown with cat in image for size comparison).

What's the largest Star Wars model that you have built? And the smallest?

The Millennium Falcon and ... the Millennium Falcon.

Ok, so I have a thing for the Falcon. To date I've made six original models of the Falcon - three versions at the large scale, a Micro scale, and two Mini scale ships.

There are two reasons for this, I think. The first is that the Millennium Falcon is so iconic of the Star Wars series; it just seems a natural for me to build. It is also, it can be argued (well, I would), one of the most awesome personal ships ever to appear on the big or small screen.

Secondly, the shape really appeals to me. I always like to challenge myself, and there are few things more challenging with LEGO then making round shapes - of which the Falcon has plenty.

Why do you build Star Wars models - what makes this so fulfilling?

I am, of course, a big Star Wars fan (but not a fanatic!). The vast Star Wars universe that has grown over the past thirty years gives a very wide variety of vehicles, characters and places that can be modeled off of or serve as inspiration. I don't think I'll ever run out of creation ideas.

I have to admit, though, that it is the recognizability of Star Wars that keeps me building in that world. I do many shows and displays throughout the year which

naturally attract a lot of kids. They love seeing the displays - the trains zooming around, the towering buildings, and the minifigs in all manner of situations.

It is when they see a Star Wars creation, however, that their eyes light up even brighter then before and they can barely contain their excitement.

The same goes for the adults.

How do you build your models - do you plan or do you just build?
A little of both. Before I start building any creation, I gather as much reference material as I can find. Star Wars images on the internet are myriad, but I also scoop up as many reference books as I can find.

For many of my creations, this is enough. A few models need a little more, though. I took the images to computer first and fired up some graphics programs. I measured every length and angle to determine how large I would need to make a given creation. Trigonometry has become my friend. For the Falcon especially, I drew out the internal support structure first on the computer - without that there might have been months of trial and error. When I'm doing a large creation that takes many months, I often set my screensaver to flicker between all my acquired images of that object.

It helps to keep my mind focused even when I'm not building.

Your best model?
The Falcon? Well, the third version is my newest, so I'll wait a while to let it sink in a bit before I say it's 'the best'. I put a lot of work and effort into all my creations and it's hard to pick one over another - so I'll let the masses do it.

As I said before, I do a lot of shows - mostly around the Chicago area. The Falcon, though, as big as it is, is never a crowd favorite. For an individual creation that award clearly goes to my Opee Sea Killer – the large fish monster that chases the Jedi heroes through the planet core in Episode I: The Phantom Menace. I am quite proud of it - it wasn't an easy build, but I think I managed to capture the organic essence of the creature quite well.

In terms of a multi-part creation, my Mos Pepa Star Wars layout probably stands out over the rest. I don't consider it to be a single creation but rather the culmination of many put together.

The layout focuses on a train of flatbed 'cars' upon which various Star Wars vehicles (and one creature) sit. The 'ground' of the layout is raised up to hide the tracks as much as possible so that the individual vehicles seem to hover through the layout as they do in the movies. The streets and buildings are populated with a wide variety of figures and scenes, many of which change from show to show. In spite of the long set-up and inevitable crashes, it is the creation I most look forward to displaying.

If you were a Star Wars designer, what would be your dream model Star Wars set?
A tough call - there's already so many good sets. You don't want to go too obscure, either. The Outrider and Virago are sweet looking ships but casual fans might be hard pressed to recognize them. For my choice, the organic-looking Mon Calamari starships would be a wonderful challenge and could easily be done to fit to the scale of the UCS Star Destroyer.

What other themes do you build in?
Ha, not many. I do try to branch out (and I've had a few Classic-Space guys try to bring me into the fold), but Star Wars always draws me back. Every now and then I'll get a chance to break away. I've done a few small gifts for Mother's and Father's day (A grand piano and some flowers for my mom, a multi-part golf course for my dad). I have a line of figures from the Soul Calibur game series that I want to do, but so far I've only completed one. My best non-Star Wars creation, though, would have to be a windmill I recently created.

The Dutch Windmill is based on the real Fabyan Windmill in Geneva, IL. My club, the Northern Illinois LEGO Train Club, was invited to do a show at the Geneva Historical Society. They also asked us if we could create various historical monuments from around the town. My own pick was the 100 year old windmill.

Remember what I said about curves and difficult builds?

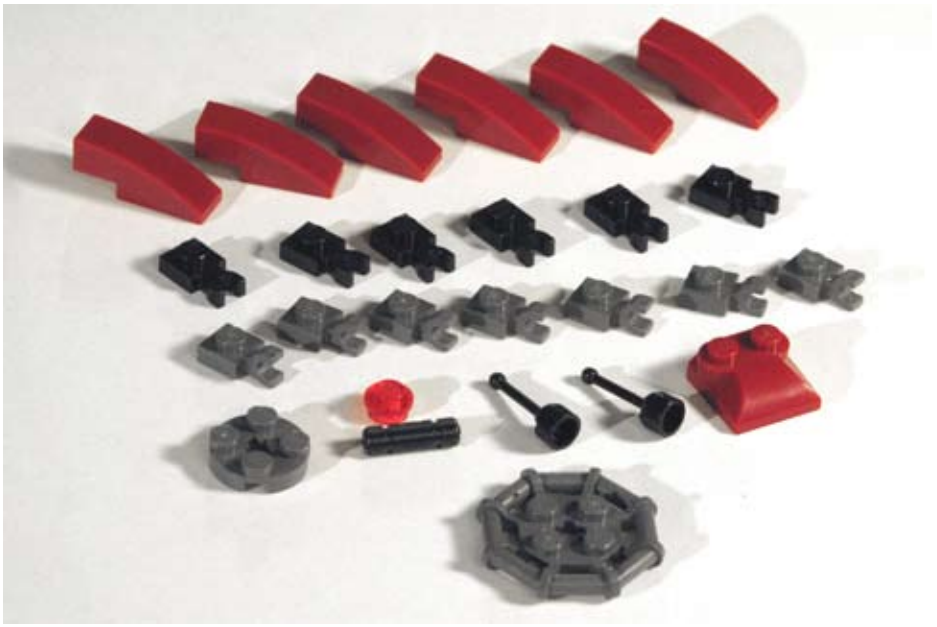
This one almost outdid me - I nearly came to the show with windmill blades sticking out of a pile of brown parts. The blades turn with the help of a 9v motor and I've given it a semi-permanent home in the Mos Pepa layout so that the power cords can be hidden.

Matt's creations can be seen at http://www.brickshelf.com/gallery/PepaQuin/

You Can Build it:
Star Wars Model

Crab Droid

If you wanted to build a droid to fill out your Star Wars layout, here's a crab droid designed by Matt. This takes only a few parts and is a quick build! Enjoy!



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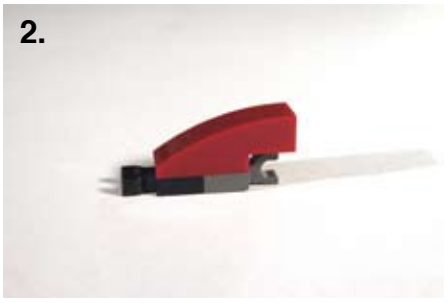

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Building:
Gareth Bowler

Gareth Bowler is another Star Wars builder, but of a different scale literally. His models are larger than minifig scale, so they can show off more detail. With more detail come more challenges. His work and gallery can be found at this webpage: http://www.fbtb.net/index.asp?feature=gareth

BrickJournal had a short talk with him.

When did you start your LEGO building? And when did you get into Star Wars LEGO building?

When I was 6. Before then, I had DUPLO and various knock-offs. When I turned 6 however, I got the Galaxy Explorer for my birthday and that's when things got serious, so to speak. As for Star Wars, I saw the first generation of those sets come out and thought they were neat, but I didn't actually buy any. Then a friend gave me two of the smaller sets and I was hooked. Back then, there were so many Star Wars ships that hadn't been done yet, so building them myself was just the logical thing to do!

What's the largest Star Wars model that you have built? And the smallest?

The largest is the large-scale AT-AT, hands down. It is so big that I haven't been able to find a place to display it since I moved, so it is relegated to a sad pile in a box in the closet. The smallest would be the UCS-scale R2-D2 I made because I was tired of having disproportionately tiny minifig R2 heads on the larger scale ships!

Why do you build Star Wars models - what makes this so fulfilling?

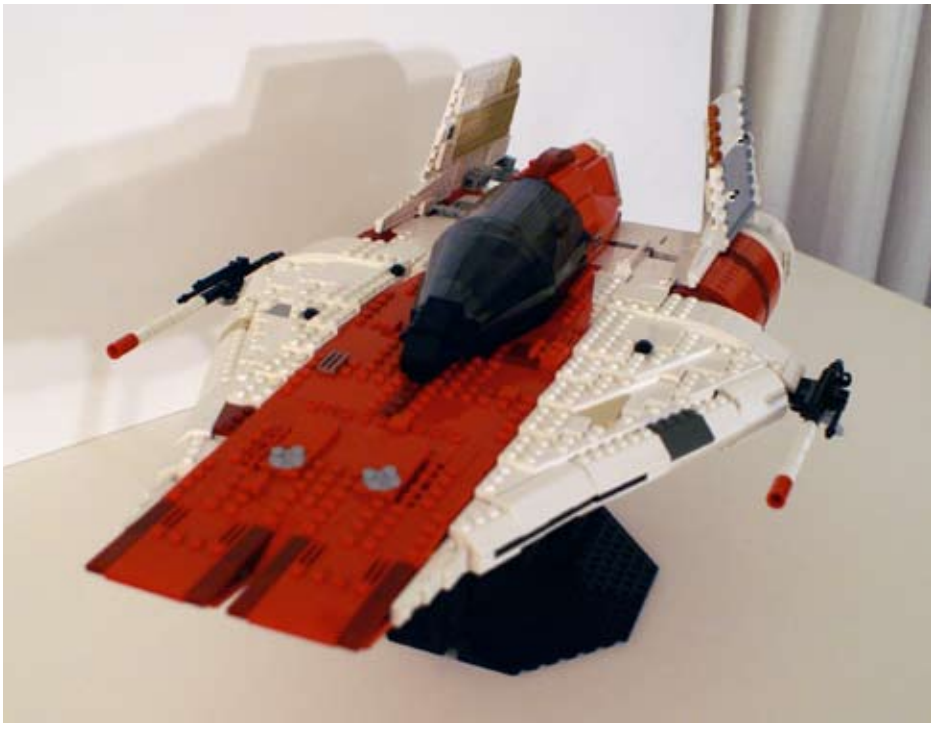
Hard to say. I guess I like the challenge of trying to match the movie models. If I was building my own design, I could change things to suit what parts exist, or what I have available, but if Vader's TIE has tapering hexagons, then I have to find a way to make tapering hexagons!

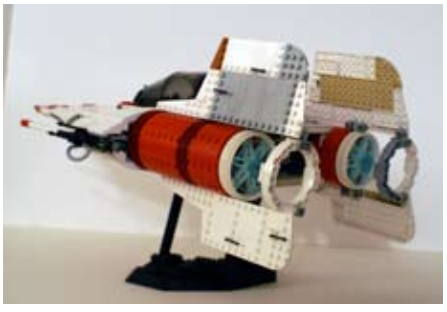
(continued next page)

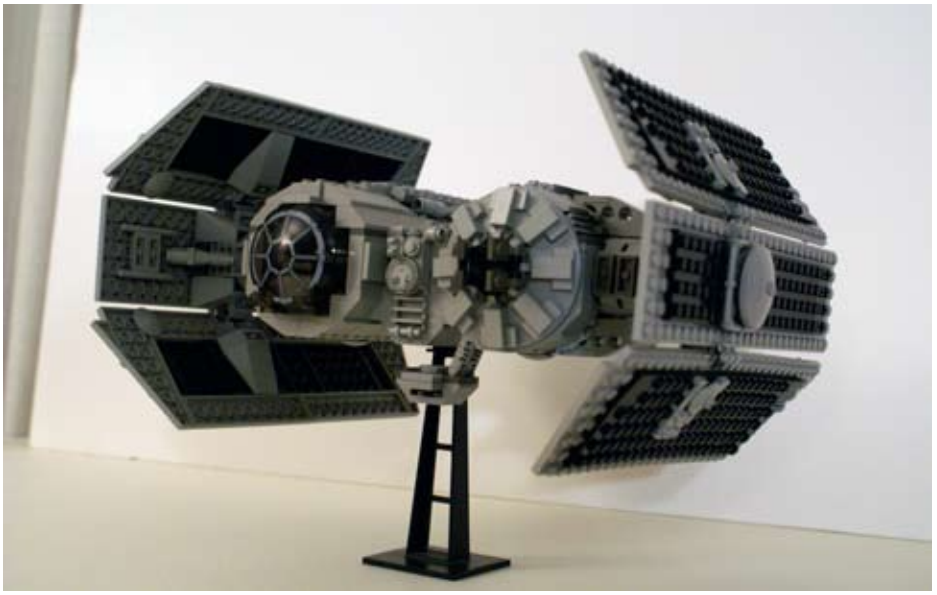
How do you build your models - do you plan or do you just build?
I do quite a bit of planning, or at least testing ideas in ldraw to see how they look before investing in parts. Then I'll do a sort of rough-draft build and usually rebuild that a dozen or so times before calling it done.

Your best model?
Right now, I'd have to say the giant A-wing. It's ridiculously huge for an A-wing, and the size meant I could properly render a number of small details I had to gloss over on prior models. The fact that it happens to be my favorite Star Wars ship might be biasing me just a little.

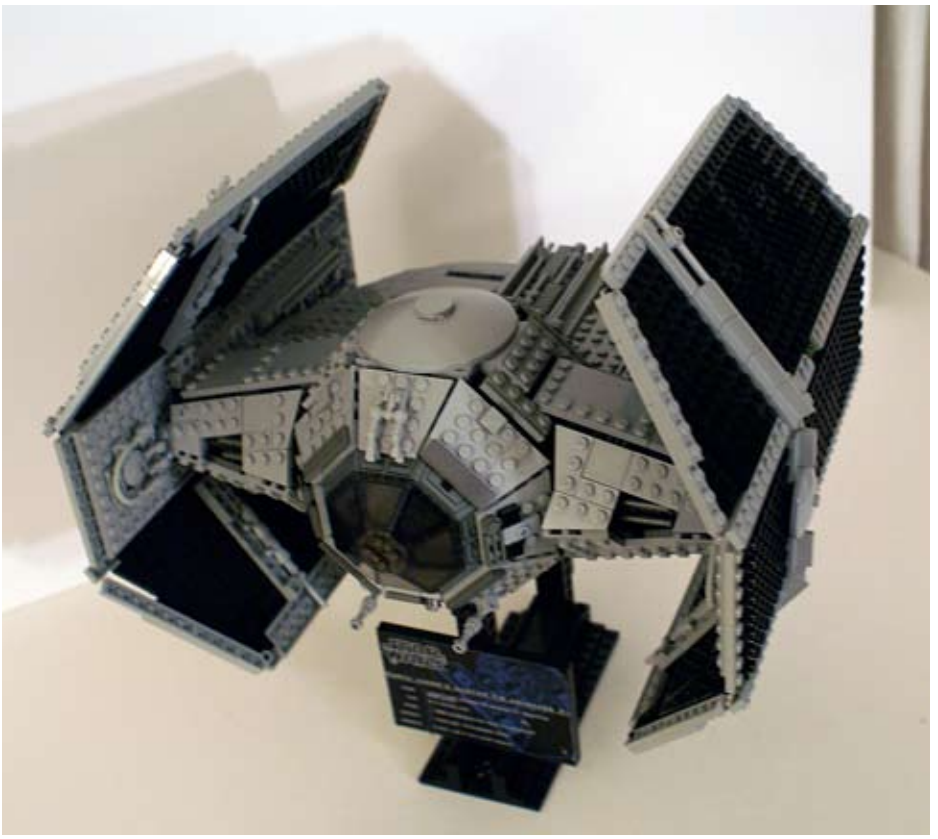
If you were a Star Wars designer, what would be your dream model Star Wars set?
I'd like to see more large-scale stuff, like a big A-wing or B-wing. They once had a prototype for a very big speederbike that I'd quite like to see released.



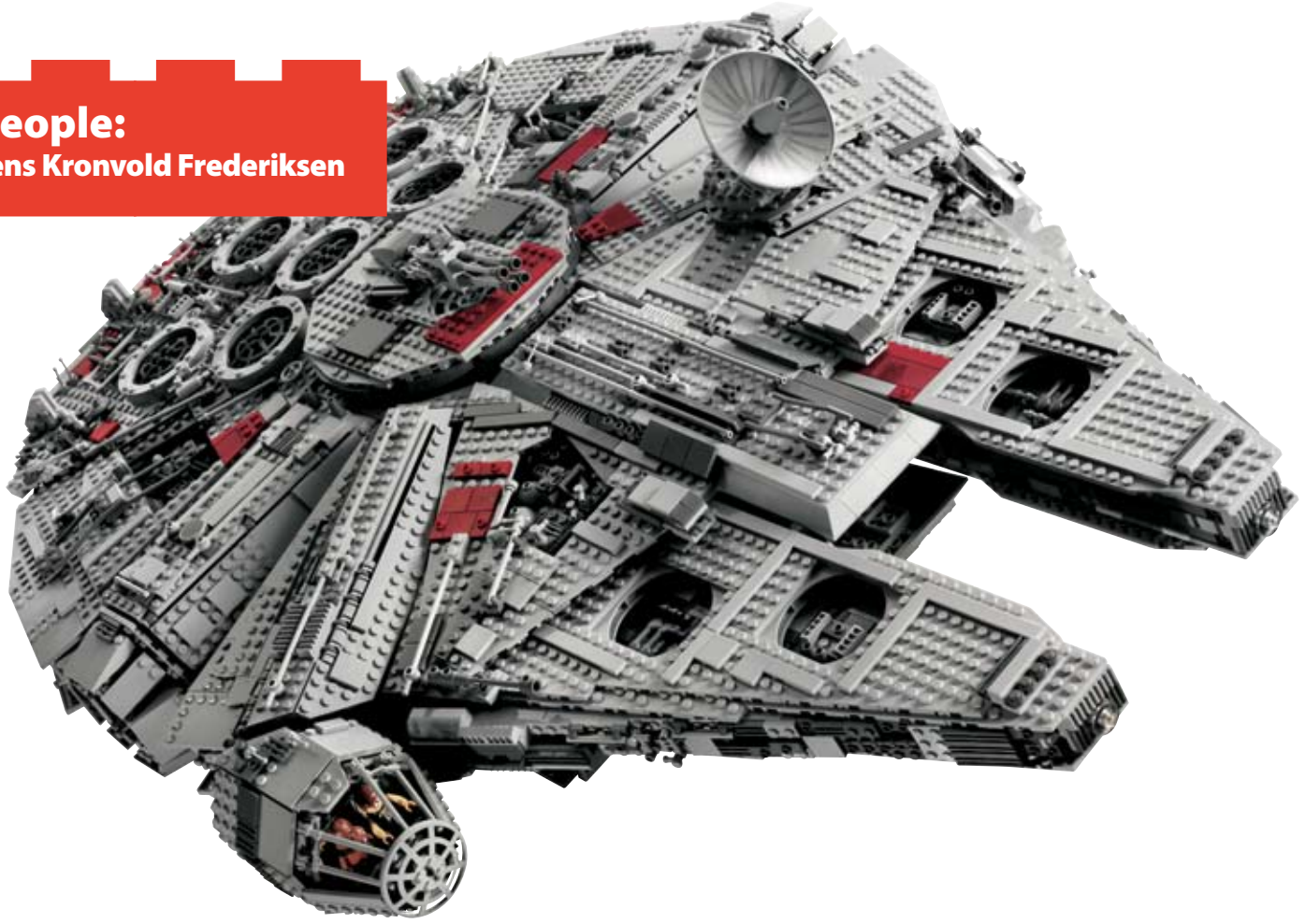




What other themes do you build in?
I build non-Star Wars space stuff sometimes but generally for my own amusement. It never really gets finished enough to show. As for other themes like castle or town, I tend to trade all those parts away to other NCLUG members, so I couldn't make a house or a castle if I wanted to!



These two are only a couple of Star Wars LEGO builders. More can be found at an unofficial LEGO Star Wars website, From Bricks to Bothans, (http:www/fbtb.net). FBTB has interviews, galleries of some of the best builders and a forum. Other builder galleries can be found on www.Brickshelf.com by searching keyword Star Wars (http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/search.cgi?q=star+wars&stype=dfic).



Designing the Ultimate Star Wars Set: A Talk with Jens Kronvold Frederiksen

By Joe Meno

The break area in the Global Innovation and Marketing Building is an open friendly space, with tables and benches lined up along the window. The central area has serving tables for lunch items, but it's early in the day. I'm here to meet Jens Kronvold, one of the set designers for the Star Wars LEGO theme. He started originally in the Rock Raiders theme (a short-lived underground-based theme) but moved into the Star Wars models. His biggest project, and the LEGO Group's largest set available for sale, is the Millennium Falcon Ultimate Collector's set (UCS). I got the chance to talk to him about that set and a little about some other sets here – but I wasn't allowed to take photos nor see anything.

He's a thin, tall man, and dressed casually, like most of the LEGO employees here. The general atmosphere of our talk was much like the break area: relaxed and comfortable. After he got some water for us, we began our chat.

"She may not look like much, but she's got it where it counts…"
- Han Solo, Star Wars: A New Hope

The part count for the Falcon is 5,195, and assembled, it's an impressive sight. The set is a detailed model of the famous ship, scaled to the LEGO minifigure. By the time that I talk to Jens, the sets are already being packed and ready for shipping in October 2007. The first run of sets has random certificates of authenticity, making them collector's items. Jens is happy to tell me this and also that the instructions took one man-year to create (over 2,000 hours!), which is a major effort for one set.

He also made a large effort to build this set. When asked about how long it took to build, he answered, " It took me 25ish hours to build the inner structure. The challenge was to build a framework that was had strength, and it took me seven versions to make it right. After that, it was another month of straight building to detail the ship." The framework is Technic beams and pins, which create a stronger

joint than bricks. This also makes the model light, as there is a framework where a 'skin' is attached, as opposed to solid brick. The frame is strong enough to pick up the model from the middle and swoop around…although with its weight and size, it's not recommended.

Another challenge that is a bit subtler is that building should be easy and clear in the instructions. LEGO Quality Control mandates that elements cannot be confused in the instructions, so Jens explained that he had to build with not only himself in mind, but also the consumer.

For reference, he used drawing and published plans and scaled them to minifig size. Jens indicated, "My personal goal was to be able to fit four minifigures in the cockpit. A fan pointed out to me that previous versions of the Falcon could only have two inside, so I wanted this version to be accurate."

The attention to accuracy is one of the factors that Jens and his fellow designers take into account with the Star Wars designs. He explains, "It's a balance of making cool toys and collectible models, to appeal to different audiences." Playability is an important factor in a Star Wars set, but not as important in a UCS model.

"I made a lot of special modifications myself."

- Han Solo, Star Wars: A New Hope

There have been different versions of LEGO Star Wars models, as sets get phased in and out of production. Every few years, spaceships are reworked, using new parts and sometime new designs. Jens designed some of them, including the second edition B-Wing. "The B-Wing I am very happy with," he mentions, " because of the new parts that have come out between the first version and current version. Also, I was able to use fin parts to create the intake in the later model. I also built the stand, which doesn't exist in the movies, but it got approval by Lucasfilm."

His best revision is the recent Slave I, Boba Fett's spaceship. One of the

(continued on next page)

At the New York Toy Fair, Jens takes the top turret to show the superstructure

and then picks up the model using the internal beams

Cockpit for four

with Luke manning the top gun.

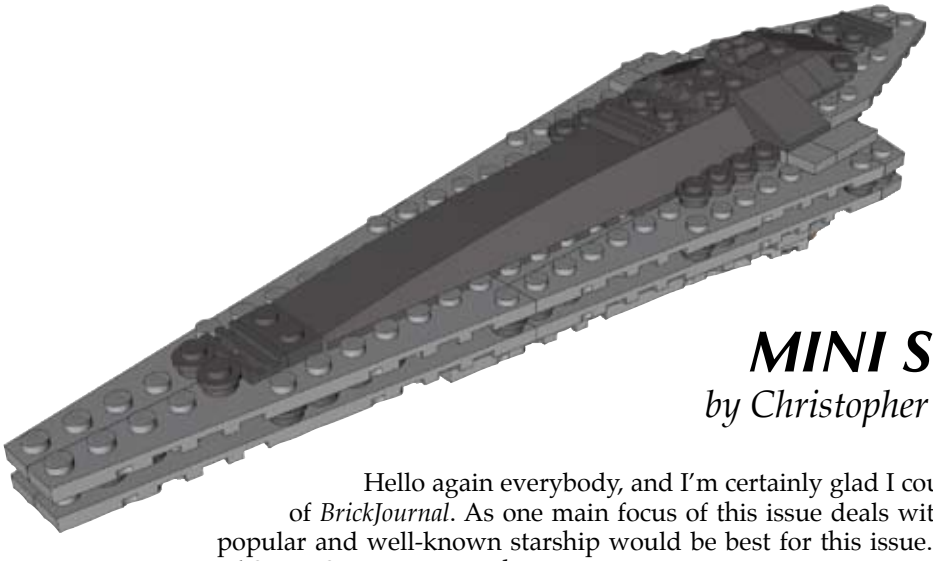
first ships to come out in the Star Wars line in 2000 the original version had 165 elements and one figure. This newer version has 537 elements and four figures! The current set is the third incarnation of the spaceship, and Jens tells me, " The new Slave I is a sturdier model than the second versions and also has the benefit of new parts to use. The second set was built to a higher price point than the first, so the part count was doubled. This time, we were able to add even more parts, a dart shooter, and more minifigures."

There will be more coming too. The licensing to Star Wars has been extended to 2011, With this will be more opportunities for building, and Jens hints at some of the upcoming sets: " There will be more UCS models coming, and MINI scale sets are an open question. We'll also be designing sets from the Clone Wars and the Expanded Universe."

And with a smile and a handshake, our talk ends. Jens has to get back to work, going to a place a long time ago in a galaxy far, far way…to build.

Two Generations of B-Wings:

Above is the 2006 release of the B-Win, as designed by Jens. On the right is the first version, released in 2006. Between the six years, there have been new parts added to the LEGO palette, and the result is a model that looks closer to its namesake.



MINI Super Star Destroyer

by Christopher Deck. Instructions by Geoff Gray

Hello again everybody, and I'm certainly glad I could join again for this new and fantastic issue of *BrickJournal*. As one main focus of this issue deals with *Star Wars*, the journal crew thought that a popular and well-known starship would be best for this issue. One of these is – of course – Darth Vader's personal Super Star Destroyer, the *Executor*.

As I unfortunately had already built this particular ship years ago, I promised to do complete new one, using more common elements and the new colours of these days. Thus, the presented model below uses a lot of newer wedge elements, including a large triple wedge slope, and (Dark) Stone Gray colours.

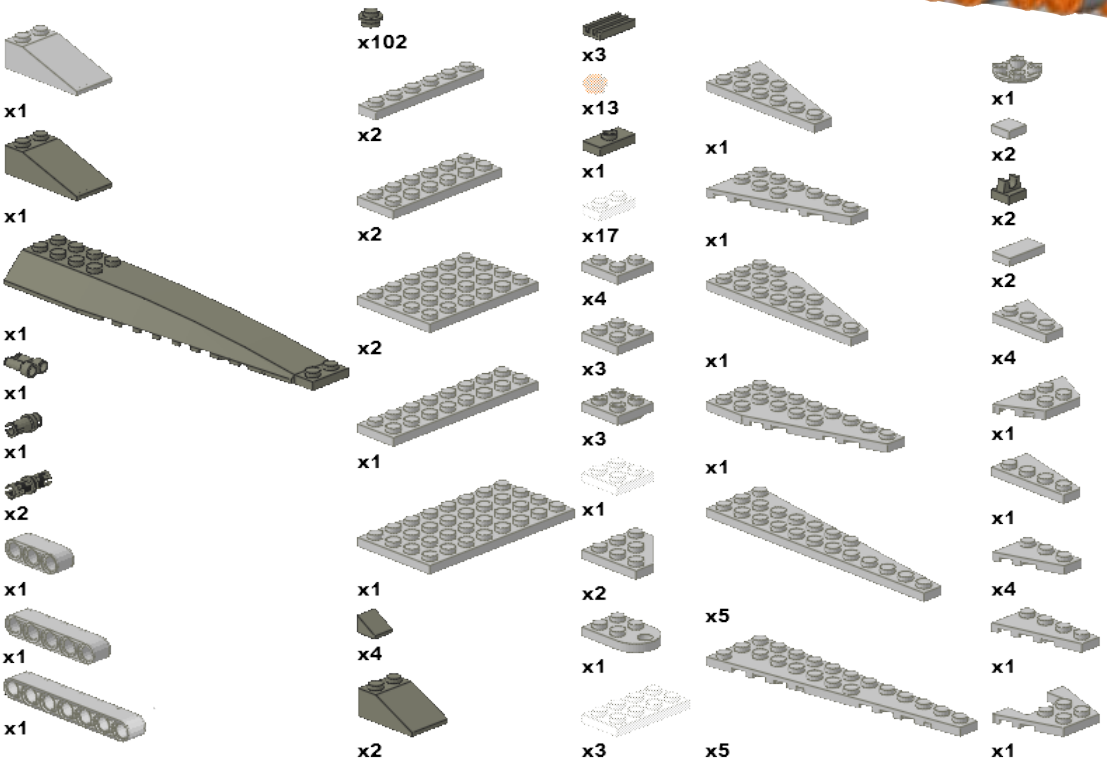
With over 200 pieces, this is one of the more compact MINI models of the collection. Style and scale still identify the ship as a true MINI model, although it has the length of a standard base plate. But the amount of pieces is rather a result of the density of brick assembly.

The model itself features a detailed hangar bay, engine and command section. Many 1x1 round plates and other small elements give the ship an overall "greebly" touch which implies that the "real" starship is really huge, what is quite true for a Super Star Destroyer with a length of several miles.

With that I am done for now, wish you happy building, and see you next time!

Yours,
Christopher.

Bill of Materials



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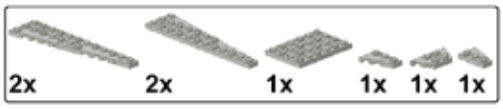
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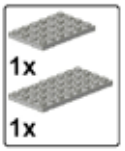
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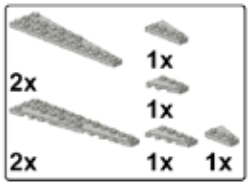
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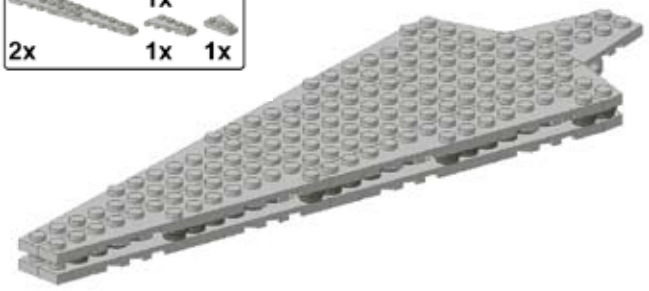

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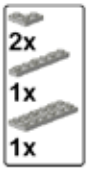
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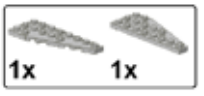
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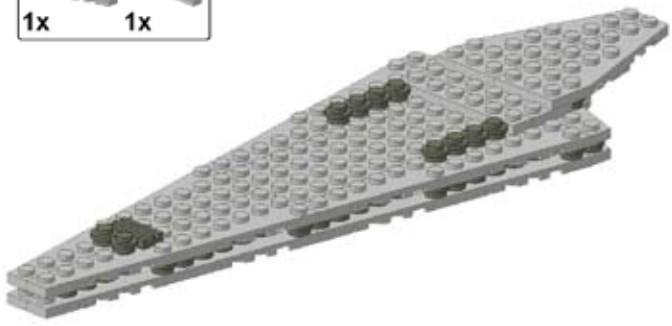

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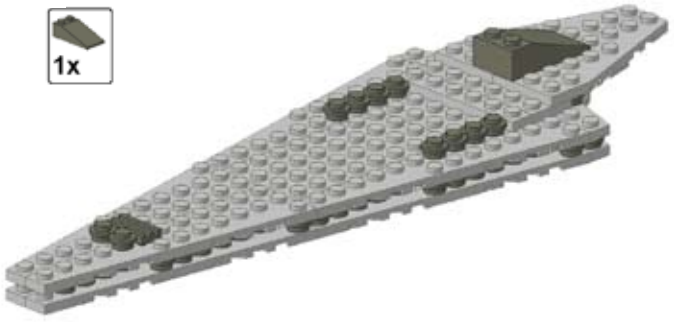

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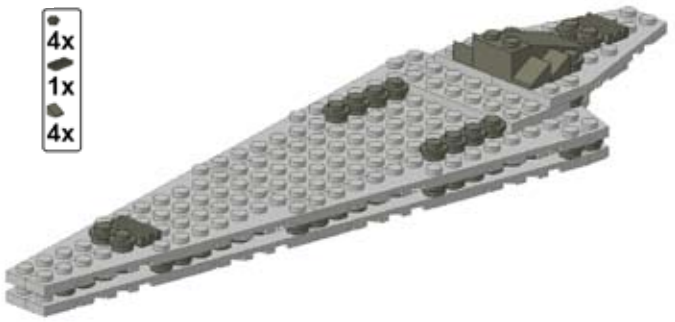

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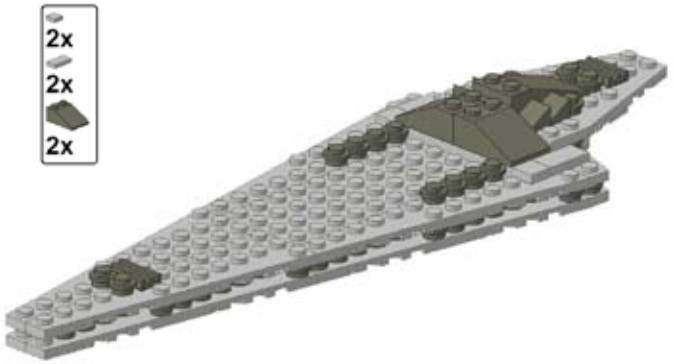

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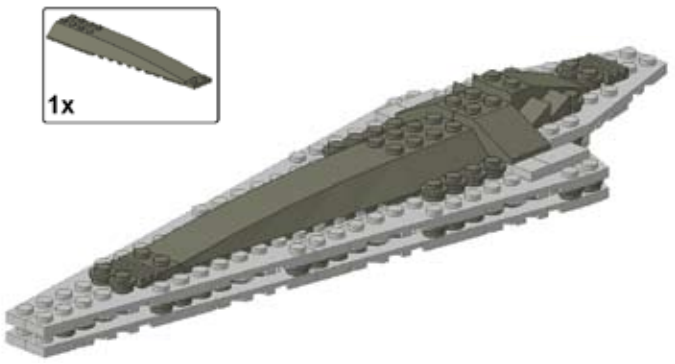

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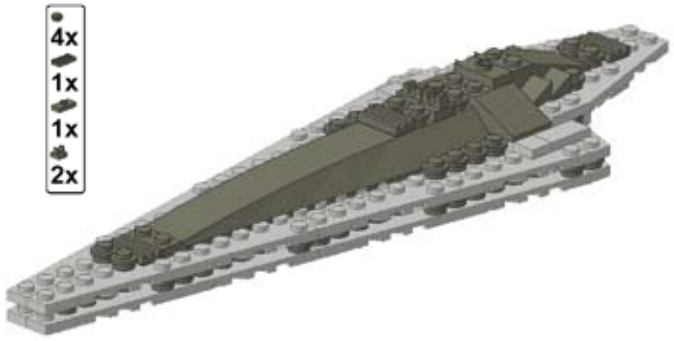

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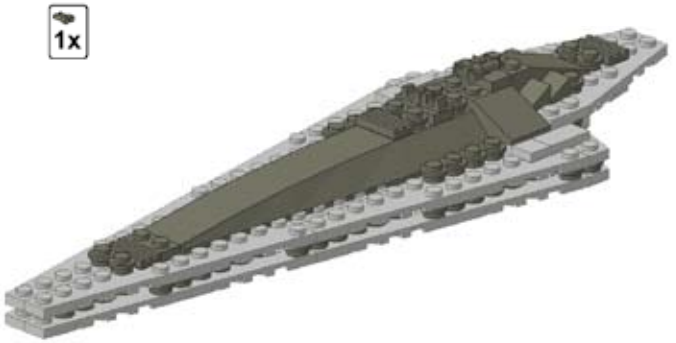

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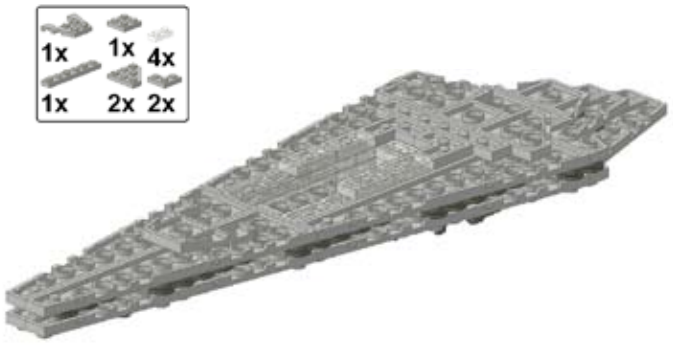
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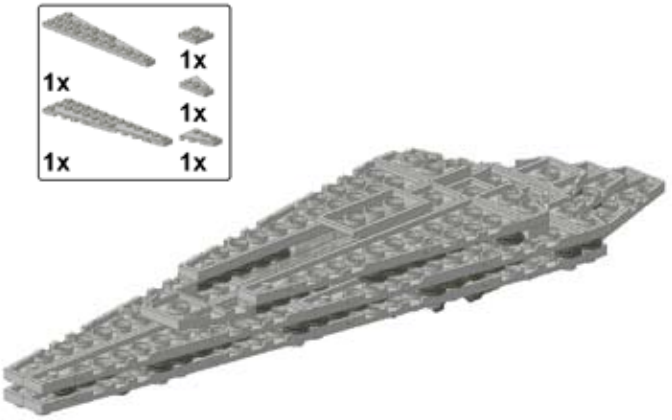
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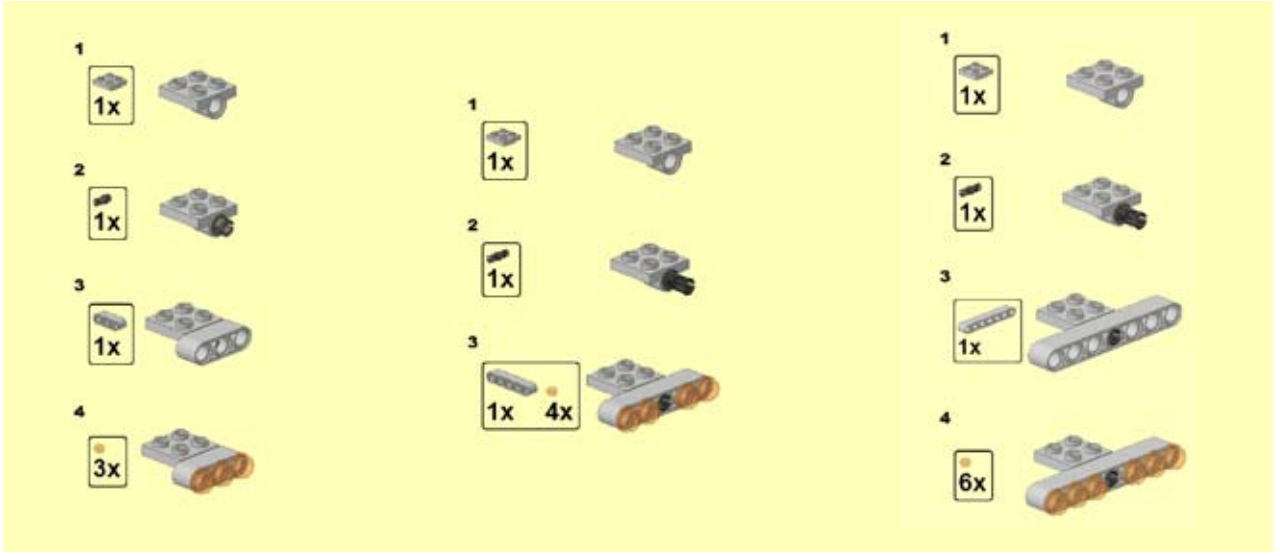
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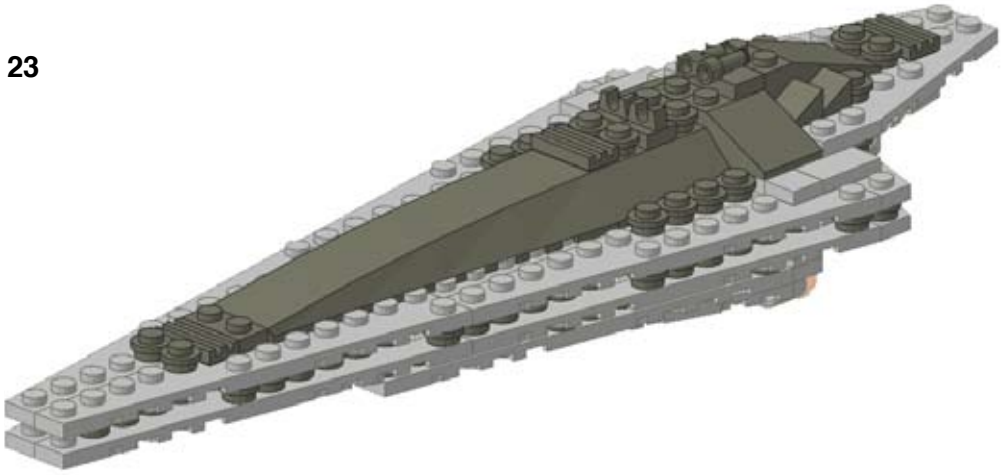

A Quick Word and Build with Masao Hidaka

BrickJournal has a brief chat with a LEGO builder with a musical specialty

Interview by Melody Krützfeldt

Photos and Instructions by Masao Hidaka

Who are you?

I'm Masao Hidaka, an AFOL from Japan.

When did you first start in the LEGO hobby?

About eight years ago, I bought DUPLO parts for my son. So I just remembered that I played with LEGO in my childhood. It was the restart of my LEGO life. And then I made my website in March, 2000.
(http://www5a.biglobe.ne.jp/~mhidaka/)

What are some of your interests?

I like music and playing music. My wife is a Piano and Electone (an electronic organ) teacher, so there is a Grand Piano and Electone in my small house.
I got inspiration from 'elkane's' "Upright player piano" in the Brickshelf gallery: (http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=55410)
And then I began to make pianos, organs and keyboards.

What do you like to build?

I like to build keyboards, cars, trains, monorails, tanks, mosaics etc.

How is LEGO in Japan?

In Japan, many LEGO sets are not released, and we don't have Shop at Home. I think that Japanese LEGO clothing and stuff is very good, but we wish LEGO Japan could give us a way to get LEGO sets that are released everywhere else in the world.

Any last words?

When you build a LEGO house, I recommend you put a grand piano or an upright piano in a room.

You can see Masao's work here:

Piano 7 (Upright Piano)
http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?i=1747576
Piano 9 (Grand Piano)
http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?i=1791037

Brickshelf folder: http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?m=hidaka

A look at one of Masao's pianos

Building A Piano

This piano was built with rainbow colors to make it easier to see how parts join. Masao uses tan for the interior and black for the frame.

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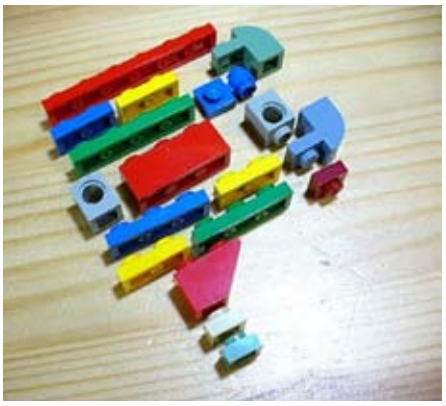

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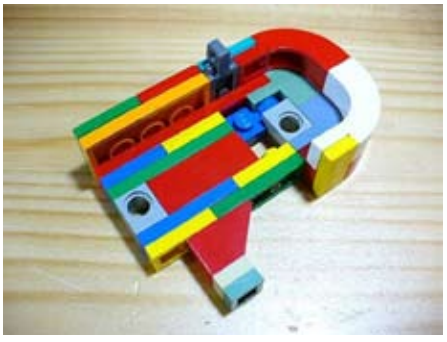

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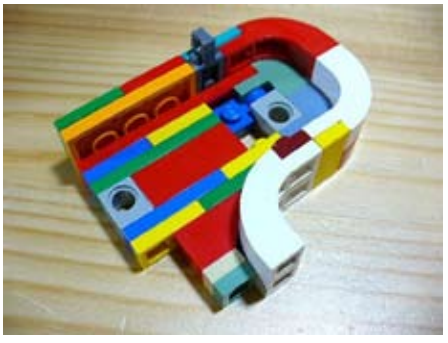

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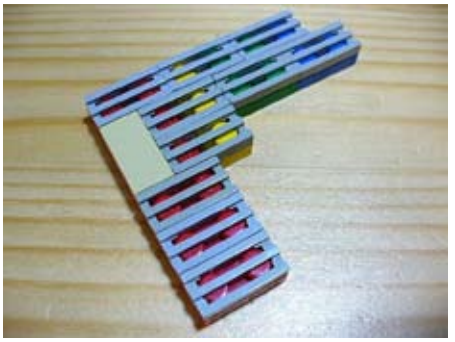

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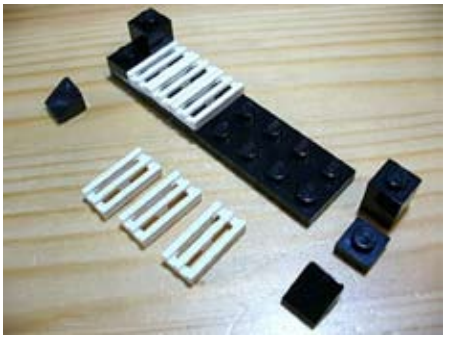

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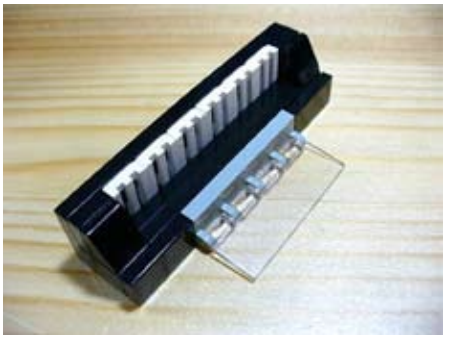

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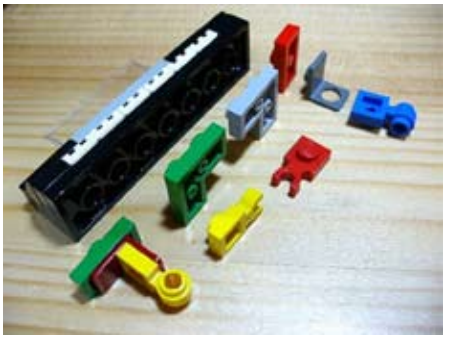

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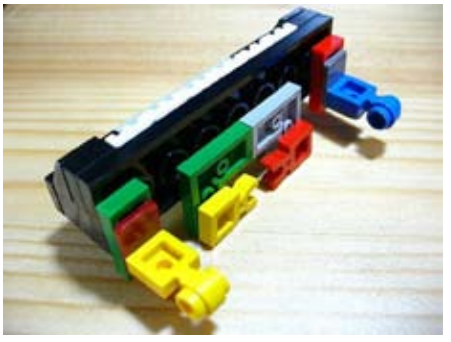

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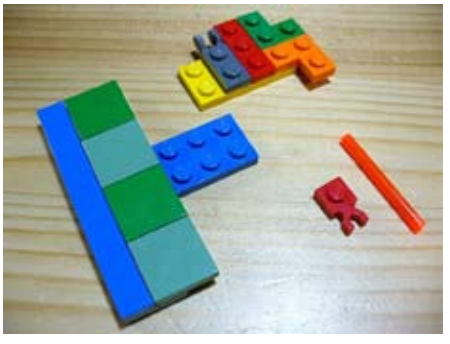

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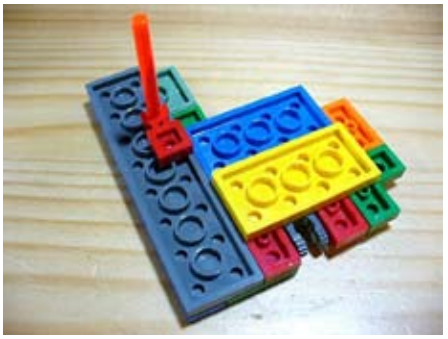

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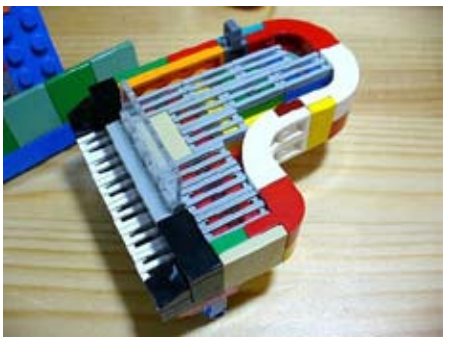

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So what color piano are *you* going to build?

You Can Build It:
Starbots

The Starbots are Here!

Article, Art and Photography by Glenn Nissen

I'm a Canadian, but both my parents were born in Odense, Denmark. I grew up playing with LEGO, but it wasn't until recently that I really started taking building seriously. I was lucky enough to be one of the LEGO Factory Contest winners, and having one of my models turned into an actual LEGO set was a dream come true. This inspired me to buy many LEGO sets and start building again. I also learned to use the free third-party LEGO tools that I downloaded off the internet to reconstruct my models on a computer, allowing me to create and print instructions for them.

I had bought several Bionicle sets and noticed that the ball joints together with the ball socket piece made an extremely flexible and versatile joint. I decided to see if I could use them as the joints for the arms and legs of a LEGO robot. Using pins and axels, I was able to attach the ball joints to bricks and plates with holes, in many different configurations. I created a torso that uses two hip-like joints with two balls each that are set between 2x8 plates with holes. Axel pins attach the ball joints to the plates, with a brick with a half pin preventing rotation. This makes for a very strong robot torso with four ball joints sticking out for limbs.

The first robot I made, a blue and white soldier, I called Stellar. While building its limbs, I realized that there where many ways of attaching LEGO bricks and plates to the socket piece that connects to the ball joints in the torso. The differences would allow to me make many kinds of limbs, so I decided to make another robot using the same basic torso, the red dinosaur Rex. I made this robot capable of looking up and down as well as left and right, by using a Knight's foot for its neck joint and chin. I was able to show these two robots to actual LEGO model designers when I went on the LEGO Insider's Tour in Denmark. On the tour, LEGO gave the participants a limited edition LEGO car set, designed by Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, grandson of the founder of LEGO.

I recreated my first two robots on my computer and made instructions for them, and then bought the pieces through

the internet to construct several of each. I sorted the pieces and put them in plastic tubs with printed instructions, which I gave to family and friends. From this experience, I learned that my first robots where too complicated to reproduce in large quantities. They used too many different kinds of pieces and not all the pieces were easy to find and some were too expensive.

I decided to make a robot with only inexpensive, easy to find pieces, with as few different piece types as possible, making it possible to reproduce them in large quantities. I called this robot, Starbot, and it contains over 400 pieces, but is uses less than 50 different types of pieces. I used mostly small bricks and plates with and without holes, pins, axels, and roof tile, all of which are readily available and cost pennies or less. Using different colored bricks and roof tile, I created the Batman, Spiderman, and Storm Trooper Starbots, with the same underlying skeleton. I then replaced the roof tile with more modern curved pieces without studs, creating the smooth Starbot. It is simple to remove the outer body bricks from the Starbot's skeleton and replace them with other colors or different pieces.

The Starbots are strong, flexible and fully posable, with 22 moving joints. They have moveable heads, arms, elbows, wrists, fingers, thumbs, legs, knees, and ankles. They have Bionicle ball joints for limb attachments and multiple hinge plates on the knees and elbows. The wrists twist using a friction pin and the fingers are minifig legs. The thumb is on a hinge with a stud on the side for helping to grip accessories like the Storm Trooper's gun. The head and feet are attached using round clicking rotation joints that have multiple directions of rotation. They create a strong and sturdy ankle, making it simple to position the feet and pose the robot. Even when on one foot, the ankle joint can hold the entire robot's weight.

Please feel free to contact me at nissen@sympatico.ca for more information on my robots, or if you are interested in recreating Starbots in bulk.


Stellar
A Posable Robot Model made with LEGO® Bricks.
309 Pieces
Age 12+
Contains 21 joints including BIONICLE® ball joints.
LEGO and BIONICLE are trademarks of The LEGO Group.
Copyright © 2005, Glenn Nissen
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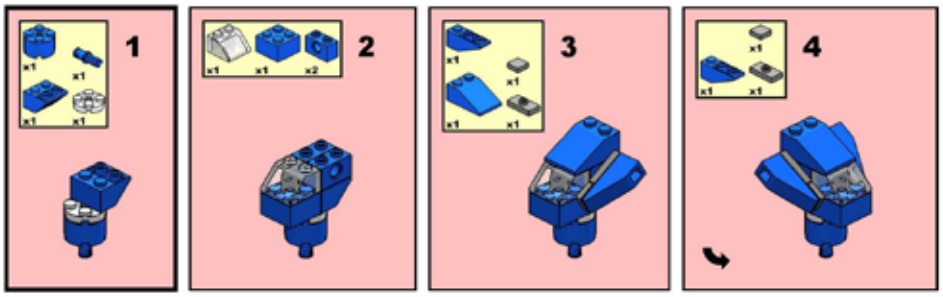
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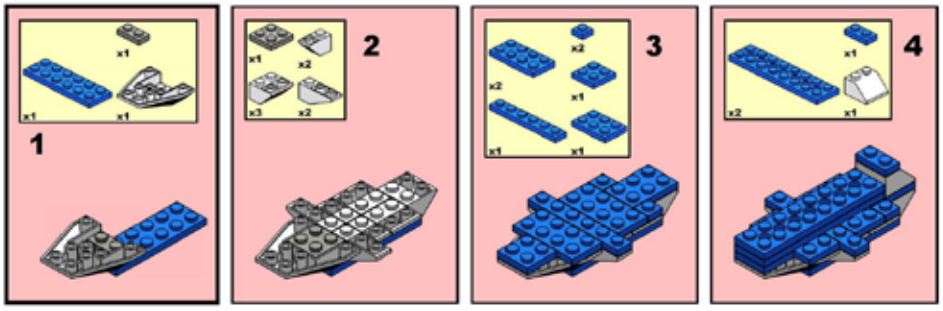
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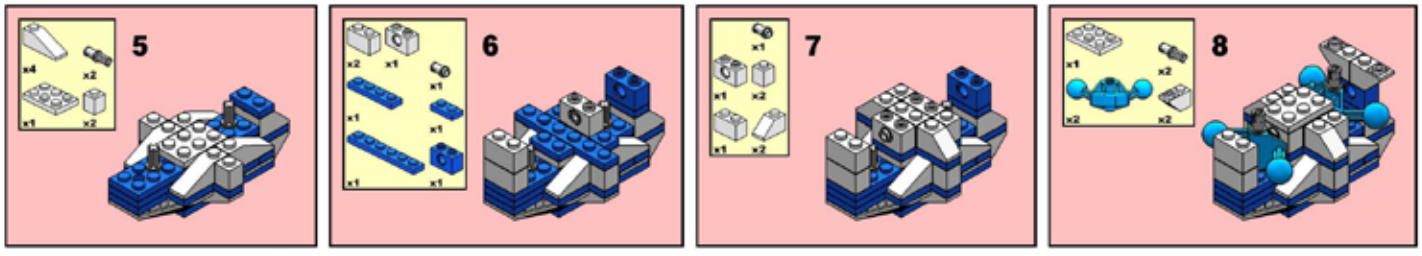
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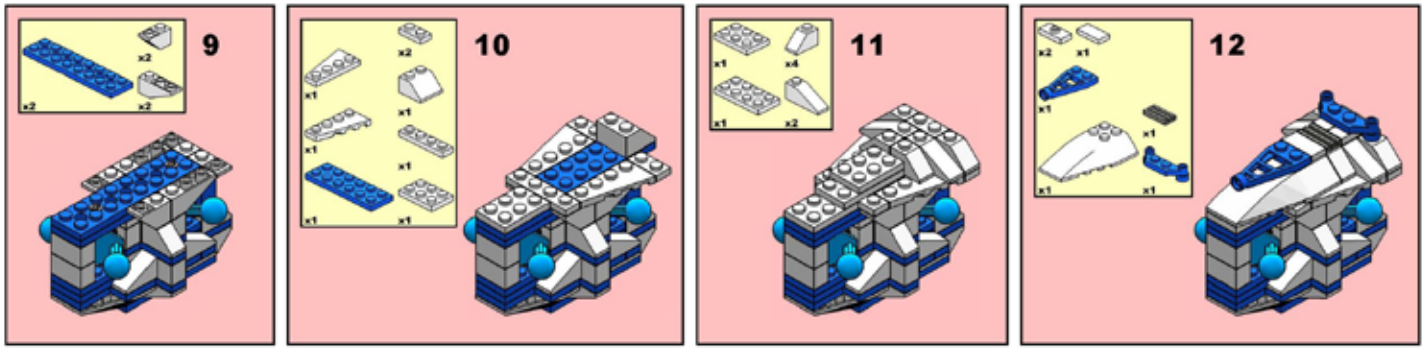
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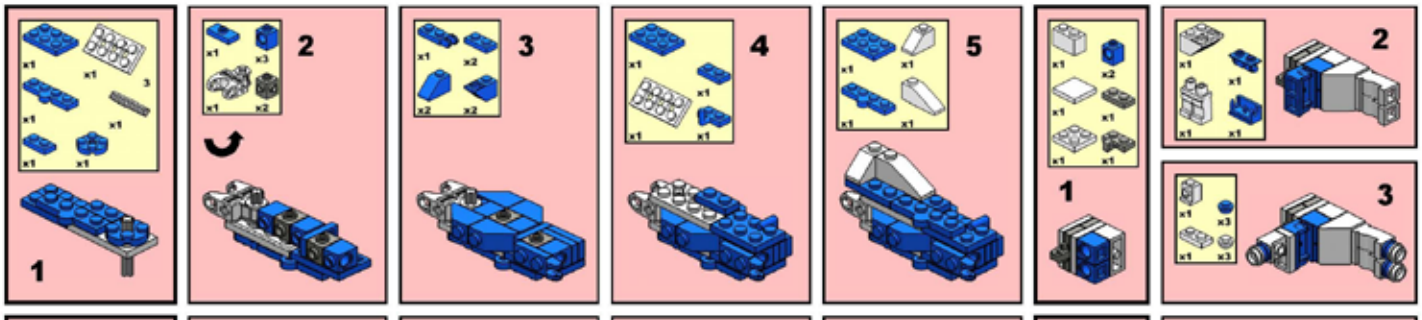
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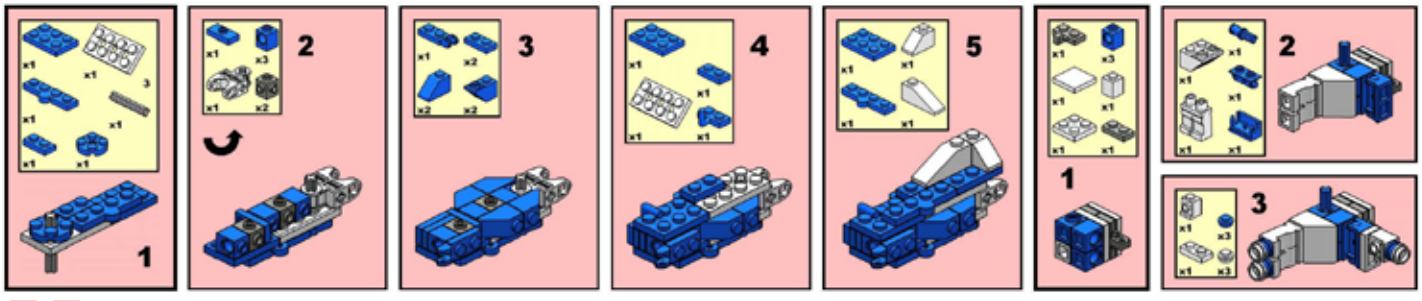
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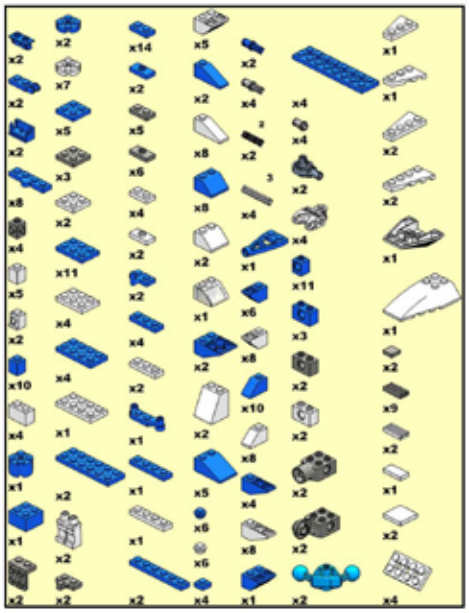
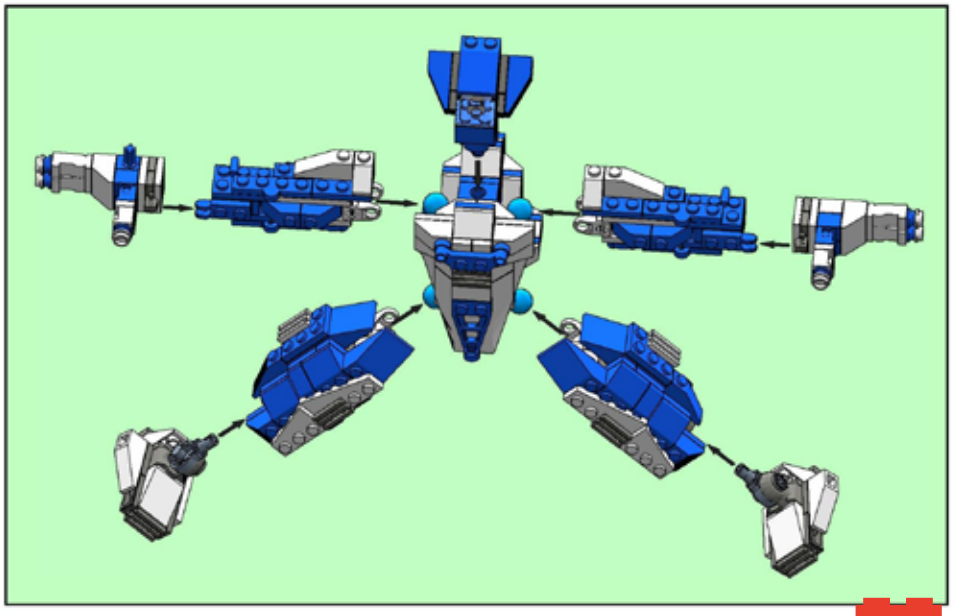
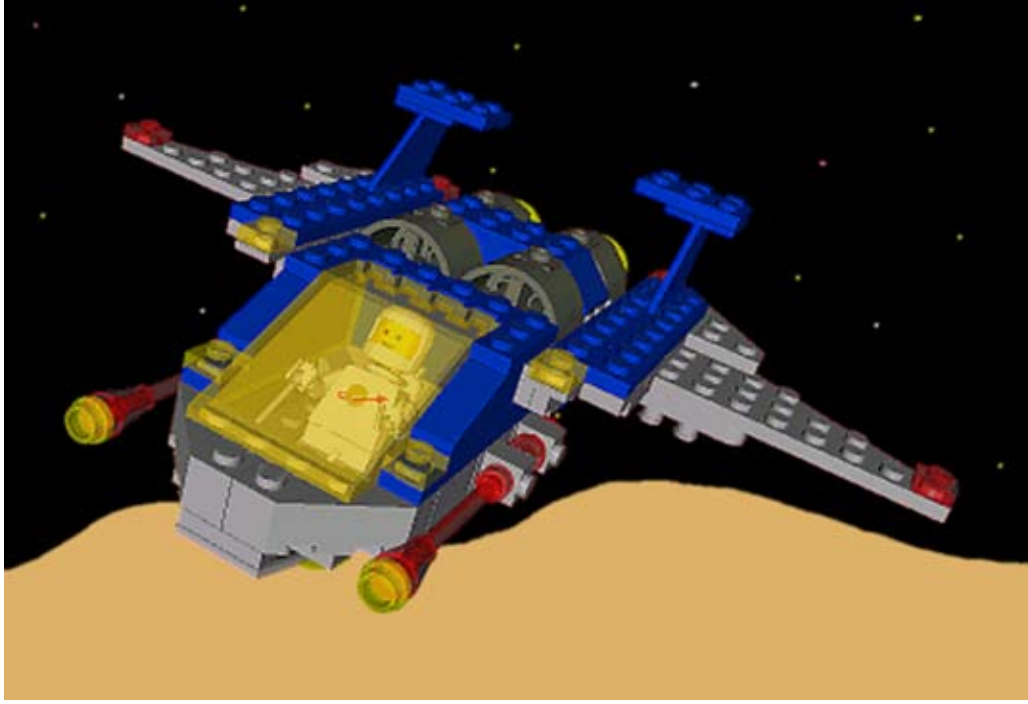




The Drake Class Fighter – Ready Anytime, Anywhere

by Jason Railton



'Drake' class in forward flight

The Drake class fighter is a Vertical Take-off and Landing (VTOL) / Variable Geometry (VG) fighter aircraft, originally designed for the air-to-ground combat role. Twin combination aerobic/anaerobic engines make it capable of operations from a land base, or orbital insertion from a carrier platform. Weapon variants further allow it to perform in air-to-air, bomber, or deep space fighter-escort roles.

The VTOL and heavy lift capability has also made it ideal for civilian use in law enforcement, fire fighting, medevac and even construction lifting in remote areas.

For take-off, landing, and hover maneuvers the main engines turn vertical and the wings fold in to make the vehicle smaller. Additional stabilizing thrust is provided from a vent below the cockpit, ducted from the main engines. In forward flight, the engines transition to the horizontal position and the wings are deployed for stability at speed.

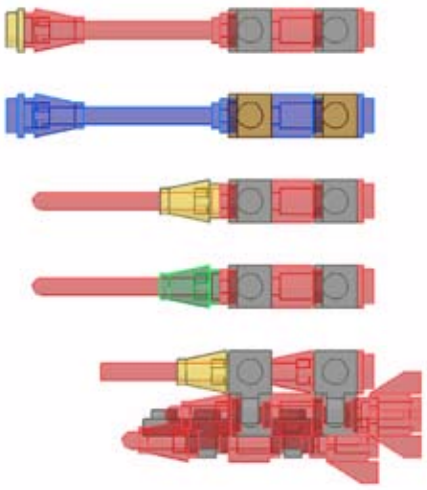
Additional fuel stores can be fitted below the rear stabilizers and solid rocket boosters (SRBs) may be fitted above the main engines to assist with heavy payloads or take-off in high-gravity environments. The casings of both may be retained and refilled, or jettisoned to reduce weight.

The SRBs only provide a small amount of direct thrust. Their main purpose is to provide additional direct drive to the main engine turbine shaft. Excessive re-use of SRB casings on deep space missions can lead to dangerous misfires - older ones are often identified by the oxidizing discoloration of the dark grey thermal coating.

The docking spigot below the engines is used to lock the aircraft down to the landing platform in storm or surface-heave conditions, or where the landing platform itself is mobile or retractable. It is also used to dock to the side of orbital transports for interplanetary re-deployment. It provides refueling and diagnostic connections.

A few of the Drake class were extended into the two-seater 'Drake Oh-Two' variant for pilot training, but the model - nicknamed the 'Draco' - was quickly adapted for a highly secret desert stealth combat role, with separate pilot and mission commander/weapons stations. It has also been used successfully as an escort fighter and multi-role mission vehicle on deep space exploration programs.

Left-to-right: Drake' class Air-to-Air Fighter, Civilian 'Skyhook' lifting variant, 'Draco' two-seater deep-space exploration escort, 'Drake' class original ground-assault craft.



Weapon variations, from top: standard air-to-ground charged plasma cannon, [CLASSIFIED], air-to-air LASER-Accelerated Projectile (LAP) cannon, positive particulate anti-shield cannon, light air-to-air cannon with twin graviton-guided localized fusion bombs.

Design Notes:

I wanted to build a small space ship in the Classic Space style, and one that I could build multiples of for fitting to a larger carrier.

The swiveling engines come from the fighters in the introduction sequence of the video game 'Raiden'. Modern VTOL fighter aircraft such as the Hawker Harrier and Yakovlev Yak-141 use ducted engine exhaust, or separate fans or engines for their vertical lift. Only propeller aircraft such as the Bell-Boeing V-22 Osprey are able to rotate the engines (along with the propellers) for vertical thrust.

The fighters in 'Raiden' looked similar to swing-wing fighter aircraft, but the gearing would be more complex to make, say, an F-14 Tomcat style swing-wing, what with the engines having to pivot much further back in the aircraft body than the wings.

The gearing thus dictated the forward-sweeping wings, and the need to mount the gears underneath raised sides. The technicalities of achieving this came together quite quickly once those decisions were made.

The lowered pod-style cockpit is inspired by the fighters from the slightly low-budget TV series *Space: Above and Beyond*, where the pilots get into cockpits in a small 'hangar' room. The cockpits descend into the floor before we cut to a CGI sequence of the spacecraft themselves in the launch bay below.

I also think the trans-yellow hinged cockpit was woefully under-used in Classic Space (I was deprived - I only ever had one!), and should have been used to keep the line going right up to the present day.

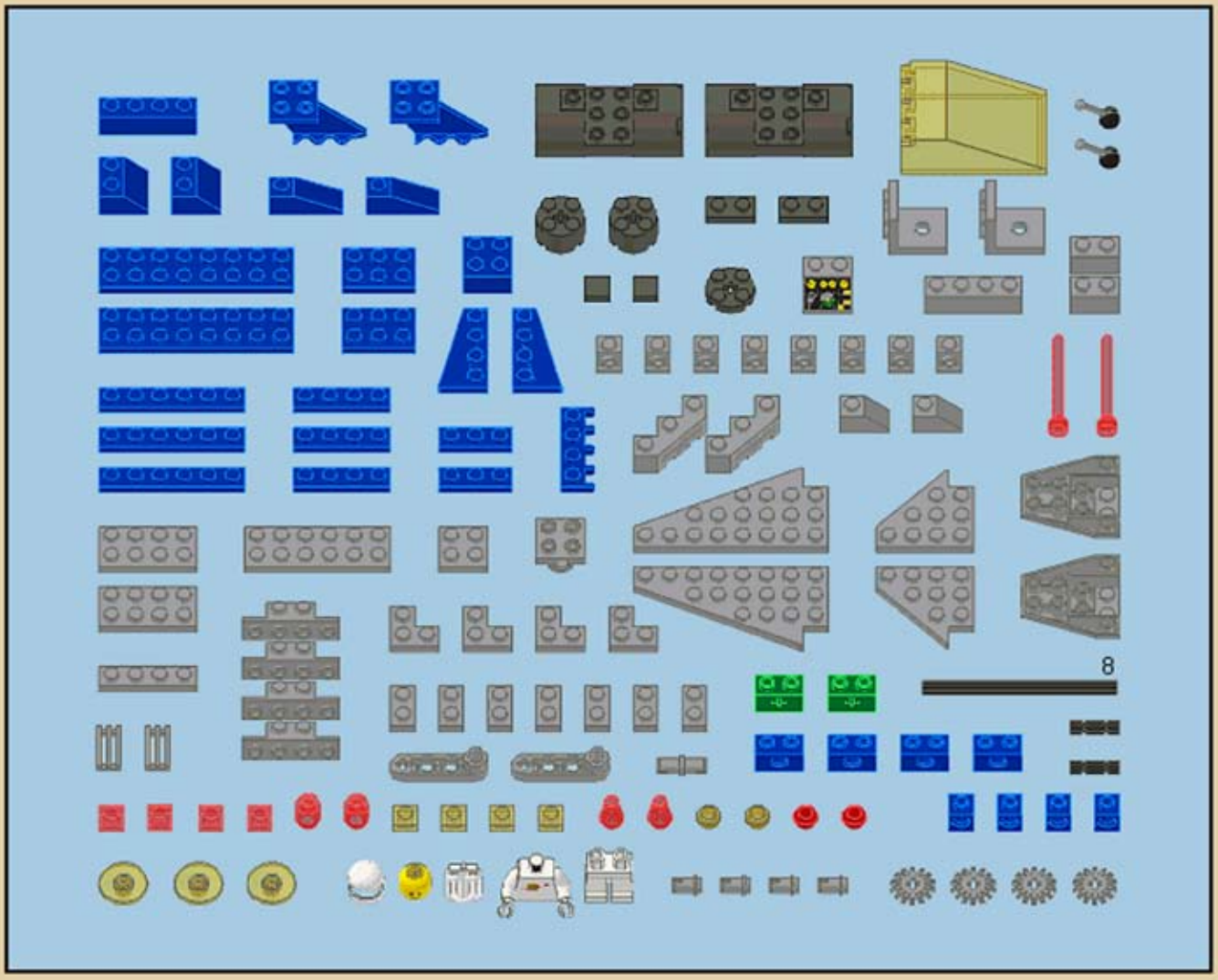
Solid Rocket Boosters (SRBs) fit to main engines.

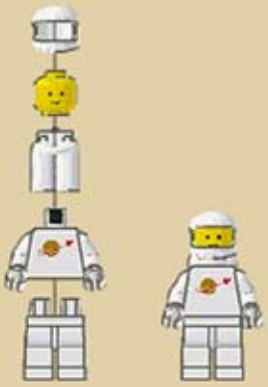
Construction Notes:

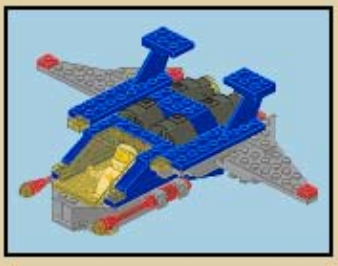
The main difficulty is in correctly aligning the non-linear nano-mechanical adaptive synchro-actuators (okay, the 'cogs'). Use the 14-tooth type of bevel gear from the original style of differential gear. Look closely at the diagram, and you'll see that turning one by 90° can change how they mesh. The modern 16-tooth type doesn't allow you to place meshing gears with their shafts rotated dead-on right-angles, and that's important here.

The wing mounts (the liftarms) should point straight out to the sides when both the engine block and the side strakes (the blue 2x8 plate bits) are held horizontal. As the engines are turned vertical, the wings should sag slightly and tuck in under the strakes in the forward position.

This model has previously appeared on display outside the LEGO Brand Store in Milton Keynes in England, at LEGO WORLD 2006 in Zwolle in the Netherlands, and at various other Brickish Association events in the UK.







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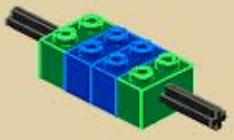

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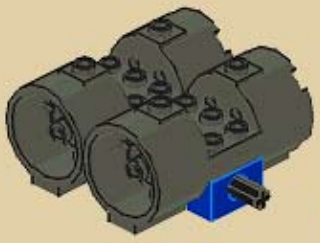

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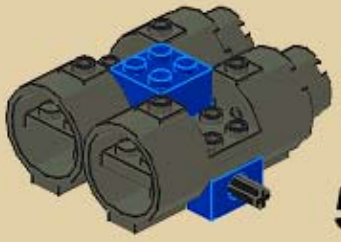

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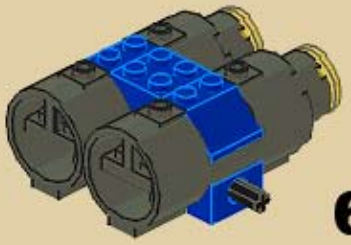

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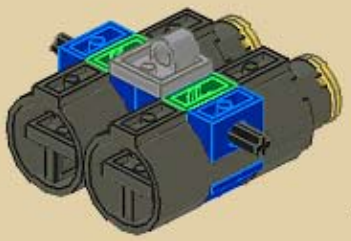

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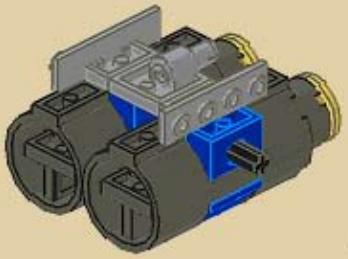

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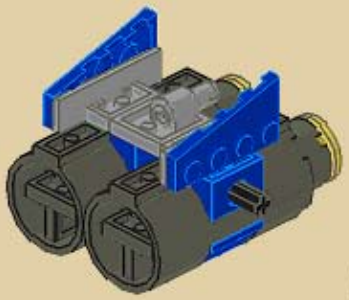

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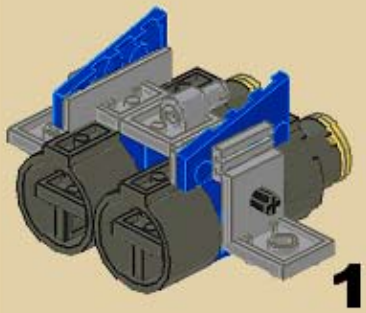

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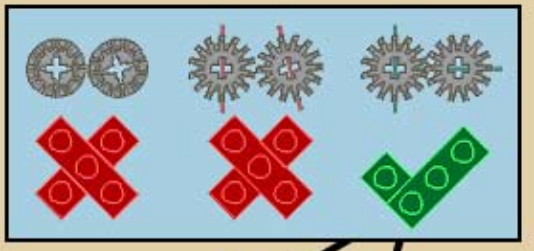

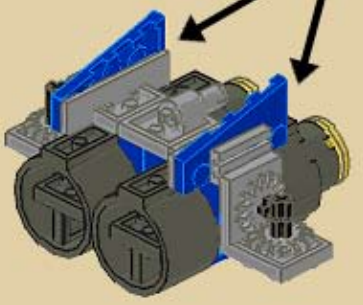

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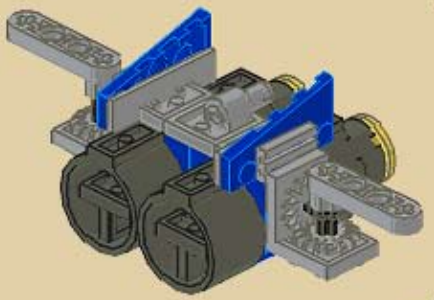

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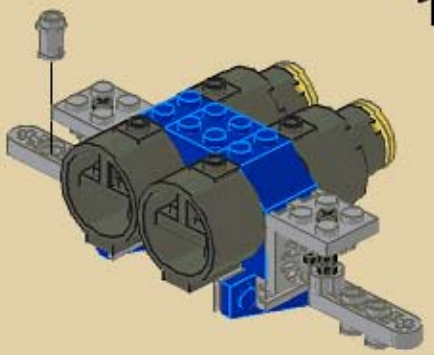

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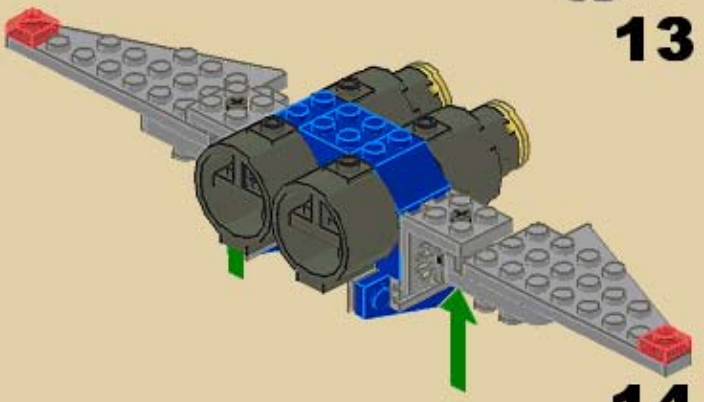

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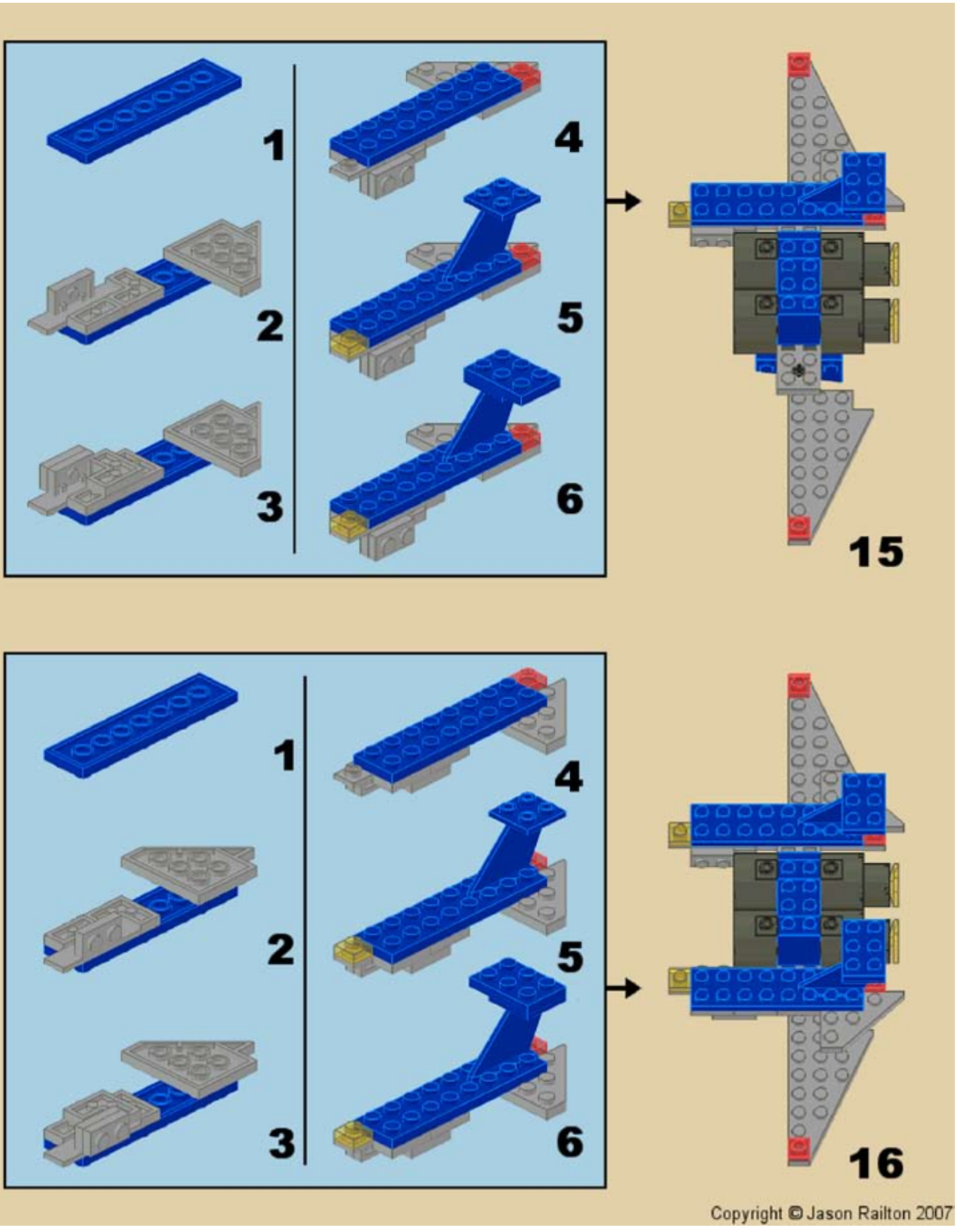

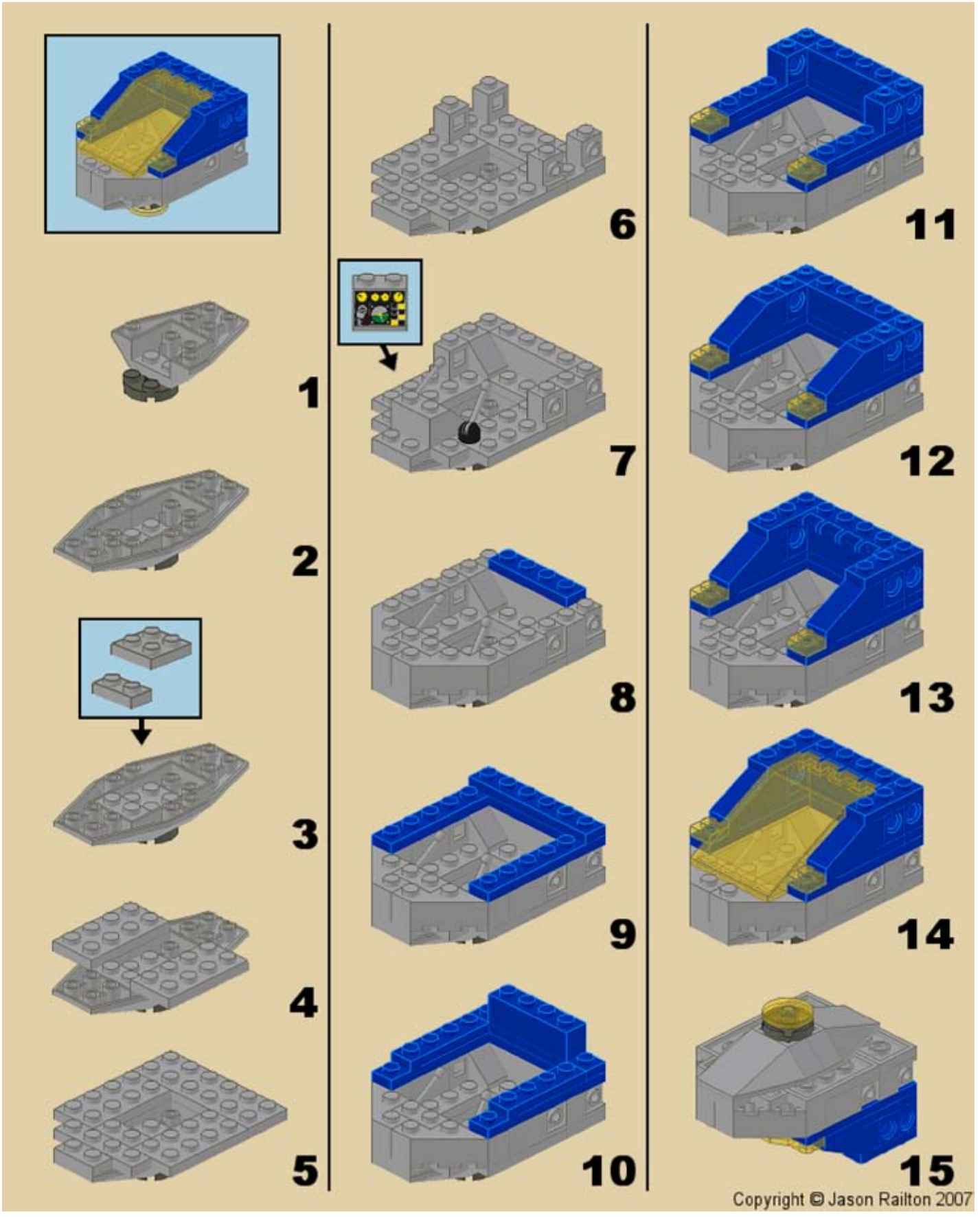
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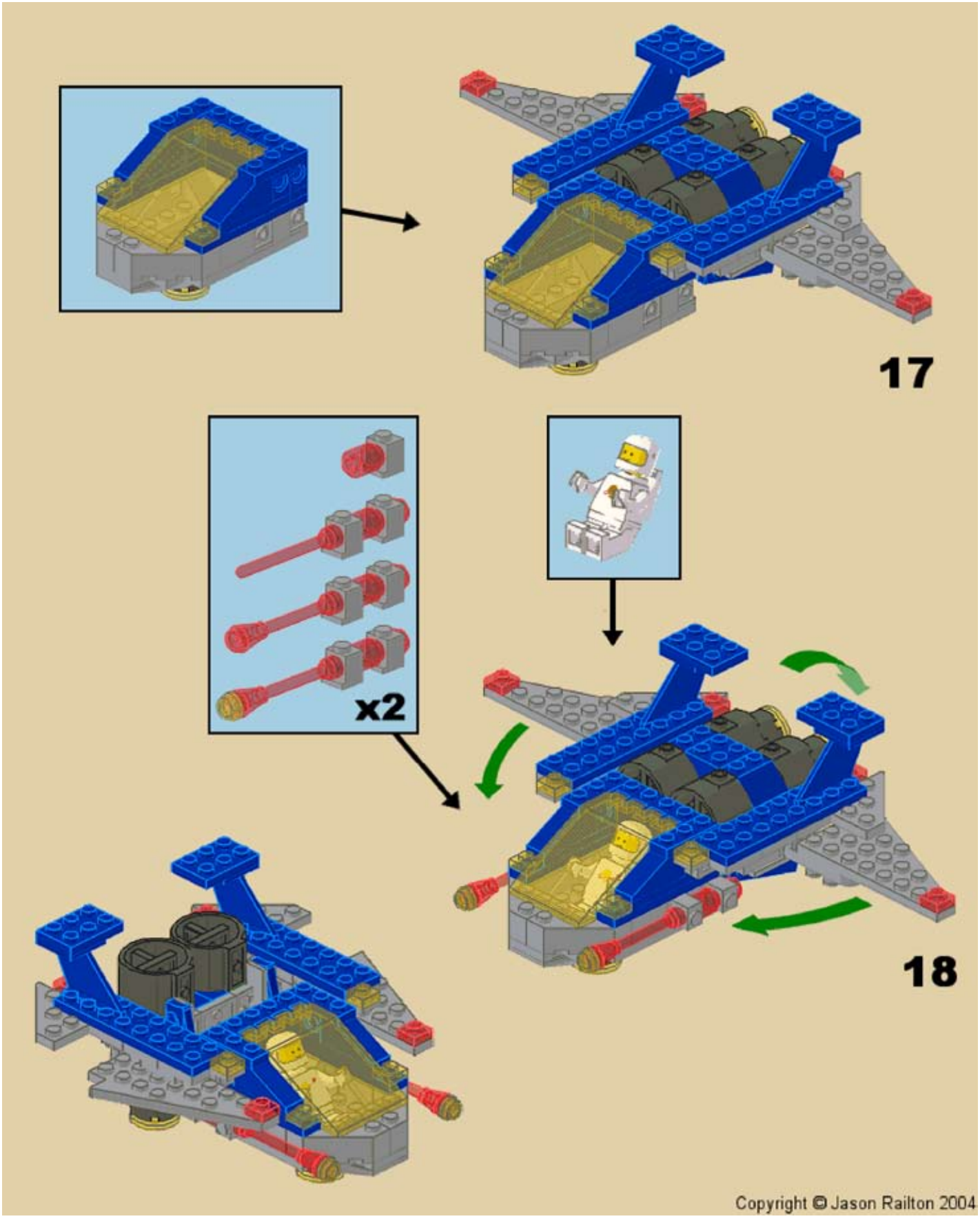
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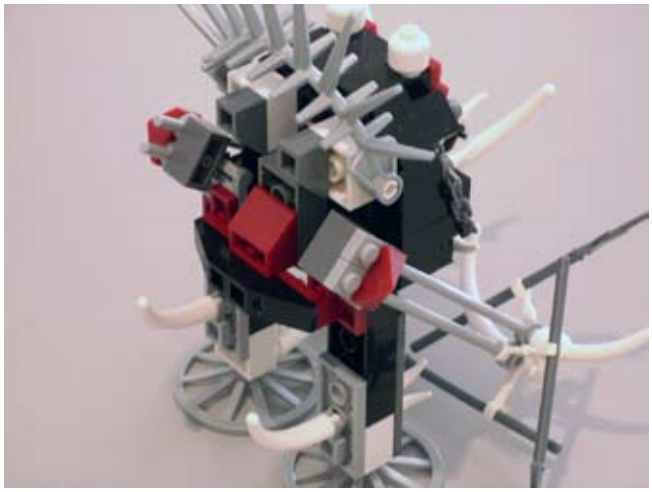
Contest Winners

by Steve DeCramer

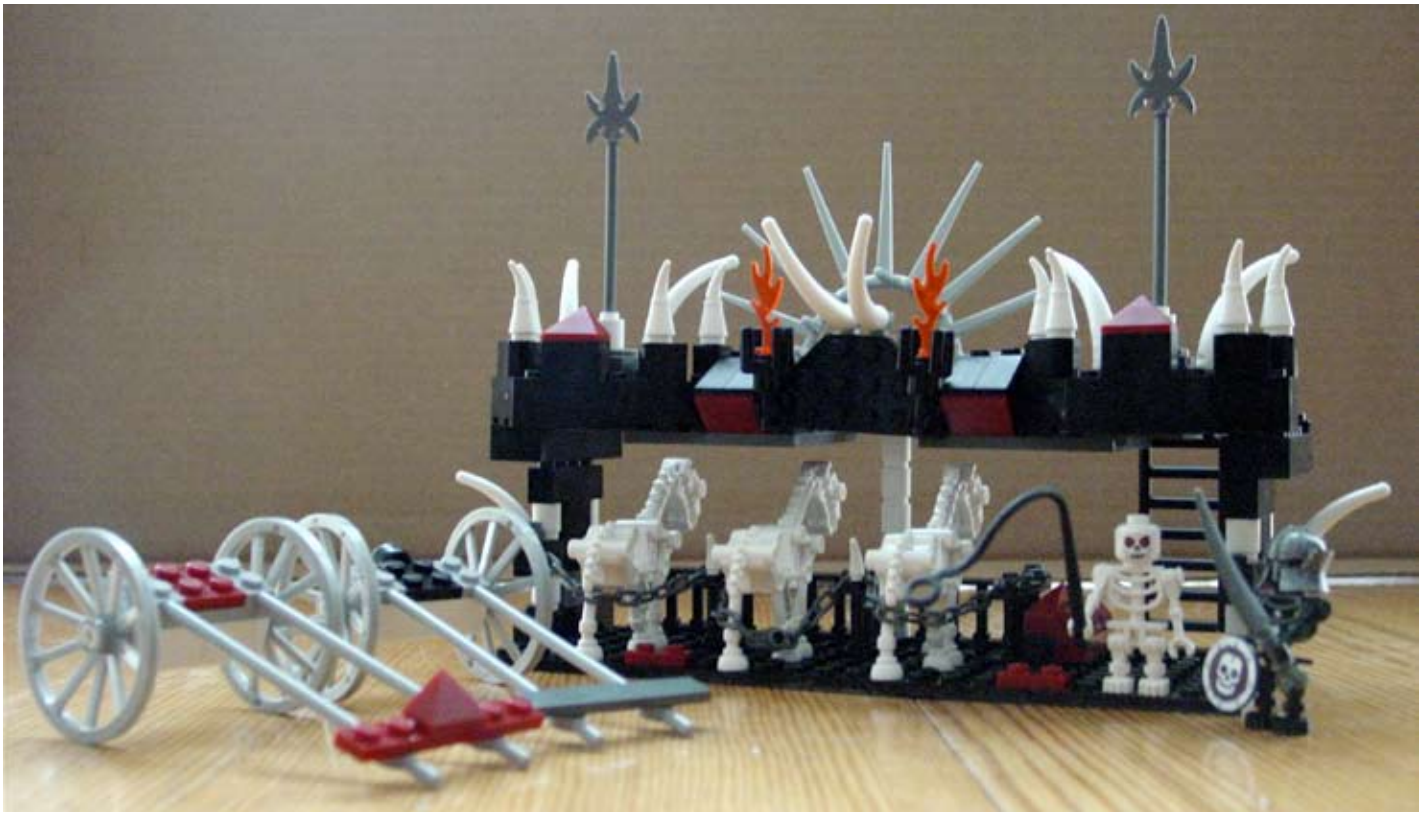
Well folks, this is the results from the second W.W.Y.B.contest. I wanted to give you guys (and gals) a tougher set to work with and I may have overdone it a bit. Our readers were asked to build a alternative model using set #7092 Skeleton's prison carriage. Third place goes to Vangelis Katsikaros, Second place goes to Cynthia Bradham, and our first place winner is Jason Railton's "Carriage of the choosen one". Congratulations to the winners and thanks to everyone who entered.

Our next contest will be with the Naboo N-1 Starfighter™, set 7660. Build an alternate model of this set by October 31, and you could end up in Issue 10!

Third Place: Vangelis Katsikaros



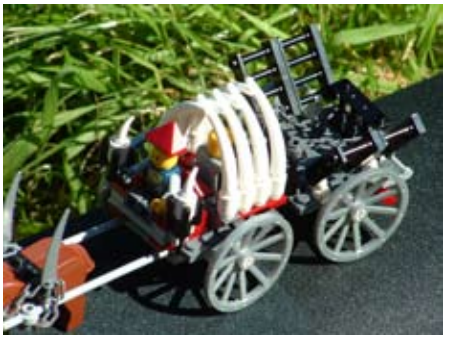
Second Place: Cynthia Bradham



Winner: Jason Railton, Carriage of the Chosen One

The Chosen One is carried to the city, as foretold centuries ago.

The aged Master of the Horse has been preparing his whole life for this journey. He guides the horse with his will alone, as his sacred charge is carried in shelter.



The trailer has carried their meagre supplies and feed for the horse. Now it is almost empty, as they near the end of their long journey.

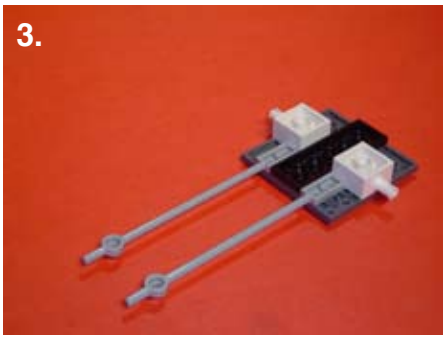
The trailer will be left with the monks of the shrine at the city gates...

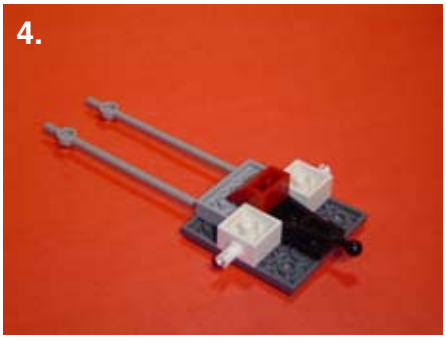
...as the carriage will lead a great procession into the city, the people flooding the streets to follow the Chosen One on the last leg of the journey up to the High Temple of the Inner Citadel.

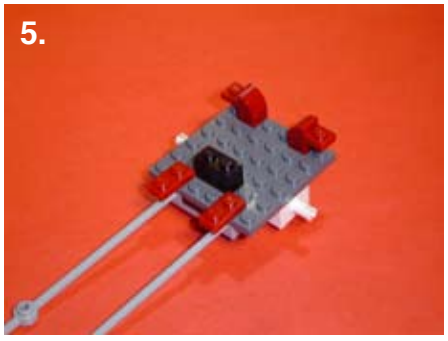
There, the two faces of the Chosen One may be addressed by all those who seek wisdom; one face that looks with the joy of contentment on the past...

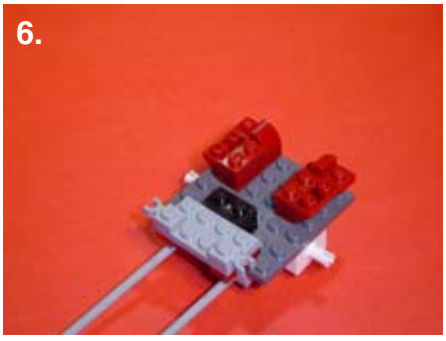
...and the other, that looks with the joy of anticipation on the future.

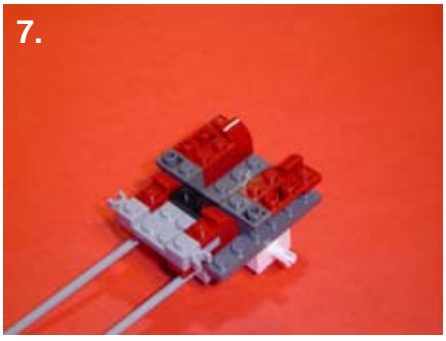
This journey has been centuries in the making. The Master will deliver the Chosen One at the time that is necessary, and will not be hurried.

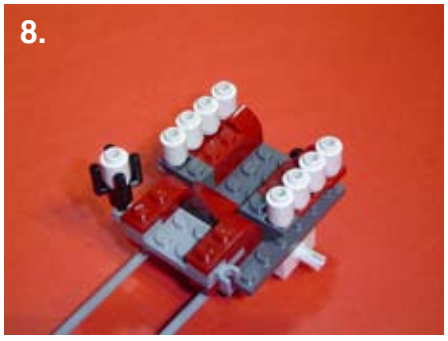


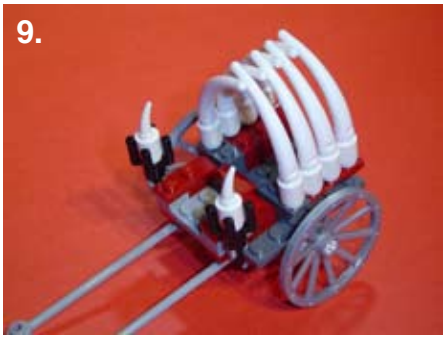


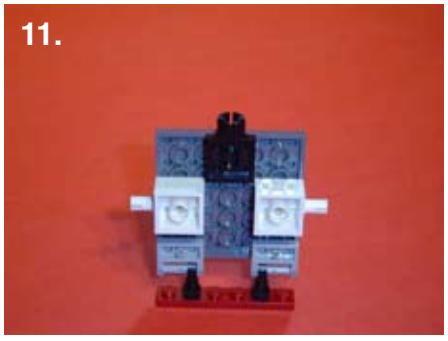








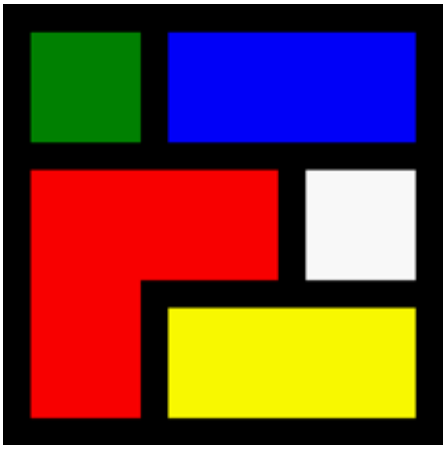




The Skeleton Carriage is such a dark and frightening model, I really wanted to make something good and light from it. So, the skeletal horses had to go, though I wasn't averse to stripping the skeletons for parts.

Most of the weapons were left out, but I love the versatility of the curved swords with clips on the end. They can be used on a pole as a scythe, or here for a highly decorative way of fitting the wagon arms to the horse.

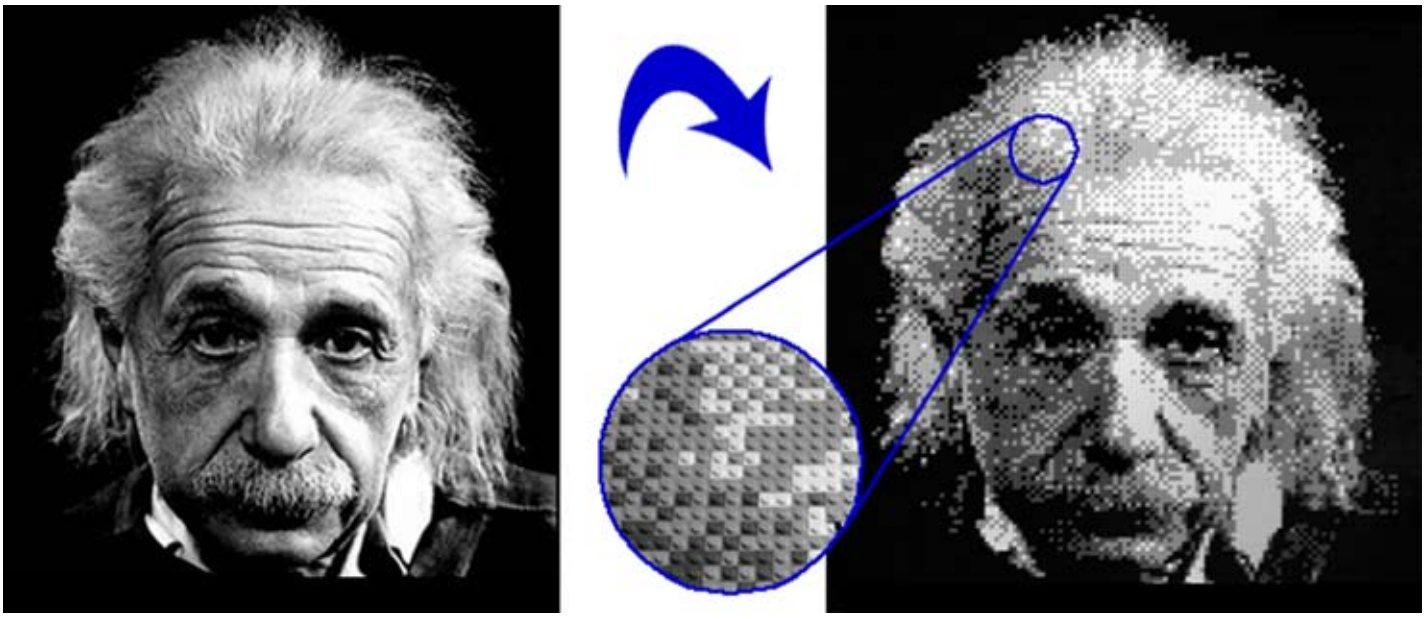
I did experiment with building a city gate or tower with the black bricks, but there weren't really enough to go round.



Discovering PicToBrick

Author: Tobias Reichling
Pictures/Images: Tobias Reichling / Adrian Schütz
Link: www.pictobrick.de (German & English)

What Is PicToBrick?



PicToBrick is a computer program for generating mosaics from digital pictures. The materials for constructing the mosaic, as well as their colors and forms, can be freely chosen. For mosaics constructed with Ministeck® (www.ministeck.de) and LEGO®, PicToBrick provides complete system configurations. These configurations contain information for current colors and forms of elements and can be modified and enlarged user-defined.
In order to get the best possible results for any master illustration, seven methods of color definition (quantization) are at your disposal. In addition you can choose between five methods of defining the element forms (tiling).
Besides the resulting mosaic picture, PicToBrick provides a multitude of different output documents. These are, among other things, a list of materials, a construction manual, as well as information about the colors and forms of material used.
PicToBrick was completely developed in JAVA and can be used cross platform (Windows, Linux, Mac). The software is published as open source under GPL2. Furthermore, PicToBrick is free!.

The Idea

The idea for this project is by me - Tobias Reichling. I'm 27 years old and from Germany, and have been building sculptures made of LEGO bricks for a few years. I've been dealing with mosaics and trying to create them electronically (mostly with Lugnet Mosaic Maker) for some time, yet I was never really pleased with the results. Moreover, there was no way of generating building instructions or a list of the required materials. Thus, the idea of writing my own mosaic software developed.
As a student at Siegen University I met Adrian Schütz. Adrian didn't have anything to do with LEGO; however, he was quickly intrigued to the idea of comprehensive mosaic software. Toward the end of our studies we decided to make it to our diploma thesis. We were able to get Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Merzenich und Dipl.-Math. Simon Budig - (both of Siegen University, faculty of electronic engineering and computer sciences, programming languages section) as tutors.

The Realization

In the spring of 2006 actual work began. At first, Adrian and I examined software products already on the market, which were, among others: Ministeck Portrait-Studio, Ministeck Creativ Atelier, Brickosaic, Pixelego Viewer, Bricksaic, Brick-O-Lizer, LUGNET Mosaic Maker and MLCad. We tested these products for their strong and weak points as well as their user-friendliness and tried to improve them. By this process the requirements for our own software PicToBrick (Picture to Brick) slowly began to take shape.
PicToBrick was to be independent of existing materials, meaning the software had to be able to define various mosaic elements (shapes) and colors. Predefined configurations were to be available for using LEGO elements and Ministeck.

The two main processing steps during the generation of the mosaic picture from a digital picture frame (photograph etc.) are color definition and tiling. In this case, color definition means assigning every colors of the template to the predetermined colors of the material. Tiling is the subsequent selection of the brick shape to be used. The software had to give the choice of several treatments for both these processes. For the step "color definition" this meant analyzing and categorizing into groups many practices from the print and computer monitor industries, such as dithering. Important members of those groups generally suited for color definition were, if necessary, to be modified for this purpose and then implemented into the program. For the tiling process the issues were scrutinizing mathematical tiling methods as well as practicaltechniques for their suitability for setting the elements within the mosaic, possibly adopting and further developing basic approaches or creating proprietary methods and incorporating them into the software.

Furthermore, user-friendly export documents and output formats had to be worked out. Instructions, parts lists or similar which were to assist the user during the building process or, by means of machine-readable templates, enable industrial production of the mosaic just made.Another goal continued to be being able to view the implemented quantization and tiling processes combined with each other, and, potential permitting, optimization in reference to various aspects of and/or materials used.
Once we had defined the principal requirements we got acquainted with many new technical aspects, such as human perception, optical illusions, digital color spaces, processing digital continuous tone from the print and monitor industry and mathematical and industrial tiling methods. We then determined the twelve processes we wanted the program to offer in the fields of quantization and tiling and came up with the title for our thesis:

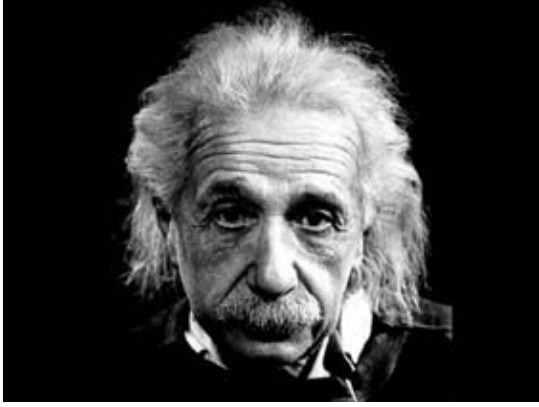
Generating Mosaics from Multicolor Raster Graphics by Optimized Interaction of Improved and Newly DevelopedQuantization and Tiling Algorithms

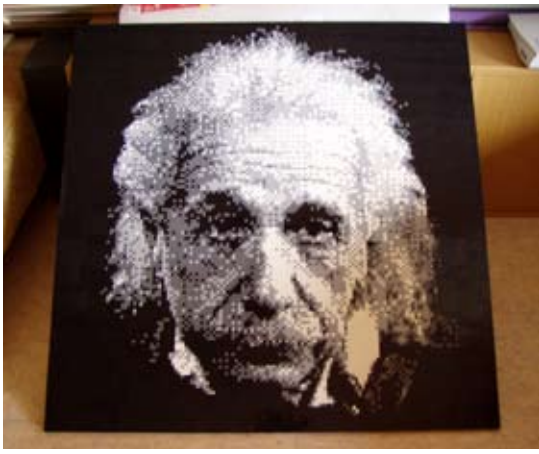
The actual programming work took four months. We selected the programming language Java, in order to enable it to eventually be used cross platform on various operating systems. First we created the software framework, i.e. the interface, the data structures and one unsophisticated process in each of the two main fields, quantization and tiling. Based upon the data structures we were then able to build in the method of generating output documents. Finally, it was time for the heart of the program: A total of twelve techniques with the most differing of set goals was implemented, tested and continually improved.

Many Helping Hands

The last step in the software implementation was providing language kits in German and English in order for the program to eventually be used internationally as well. Thanks to Gisela Schütz of Siegen for examining all our English translations. The remaining two months were spent summarizing our procedures, results, experiences in a 340 page documentation. However, it was during my private visit in September to Jan Beyer of TLC that I got the idea to offer the software in further languages and to make use of the international forum of "LEGO Ambassadors".

(continued on next page)





The Process: 1. (Top) A photo is imported into PicToBrick. 2. (Upper and middle) Patterns are made from the program for parts ordes and building. 3. (Bottom) The completed mosaic

Making a Color Mosaic

1. A graphic is imported into PicTo-Brick. 2. A color mixing pattern is selected from the options provided in the program. 3. Parts are selected by the program and ordered (This mosaic is not done with LEGO elements, but with Ministeck parts). 4. The completed mosaic, by Tobias Reichling and Adrian Schütz. 5. A closer look at the mosiac, showing the color mixing used.

So, Jan contacted selected ambassadors, who all gave their support and enabled Adrian and me to include four more language kits into the program. We would like to thank Barbara Werth (NL), Casper van Nimwegen (NL), Didier Enjary (F), Marco Chiappa (I), Jakob Bindslet (DK) und Juan Macias (E) for their assistance in this matter.

On December 1, 2006 we then handed in PicToBrick and its documentation to our registrar's office , and about a fortnight later we had the presentation in front of our examiners, other important representatives of the University and other interested persons.

presentation of diploma thesis
Left: Tobias Reichling, right: Adrian Schütz

Software-Release / Website

Afterwards, we had to wait about six weeks for the results from the examiners. This was quite satisfactory, and on January 19, 2007 we were thus able to take another important step with PicToBrick; we published PicToBrick as Open Source Software under the General Public Licence (GPL) Version 2 on the website www.pictobrick.de (in both German and English).

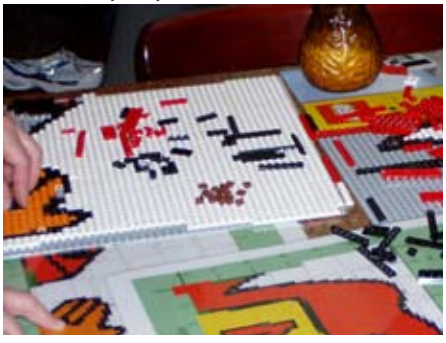
Website

During the past three months we have had just about 1500 downloads without getting one single error message in return. We received many e-mails from various corners of the earth, the praise being a wonderful recompense for the many hours of work.

Website screen

Rijswijk - Bouwsteen-Land - 20./21.01.2007

Additionally, in December 2006 already we received a request from Jan Bayer, Community Liaison of the LEGO Group . He wanted to give the Dutch LEGO club De Bouwsteen a large mosaic of their club logo as a present for their 12-and-halfth birthday. It was, however, only supposed to be built on the actual day only, by club members. We therefore created the instructions for the 2.30m by 1.15m large mosaic and divided it into 18 smaller ones - one for each 48x48 baseplate. Jan got the list of the required material, and we met at the end of January 2007 in Rijswijk, in the Netherlands, with bricks, instructions and many avid would-be builders. Before letting the following photos speak for themselves, allow us to thank Jan Beyer (TLC) and Paul Wolters (De Bouwsteen) for the invitation and the pleasant time in Rijswijk.



Settiing up panels...

for the mosaic

Plans for the future

As can be expected, during the entire diploma thesis we continually had ideas for improvement of and modification to our software. Not all of these ideas fit to the actual task of the thesis by content. It was also not possible to work on all of this during the time period available. We have rudimentarily documented some of these ideas already, as well as adding others we received by e-mail from various users of the programme. Adrian's and my own professional and private futures permitting, we do plan to further develop PicToBrick!

City arms with LEGO brick, by Tobias Reichling

Three golden rules

Here are three simple rules for creating mosaics with PicToBrick:
1) The better-known your source graphic is, the more recognizable the mosaic will become.
2) The larger the mosaic will be built, the higher the quality will most likely be.
3) The longer you play around with the functions of PicToBrick, the better you will get to know its strengths and weaknesses and be able to use this to improve the end product's quality.

There's a small tutorial of PicToBrick on the website as well as in the *BrickJournal* site for download.

Finally a little request to everybody

Finally, may I ask all users of our software to submit pictures and information to your mosaics designed with PicToBrick, which we would like to present in the picture gallery on our website. The e-mail address for this is also can be found on the website. Thank you.

The Review: Making a Complete Customized Figure!

By Jared K. Burks

In this article I am going to review all the basic techniques we have gone through in the previous articles by demonstrating their use in the creation of one figure; from design concept to finished fig. Construction of a Roman Legionnaire will be used to demonstrate all the basic techniques. This is the classical Roman soldier seen in the segmented silver banded armor (Figure 1A). This type of armor wraps around the body in real life, but this is not possible for a minifigure so we will need to address some parts issues as well as weapons and helmets.

There are two main defining parts of a Roman Legionnaire's gear: the armor and the helmet. These will be what we have to focus on to develop our figure. We need to design the decals for the armor and the lower tunic which protrudes from the bottom of the armor. Before designing the decals for the armor (or Lorica segmentata) we need to decide which part we are going to use to represent the armor, or are we going to apply it directly to the torso? In this case after examining the lorica armor I decided the shoulders are critical to getting the "look" of the armor. I searched through Bricklink and found the hockey player armor, which has the correct shoulder look (Figure 1B). This sacrifices a bit on the sides of the armor, but this is unavoidable as there is no better part. We could apply the decal directly to the torso, but then we wouldn't have the shoulder look. The hockey player body armor is only available in black or white, but don't worry about this as we are going to complete or almost completely cover the armor so this won't matter. I will use a black one in this example because if some of the black does show around the sides it will be less of detraction from the figure than the white part.

Now we have the part to decal so we need to make a template and design the decal. Carefully measure the part and draw it out in your vector art program. Remember that vector art is better than raster for print resolution {for more information please revisit the first article in this series in *BrickJournal* 4). The armor is relatively easy to draw as it is a segmented armor. Just don't make the segments line up perfectly in the middle area. If you do it won't look "real" as nothing is perfect in real life. So make the alignment between the segment bands slightly off. Then add a few details such as hinges, tie string, and rivets and you are done. Next, we need to draw the fabric that covers the shoulders and upper legs from the under tunic. We also need to draw the belt that the soldier would wear.

Figure 1A: (Pic from Wiki: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Roman_legionaire_in_lorica_segmentata.jpg, used with permission.)

Figure 1B: (Pic from BL: http://www.bricklink.com/PL/47577pb01.jpg)

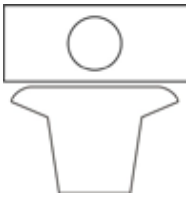


Figure 2A: Hockey player template

Figure 2B: Roman Legionnaire decal design.

Figure 3: Decaled Process.

Brasso Instructions:

1. Pour a small amount of Brasso (about the size of a quarter) on paper towel or cloth.

2. Rub LEGO element or minifig part vigorously against cloth containing the Brasso. Apply more Brasso if necessary. Removing the printing from a torso should take 15 seconds to 1 minute depending on how much elbow grease one uses.

3. Once the original print has been removed, wash the piece with soap and water, making sure to remove any residual Brasso, and then allow the part to dry.

With our decal in hand we can decide if we are going to make the figure flesh-colored or yellow. Either will work with the example design I have shown above. For this article I am going to use a yellow minifig, as such I now need to find the following parts to complete the figure: yellow head, yellow arms, yellow hands, red hips, red torso, and yellow legs. I am using a red torso as that is the color of the under tunic and the figure will look better if all matches. I am using yellow arms as I have a decal to cover the shoulder region to mimic the tunic. The next step is to trim your decal to remove as much of the non-printed area as possible and get it ready for application. In the case of body armor piece we will have to use Brasso on the part to remove the NHL printing and get it ready for the decal. You could apply the decal over the printing, but depending on the type of film you are using it might show through so it is better to remove it. Remember, if you are a younger reader please get your parents help with the Brasso step (for instructions see the inset).

With a clean part in hand you are ready to apply the decal. Briefly dip (DO NOT SOAK) the decal in distilled water. Allow it to sit for one minute. Apply a small amount of water to the part to receiving the decal. Slide the decal from the backer paper onto the part and position it with a moist Q-tip. Roll the Q-tip across the decal's surface to remove trapped air bubbles. Allow the decal to dry and then, finally, overcoat the decal for protection using a clear paint. For more detail please revisit the past article in *BrickJournal 5* on decal application.

Now we have a decaled body and armor. We need to give our Roman Legionnaire a way to defend himself and Rome; therefore he needs weapons and armor. I will briefly show you how to make a Pilum (spear), Coolus (helmet), and Scutum (Shield) to equip our soldier (Figure 4). I have cheated slightly in the construction of the Scutum (shield). I have used sheet styrene, available at most hobby stores. This is a bit of an advanced technique and a new technique to the series. I will be covering more on its use in the future, so this is a bit of a teaser. You could make a Gladius (sword) out of the LEGO knight's sword if you want, but the Little Armory offers a great version so I have elected to go with it in this example. Please follow the pictorial instructions on the next page to cut or sand the parts needed into the new items. I use superglue to attach my parts, but there are many different options for glue including plastic welding agents.

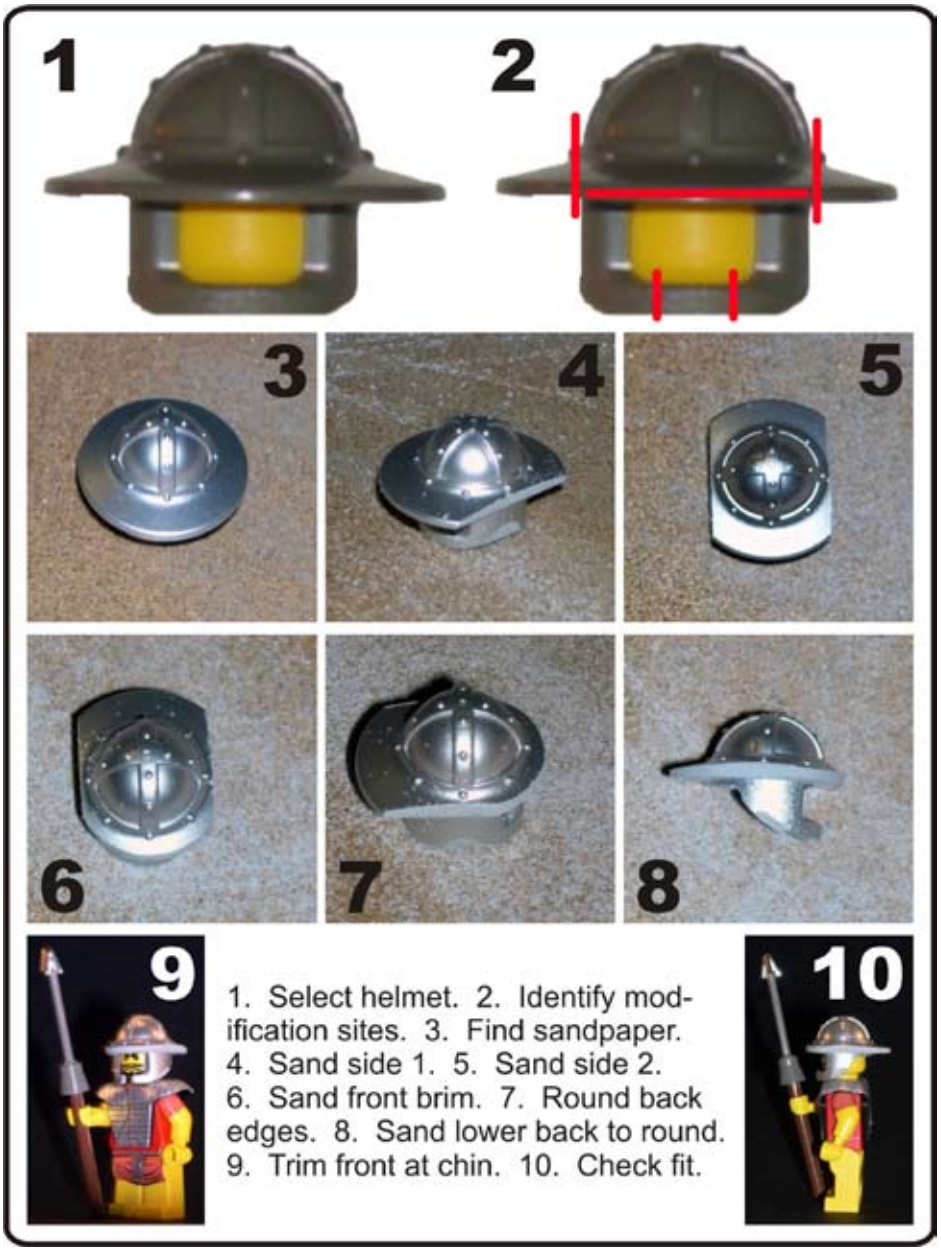


Figure 4B: Coolus. Idea from Emily Brownlow.

Figure 4A: Pilum

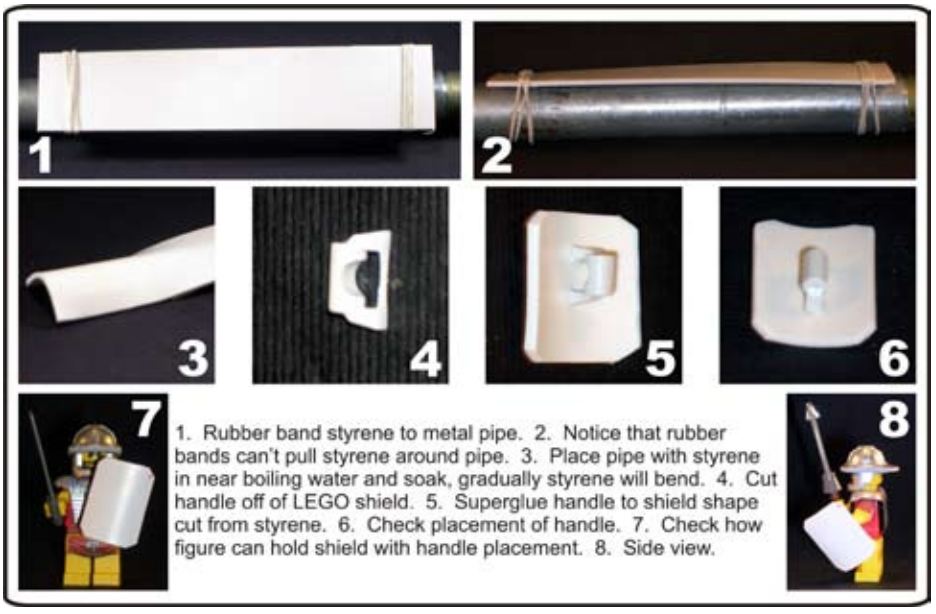


Figure 4C: Scutum.

Many of these soldiers wore a cape so we will now need some cloth. Remember, you can make your own or modify a piece of LEGO cloth. If you make your own be sure to paint a thin layer of acrylic medium over the cloth to prevent fraying, then paint the cloth the desired color, in this case red. I am using a short cape design because a soldier wouldn't want to trip on his cape before or in battle. In the next figure you can see the short cape template and the modification I have made to alter the cape slightly so as it wouldn't get caught in the soldiers weapon arm.

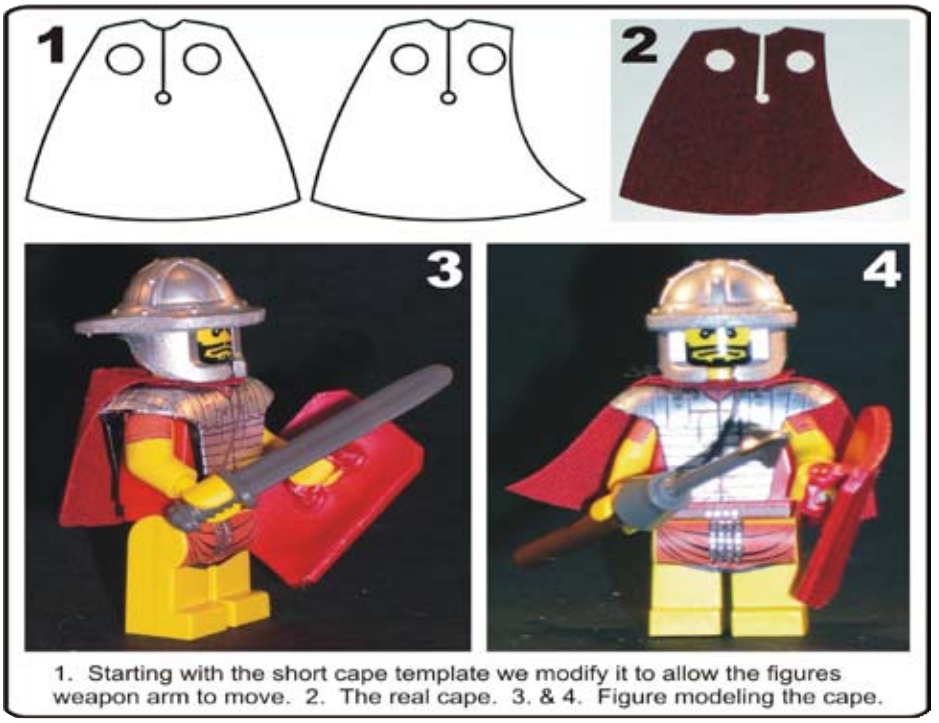


Figure 5: Cloth

Now we need to pose and photograph our new infantryman. Make sure you have your lights setup from opposite directions to help cancel out the shadow effects created when lighting. Use the macro option on your camera and a contrasting colored background.

Now that we have recapped these techniques let's see what you can create. If you want further details on any of the techniques used here be sure to check out the previous issues of *BrickJournal*.

Issue 4: Decal Design
Issue 5: Decal Application
Issue 6: Photographing Minifigs
Issue 7: Custom Accessory Creation
Issue 8: Custom Cloth Creation

Figure 6: Final Figure

Next Time:
Minifig Customization 101 – Creating Completely New Accessories from Clay!

Evolution of the Blacktron Intelligence Agency

Brian Darrow explains the building of his enormous space layout!

Article by Brian Darrow
Photography by Brian Darrow and Joe Meno

Hello. <stands up> My name is Brian and I'm a LEGOholic.

I love to build things! When I was a kid during the 1960s plastic models were all the rage: planes, ships (especially sailing vessels) and cars. I built them all. I built HO train layouts. I built with Popsicle sticks, Lincoln Logs, Erector sets and of course LEGO bricks. The dark ages of building hit around my high school years like it does for so many kids and it wasn't until age 26 that I rediscovered the "Brick". At Christmas time 1983 my wife and I were at the mall, in Sears, doing some gift shopping when I stumbled upon the toy section. I hadn't been in the toy section of a store for years. I had a two year old and a six-month old, and they needed TOYS! Voila, there they were, Space System value pack (set #1977) and Classic Spacemen Minifigures (set #6701), begging me to buy them and take them home. They were a far cry from the basic bricks I built with as a youth. These two LEGO sets were the beginning of my second childhood. LEGO was a wonderful way to connect with my sons and we had a house full while they were growing up. We built towns, spaceships, castles and they always saved me a ship to sail in their pirate game when I'd get home late from the office. Alas, they got into high school and their interest shifted to sports and girls, but I just kept building. About that same time I found the Internet newsgroup rec.toys.LEGO which connected me with a whole world of LEGO fans. But that's a whole other story and I need to get back to the subject at hand.

In the beginning...Version 1

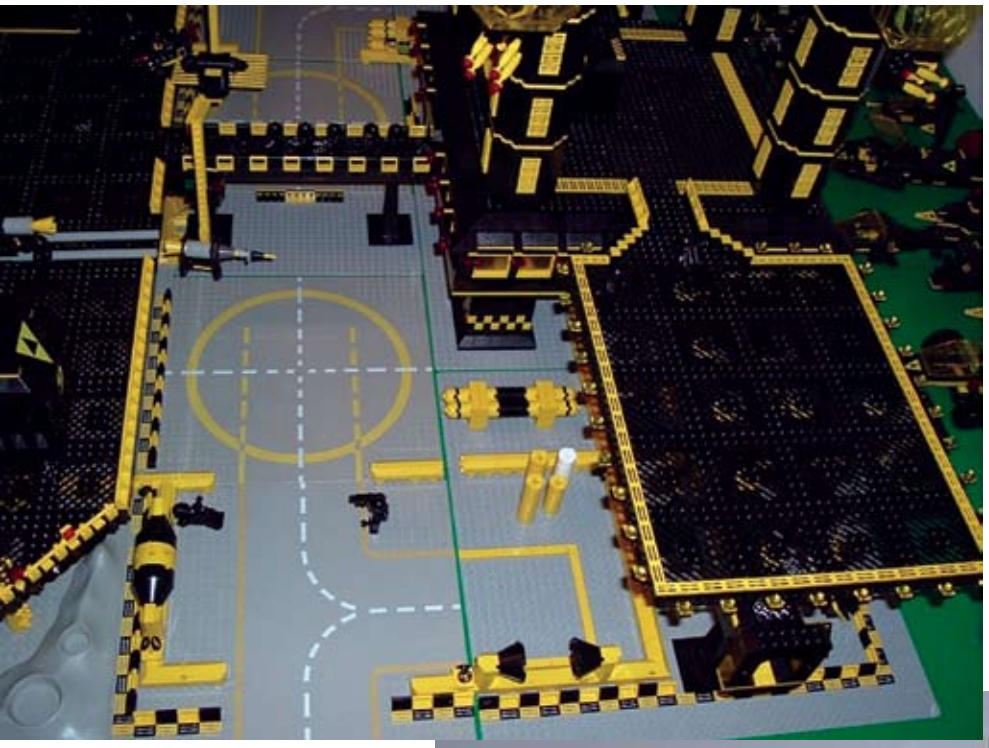
My LEGO hobby took a giant leap forward when I hooked up with the Indianapolis LEGO Users Group (IndyLUG) and found a talented and creative bunch of likeminded enthusiasts. Sharing building ideas and doing public displays was a wonderful opportunity for all of us. We received an invitation in October 2003 to participate in the Indianapolis Parent's and Children's Expo being held the following February (2004). This was a superb opportunity for the club to build something other than the standard train/town displays we'd been doing up to that point. The club's consensus was to build a moon-base with each member supplying a module. I knew right off what I wanted to build; a module based upon my favorite space theme: Blacktron I. I find irresistible the Blacktron I color scheme of black and trans-yellow trimmed with yellow and highlighted by bits of trans-red. So the Blacktron Intellegence Agency was born and, yes, I know intelligence is misspelled. I initially thought this would be a clever play on words since these Blacktron guys were supposed to be on top of everything. But it was a poor joke only convincing people I didn't know how to spell. So it was changed back to the correct spelling after that first public show and became the Blacktron Intelligence Agency (BIA).

I wanted to stick to the building style of the original Message Intercept Base (#6987) released in 1988 plus incorporate all the original Blacktron I sets: Alienator (#6876), Invader (#6894), Battrax (#6941) and Renegade (#6954) with designs of my own. The first BIA had three small towers topped with trans-yellow domes interconnected by corridors to give it some stability. There was a rectangular elevated dormitory with a landing pad on top. I built many little details into the BIA because I love detail plus it gives it more viewer interest as well. It turned out to be three large gray baseplates long and resembled a gerbil habitat.

Version 1 of the Blacktron Intelligence Agency

The idea for three towers came about simply because I had eleven 10 x 10 x 12 trans-yellow quarter dome panels in my collection at the time, enough for the better part of three full domes. If you look closely at the photo you'll see the twelfth quarter dome hidden in the back is actually trans-fluorescent green. The height of the towers corresponds to the quantity of 3 x 3 black castle wall sections I had and thus the secret to my early MOCs. I'd simply dig through my parts bins to get an idea of what was there, and then start building. Oh I would draw out a little sketch from time to time, but mostly I would just build, keeping designs I liked and discarding those I didn't.

All in all that first BIA was a big hit with both the public and my fellow IndyLUG club members. I got some great feedback from that Parent's and Children's Expo and decided to redesign the BIA and take it to BrickFest 2004. Connecting the towers gave them stability but the original three BIA towers were in a linear arrangement simply because connecting them in a triangle was way too clumsy looking. I envisioned the next BIA having four towers of increasing height in a square configuration connected by four individual corridors giving it the stability to withstand the inevitable table nudge all MOCs get at public events. I needed lots of rare pieces from a 1988 set to accomplish this and from that point on all of my projects have relied heavily on our friends and neighbors at Bricklink.com.



Version 2 of the Blacktron Intelligence Agency

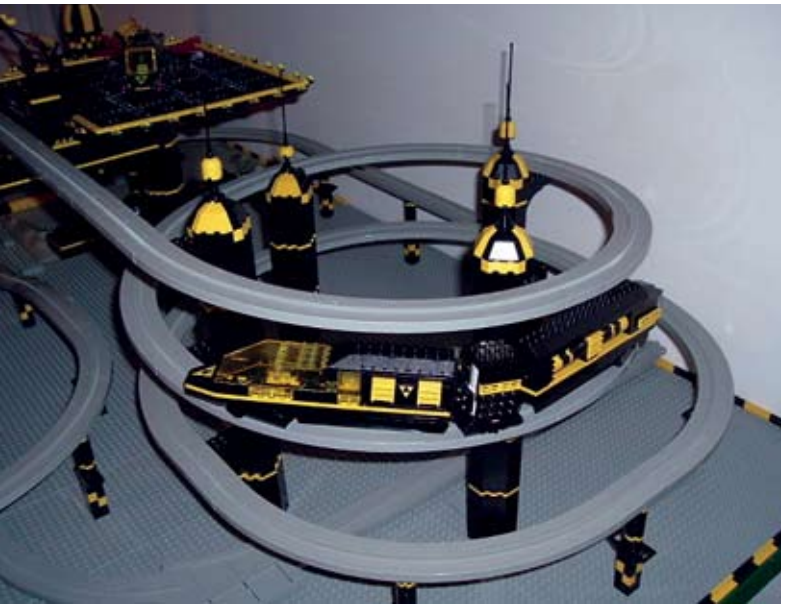
Version 2

That second ground up rebuild was displayed at BrickFest 2004. It had five moonbase corridor connections compared to the first model which only had one. It occupied the area of nine large gray baseplates, however crater plates and classic space landing pad plates were used instead. It had two elevated landing pads supported underneath by moonbase corridors and two multi pod missile compounds connected by an elevated gantry along with the four towers topped with trans-yellow domes.

Versions 3 and 4

Version 3 of the Blacktron Intelligence Agency

As quickly as I get a model 'done' I'm thinking of ways to change or modify it. All my projects are works-in-progress sort of like the never-ending story, but in a good way. This was the situation leading up to the third major renovation in the fall of 2004. I had acquired lots of monorail track over the years but up to this time IndyLUG had only been using it on our train layouts, and I wanted to incorporate it into the BIA. I wanted something other than the ubiquitous ten-brick high monorail stanchion; I wanted something to stand out in the design and I wanted to go higher than the ten-brick high stanchion. So I began experimenting with ways to spiral the track up and eventually settled on four black and yellow 6 x 6 pillars elevating the track 30 bricks high.



Version 3 monorail track of the Blacktron Intelligence Agency

Version 5

These pillars worked well once assembled on the layout but proved tricky during set-up requiring way too much time plus an additional set of hands to help position them. I used a point to point stop switch monorail track layout because what goes up must come down and there was only room for one spiral. This rendition of the BIA also sported a redesigned central dormitory unit and taller spires with updates and refinements. The taller spires got a single 'X' shaped stabilizing corridor which polished up the look and gave it a sleeker appearance. There were four 30-brick high landing pads stretching out from the central dormitory unit supported by pillars and corridors. These pillars also doubled as supports for the monorail track opening up the area underneath to expose more of the design details. Unfortunately, this open design made it impractical to have standard moonbase corridors and the BIA lost its moonbase compatibility with this revision.

Version 4 of the Blacktron Intelligence Agency

No sooner had I completed this rebuild than I begin considering a new design where the monorail track would pierce the towers and pillars. This was the fourth version and everything but the central dormitory unit was again redesigned. I'd now collected enough trans-yellow quarter domes to add six more complete towers to the existing four towers. These six towers provided the support for the monorail which pieced them at two different levels as it wound around from ground level to 24 bricks high. The monorail track spiral was omitted from this version because it had proved to be too cumbersome during set-up. The ground level missile bays were dismantled and incorporated into the six new towers. A new parallel track monorail station was added along with an oversize landing pad on the north end. The monorail track was a single closed loop for continuous running and a second spur track was added so that in club displays the rest of the moon base modules would have access to the BIA via the monorail. This forth version was displayed at Brickfest 2005.

I spent some time working on a background story for the BrickFest 2005 BIA and presented that for the first time in printed info sheets placed around the perimeter. These info sheets described the function of the structures and vehicles.

Many of those vehicles were Blacktron I renditions of Classic Space sets like Alien Moon Stalker (#6940) and Mega Core Magnetizer (#6989).

Version 6

I was bummed out not having a spiraling monorail track in the fifth version so I set out to solve this problem. I needed something easy to set up and stable enough so I won't suffer the pain of seeing one of those rare and expensive monorails crashing to the floor at a public show. The answer was a pyramid! The conception of this simple elegant design foretold the fifth version of the BIA built during the winter of 2005-2006. Double pyramid spires allowed the monorail track to climb back up to 30 bricks high.

Moon Stalker (above) and the Mega Core Magnetizer (left)

But this fifth version lasted less than a month and was never even photographed before being modified to include additional monorails. Why not have two independent loops of monorail track with two monorails? And if two's good, three would be better. (A side note about two or more monorails running on the same track…it just doesn't work! One always catches up to the other bumping if off the track or locking them both down tight.)

Version 7

While laying out this sixth version I knew it was going to have to grow to support the addition of three monorail loops. So I extended the end opposite the pyramids by building a landing zone with eight small towers connected by a gantry. The BIA had now grown to 60 inches x 160 inches with three independent monorail loops climbing and descending four levels. It had ten ground level landing pads and two large elevated landing platforms. This version made it to the House of Bricks 2006.

Version 6 of the Blacktron Intelligence Agency

The BIA remained unchanged for close to a year while I worked on a couple of my other projects. However, when they announced Brickworld was coming to Chicago, the Blacktron creative juices started flowing again. I had been acquiring more trans-yellow quarter domes along with crater plates and landing pad baseplates with the intent of expanding the BIA. Brickworld being only three hours away gave me the boost I needed to get building. I thought a fleet of Renegades lined up and ready for take-off would be a cool addition. But I needed an open landing zone to make it look right so I reconfigured all the baseplates under the existing BIA, borrowing a few to expand the new landing zone to fit the need.

This doubled the length to 320 inches. Reworking the baseplates also proved beneficial when installing the train track for the new Blacktron space train, an idea I borrowed from fellow IndyLUG member Steve McDonough. I got another great idea while talking with another club member Jeramy Spurgeon: Why not add a bunch more troops? All 250+ Blacktron I minifigures were currently on active duty. However, I did have other space minifigures in cryogenic storage ready to be called into service plus I'd previously built a fleet of Galaxy Commanders (#6980) for BrickFest 2004 in six different themes (Classic Space, Space Police I & II, M-Tron, Ice Planet 2002 and Blacktron I). This then evolved into the historical review of visiting space minifigures

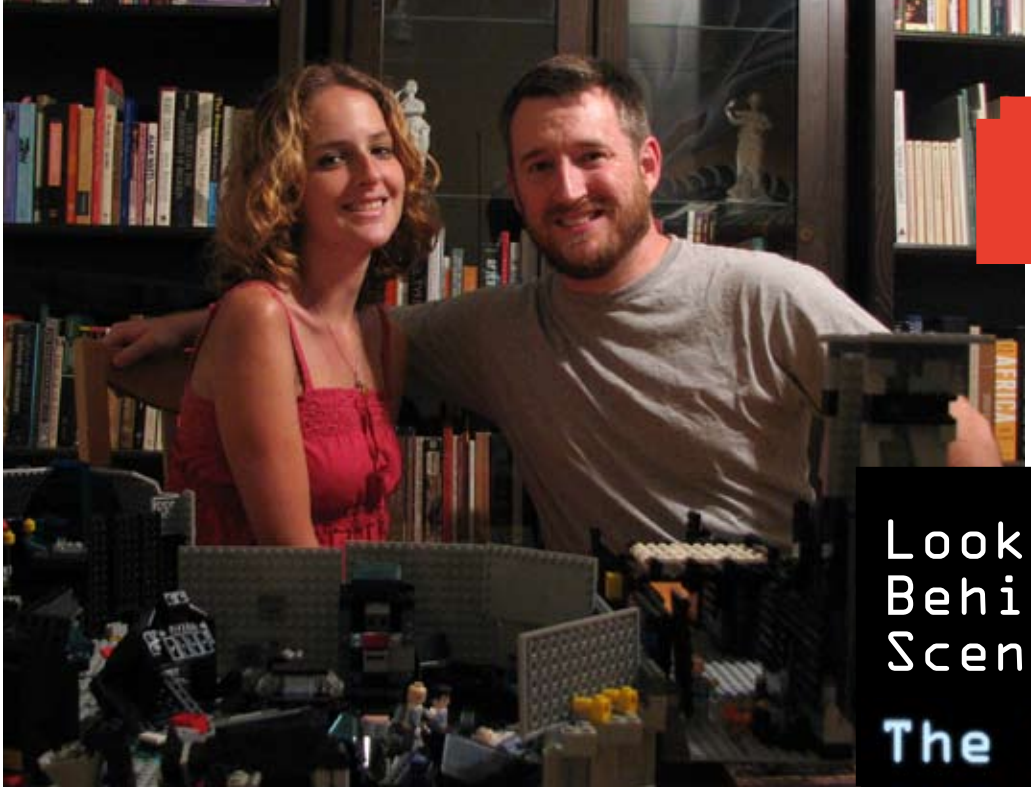
Version 7 of the Blacktron Intelligence Agency

on parade down the central boulevard reminiscent of a Soviet May Day spectacle. I also wanted lots of support vehicles to populate the new landing zone so I went to the parts bins and pulled out all the classic space balloon tires allowing me to make 36 additional vehicles. The Renegade landing zone got three new trans-yellow observation towers in ascending height along with four spacecraft hangers housing the Battrax and Invader. Included with seventh version displayed at Brickworld was a little Seek & Find. We've employed this in our IndyLUG displays to get the viewer involved and looking for all the little details.

"How long did it take?" "How many pieces?" "How much did it cost?" These are just three of the many questions every AFOL hears at any public event. Truthfully I don't have an accurate answer to these questions. I'm a LEGO hobbyist and as such build for fun. I have no interest in turning my hobby into a commercial enterprise or laborious task; therefore I don't count bricks, keep track of time or add up how much I spend. Those things would take away from the fun of building and creating.

So there you have it, the Evolution of the Blacktron Intelligence Agency, the most advanced surveillance organization known to minifigkind. They're dark and sinister: If you don't want them to know what you're thinking, Don't Think!

Blacktron Intelligence Agency



Looking Behind the Scenes of The Mercurials

Article by Joe Meno

Photography by Tom and Nicole Wilson

Earlier this year, a LEGO graphic novel began online called *The Mercurials*. The comics quickly was noticed for not only its serious tone, but for it's distinct look. The Mercurials is a dark science-fiction story that is the creation of Tom and Nicole Wilson, two LEGO storytellers. BrickJournal talked to them about the comic and themselves.

What do you and Nicole do in real life?

TOM: My career has been in political communications. Currently I do media relations and speechwriting for a state agency in Georgia and manage a staff of press secretaries.

NICOLE: I'm a children's librarian. I go around to schools and read to and perform for children.

When did you start thinking about *The Mercurials?*

TOM: We started talking about the ideas that would become "The Mercurials" towards the beginning of 2007.

How long have you been in the hobby?

TOM: Something like 24 years. My first set was a small space ship with a red space minifig, which I still have. My favorite set was the original yellow castle.

NICOLE: I remember lusting after my brother's space LEGO set at a very young age. My first set was also the yellow castle.

There have been online serials using LEGO elements before, but most have been in a humourous tone. What inspired you to make the Mercurials as a LEGO-based project?

TOM: It was kind of the reverse: the LEGO pieces I had on hand inspired and dictated the story. As an adult, I'd been picking up different sets like the pirates, ninjas, woodsmen, castle, and of course Star Wars sets. Unfortunately I've lost the ability to just sit down in the floor and make laser gun noises, but all these sets, especially the minifigs, were crying to be played with. Inspired by the "Brick Testament" and some of the superhero LEGO comics like "S-Team' and the 'Unlikely Society," I decided to try a photo-based comic. We never really made the conscious decision to do something so serious. Our main challenge was: how do you put together such disparate themes as pirates, Jedi, and Robin Hood. The theme of wildly different cultures growing up spontaneously on a colony ship stuck in space

The Cast of *The Mercurials*

Admiral Bale
Name: Marcus Wilson Bale
Rank: Vice Admiral, Retired
Age: 75
Years in Service: 54

Info: Admiral Bale was formerly the head of CERA where he led development of the mercurial drive and championed and designed SEDA's extrasolor colonization program. He was a champion fencer during his days at the Academy.

Commander Dare

Lt. Commander Dare
Name: Genua Zelda Dare
Rank: Lt. Commander
Age: 36
Years in Service: 18

Info: Dare is the Second Officer (sometimes referred to as "Second Lieutenant") of the C.S. Mercurial. She is married to Lt. John Dare, an engineering officer on the ship.

Crewman Donner

Donner
Name: Ian Ronald Donner
Rank: Master's Mate
Age: 20 (27)
Years in Service: 3

Info: Donner was assigned to ship security onboard the C.S. Mercurial. Because he woke from stasis over six years before the beginning of Chapter One, his current physical age (27) is greater than when the ship launched (when he was 20).

Chief Koh

Chief Koh
Name: David Koh
Rank: Chief Master's Mate
Age: 26
Years in Service: 8

Info: Chief Koh is a computer file systems technician on the C.S. Mercurial. He has a fondness for mid-20th Century rock music.

let us do that. Also, it let us explain why five people have light pink skin and the rest are yellow-skinned mutants!

How long do you plan to make the series?

NICOLE: Until it's done. That might take awhile, considering we're doing an episode every two weeks, which works out to roughly four chapters a year.

How did you develop the characters? You only have a few presently, but I expect many more as the crew goes farther into the ship.

TOM: Well, since we were going to do this thing with different cultures, and since I was an anthropology major, I knew we had to have an anthropologist. But an anthropologist on a space ship is kind of an anomaly. So we came up with the idea that our main characters are the last crew members to be awoken from stasis. When your space ship's in trouble, these are absolutely the last people you would call on. That makes it more believable that an anthropologist, like Dr. Murphy, would be one of the main characters, and it let us make the other characters….not quite competent. Chief Koh is essentially the tech support guy who runs defrag on the ship's hard drives. Bale is a retired admiral, well past his prime. The only one who's good at anything is Commander Dare. But I don't think I'd be giving anything away to say that, as it turns out, these are exactly the people needed to save this ship.

NICOLE: The main five characters are actually based on enneagram types. It's a personality classification system that we've found interesting. It really helps work out the characters' motivations, how they react in different situations, and how they react to each other. There'll definitely be many more characters. In fact, we're kind of impatient to get to some of the more interesting ones, but the story has to unfold at its own pace.

The tagline of your page calls *The Mercurials*, "An online science-fiction photo graphic novel about culture, religion, and mythology ona colony ship trapped in deep space - created with LEGO® bricks!" How are you planning to touch on this? There are some hints in the chapters, but what is in store for the crew?

TOM: They're all going to die!

NICOLE: No, they're not!

TOM: OK, maybe just some of them?

Anyway, what we have is a colony ship headed to another planet with passengers and crew in a sort of suspended animation. Some mysterious force takes control of the ship and the passengers are accidentally awoken. Two hundred years later, the last of the crew awakens, and the story begins. It's is a sort of "Lord of the Flies" thing. What happens when lots of people are trapped with very few resources? The first set of questions is: how do you find, gather, share, and protect your food? On earth, humans have answered those questions in various ways, so that we have cultures living in the arctic, the deserts, and the deep jungles. Secondly, this is a technically sophisticated ship, one which the passengers don't understand or have much control over. At the same time, there are legitimately strange and powerful forces at work. We've already seen some sort of zombies roaming the ship. All of that makes perfect fodder for religious concepts to arise. And, of course, we have these waves of crew members waking up every generation or so, people who have extraordinary abilities to understand and control the environment, and they become, in some sense, mythic personalities. All of these elements are the backdrop on which the story takes place.

Should we expect Dare to meet her husband or something else?

NICOLE: She's going to meet someone, and her husband will make an appearance, just not in the way you might think! The personal relationships of the characters, both in the past and to come, play a big part in the story. It's not just a straightforward shoot-'em-up. It's just hard, but in a good way, to get minifigs to express all those nuances of emotion!

Moving to production, how do you plan each episode and how long does it take?

TOM; Too long.

NICOLE: Ages.

TOM: We discuss the story together and the characters. What information do we need to convey, which parts of the mystery do we need to spool out? Then I write the script, going through a few drafts, and Nicole edits and makes suggestions. I build sets if necessary and Nicole might "dress the set." Then I shoot it with a digital camera…

NICOLE: …While I sleep.

TOM: Right. Late at night, like staying up until 3 AM. Part of that is, I do it at night so I can isolate the light. One ambition we did have from the beginning was to use light in a dramatic way to help tell the story. Anyway, shooting takes awhile because I have to pose the figures and remove or replace wall sections to get the angle I'm looking for. After the shoot, I'll download the pics to my computer and edit them with a graphics program. I try not to do too much image manipulation, because I'm kind of proud of the practical elements we're able to capture, but I do have to add the text and such. The last step is to upload them to our web site. I've written some custom interface software to display the pages. All told, we probably spend about 15 hours on each episode.

Both of you are credited, so who does what?

TOM: We both come up with the story lines and the characters. I write the scripts, shoot, and edit them.

NICOLE: I do research for character's names, religious practices, and general weirdness. I like to come up with all the sick and twisted stuff, like Donner's lair. I also edit the dialogue and hold colored Christmas lights at the appropriate angle.

How are the sets designed? Is there an overall ship design? Do you design for the camera?

TOM: The sets are designed a lot differently than you would for a regular MOC. It's all for looks, so the sets are kind of like a movie studio back lot. Not having to make them hold up to play or display lets us take some short cuts as well as doing things you wouldn't normally do for a LEGO model. The sets have walls that can be removed in sections so that I can get down at the minifig level, take a shot, put the wall back, and take a reverse angle shot. That hopefully gives you the sense that you're actually in this three-dimensional space with these "actors."

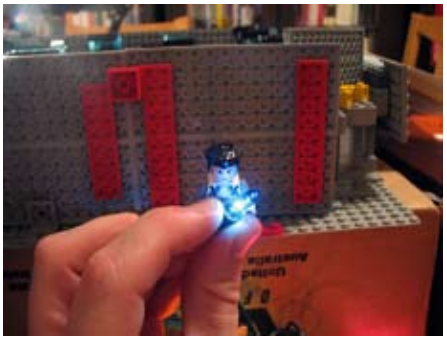
The layout of the ship is purposefully vague at this point. It's basically two large habitat modules that spin around a central core to provide artificial gravity at one G. Whenever anyone on the ship is going "up" they're really moving inward towards the core. The action so far takes place in one of the outer modules. Eventually we'll

(continued next page)

Dr. Murphy

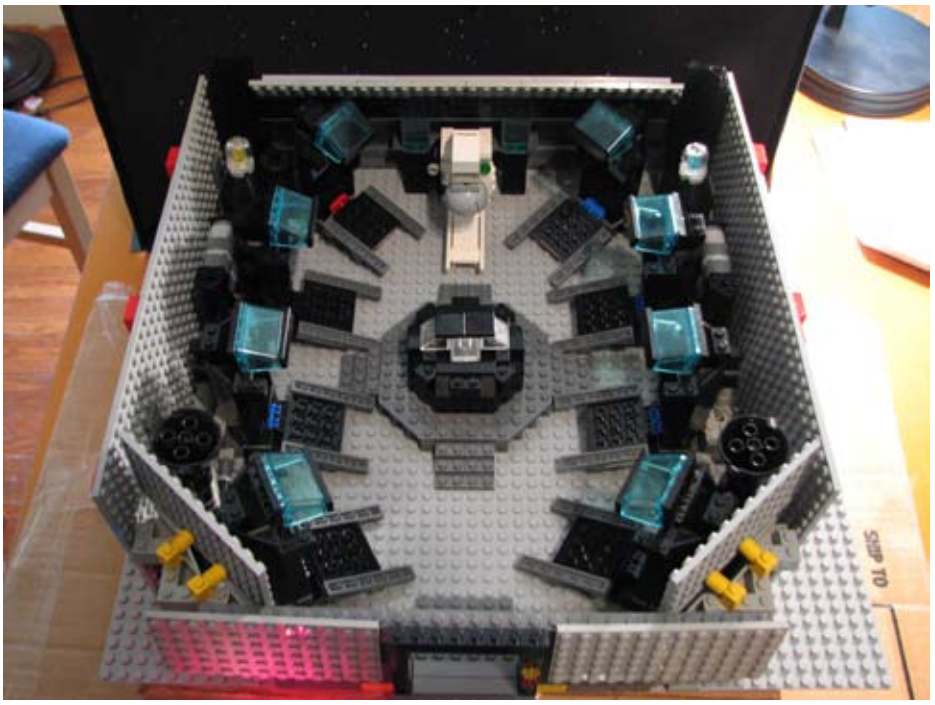
Dr. Murphy
Name: Louis James Murphy, PhD
Rank: civilian
Age: 40
Years in Service: n/a

Info: Dr. Murphy is an Anthropologist who was hired by SEDA to study the new colony from its formation.

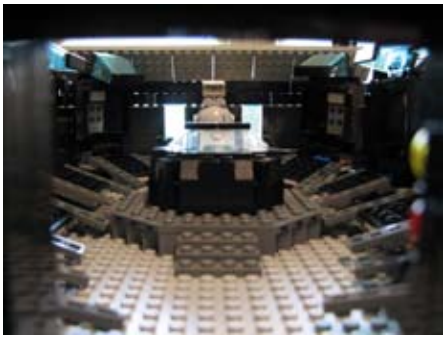


Getting the Shot

The Mercurials atmosphere is achieved with lighting, In this shot, a blue Christmas light is used to underlight Chief Koh's face. From there, the photo is inserted in the frame with caption.



The Stasis Room



The stasis room is the first setting seen in the Mercurials. The model for it is set up much like a movie ste, where walls are 'wild" - removable for camera angles.

The chambers are also removable for use in closeups and camera access.

be moving into zero-G parts of the ship, which should prove challenging to shoot!

You're developing a background for the series on the website. What else do you see happening with the *Mercurials* website?

NICOLE: It's the launching point for our LEGO empire. Next we'll be doing a LEGO "War and Peace."

TOM: Good luck with that, sweetheart.

We both like authors who just drop you into the story, so that's how we do it. The danger is you lose some folks, but the web site is a good way to fill in that backstory. We'll be releasing whole chapters as they're completed. We're also going to keep updating the character section as new things happen.

How has audience reaction been?
TOM: It's been really great. That so many people have enjoyed it and found the story interesting is really gratifying. A lot of the readers had great suggestions for improving the ease of navigating the site and following the story, and it's much better for their input. So far we've had almost 900 unique visitors from all over the world, and we're hoping to share it with more as we expand beyond the LEGO community and let more sci-fi and comic fans know about it.

NICOLE: Some people have told me they don't get it. The ones who do get it tell me I'm weird, but I'm used to that.

TOM: You are weird.

Any other things you would want to share with the readers?
NICOLE: Tell all your friends!

TOM: I just hope they enjoy the project and keep checking back. The more interesting stuff is still to come. It's a lot of fun to interact with people on our blog and by email, so feel free to contact us. Also, The Mercurials is licensed under a Creative Commons license, so you're free to share it with others and even make your own derivative works, within certain limits. If people like it, I'm hoping to see translations, fan art, and spin-offs some day.

The Mercurials *can be found online at www.mercurials.net, with additional background information on the story and characters.*

Getting Your NXT Infraready

A Look at the HiTechnic 'Infrared Link' sensor

Review and Photography by BlueToothKiwi

The Infrared Link sensor

Power Function Motors

Introduction

When LEGO® developed the new MINDSTORMS NXT last year, they chose to drop Infrared as the default wireless protocol and instead standardised on Bluetooth for communicating with other NXT bricks and other devices.

However, the new HiTechnic 'Infrared Link' (or IR-Link) sensor adds the Infrared communication capability to the MINDSTORMS NXT.

In essence, it allows the NXT user to:

- Control legacy MINDSTORMS bricks (RCX) with NXT and allow bidirectional communications
- Control the LEGO® train (e.g. 7897) from NXT
- Control the new Power Function motors (e.g. 8275) from NXT

In this review, I would be focussing on the new HiTechnic 'Infrared Link' sensor and how it integrates with the NXT, and how it can be programmed. The review concludes with a real life example of a robotised LEGO® TECHNIC vehicle using the HiTechnic 'Infrared Link' sensor.

For the purpose of the review, I am going to use the PF motors to test the HiTechnic 'Infrared Link' sensor. First a quick introduction to the Power Function motors:

The new Power Function (PF) Motors

In the last few months we have seen LEGO® introducing new kits with the Power Function elements. Right now the PF elements ship with the LEGO® Creator Dinosaur, LEGO® Creator Ferris Wheel and of course the incredible LEGO® TECHNIC Bulldozer 8275 that has just hit the market a few weeks ago. The Bulldozer comes with four PF motors in total, two receivers, and one transmitter.

The new PF motors are absolutely fantastic - it is easy to attach to the beams as well as to the old style studded LEGO. They are smaller than the NXT motors – see picture of the PF motors next to the standard LEGO® NXT motor (left):

The PF motors come in two form factors – XL (the two on the left) and standard (the two in the middle). The XL version has more grunt but has a lower RPM (around 200 RPM compared to 400 RPM the standard PF motor has). However, the most amazing thing about the PF XL motor is its incredible torque - enough torque to twist a 3L axle – see the recent lab tests conducted by Phillipe Hurbain in *BrickJournal* Issue 8 (http://www.brickjournal.com/wiki/show/Exclusive:+Power+Functions+Motor+Comparison)

The motor comes with its own power pack (with space for 6 AA batteries) which also powers the IR receiver. I managed to get nearly 3 hours of playing from a full charge - so it is pretty impressive.

(continued next page)

The LEGO® models with the PF motors ship with a handheld IR remote to control the motors. However, in this review we would be using the NXT to generate the motor commands via the IR-Link instead of using the remote. The next section looks at how to integrate the PF motor and the NXT using the IR-Link.

Integrating the PF motor and the NXT using the IR-Link

Integration is achieved by wiring up the motors to the power and the Infrared receiver and the setting the channel (1..4) on the receiver and positioning the IR sensor so it has a line of site to the PF IR receiver and is within its range. The IR-link sensor needs to be plugged into the NXT on one of the four sensor ports (I used port 1 for the first receiver and port 4 for the second).

The picture shows the battery pack (from top left), two IR receivers and the PF motors (top right). Facing the IR receivers is the IR-link in the middle connected to a NXT.

The NXT motors (shown in bottom right) can be connected to the NXT in addition to the PF motors – however, they were not used in the tests during this review.

Robotizing a LEGO® TECHNIC model for testing

This is pretty straight forward. Given there are two different PF motors with different size and torque – first decide which one to use and then add the motor(s) to your creation.

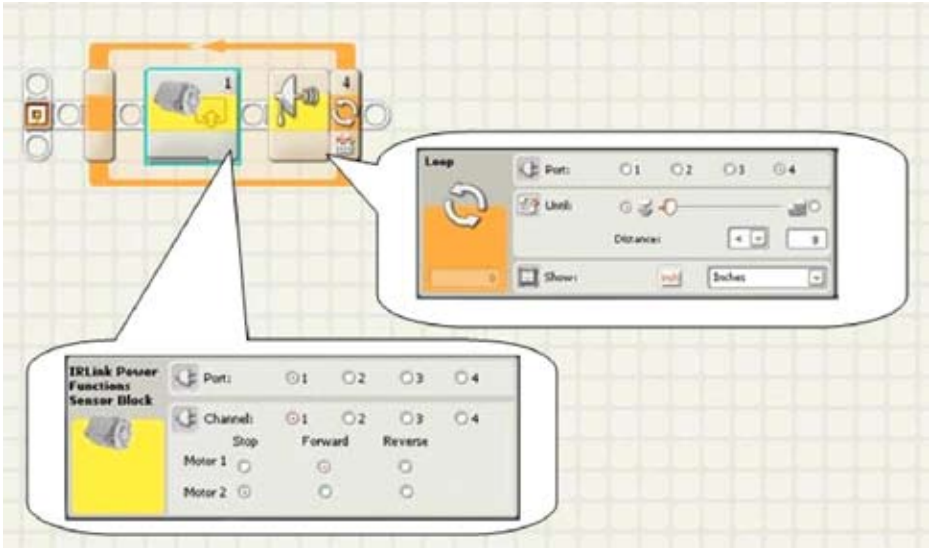
For the review I used an old TECHNIC 8414 – a very small model that is really hard to motorise using the large NXT motors – but it is much easier with the smaller PF motor.

However, the PF battery pack and the NXT were too big to fit inside the model – so I put on two wheels and connected it to the 8414. The Ultrasonic sensor (used as range finder to avoid the robotised vehicle hitting anything) and the IR Link sensor were mounted on the NXT as shown below. It is not elegant – but serves its purpose for the test.

Programming the HiTechnic Infrared Link sensor

You can use various programming languages to control the HiTechnic 'Infrared Link' including PbLua and NXC. However, if you want to stick to the visual programming software that LEGO provides (NXT-G), then HiTechnic supply a sensor block, which is extremely easy to use - my 11 year old took 5 minutes to get going with simple PF motor program in NXT-G – dragging the sensor block and setting the parameters:

The simple NXT-G program above is used to control the above robotised TECHNIC vehicle. It uses loop block and the new HiTechnic IR-Link sensor blocks: it turns on the motor and keeps it on until there is an object detected by the Ultrasonic sensor within a range (8 inches).



The new IR-Link power function sensor block (see at left) allows you to set which port (1..4) on the NXT brick the sensor is connected to and which IR channel (1..4) you want to address. Within the selected channel you can set a motor to go forward, reverse or stop. Since there are two motor ports on each PF motor IR receiver, the block allows you to control both motor ports simultaneously – so for example you can have one motor on the same channel going forward and the other going backwards. Of course you can have more than one motor connected to the same motor port within the same channel as well.

Results

The HiTechnic IR link performed very well in our tests. The simple test worked fine – the vehicle's PF motors were started by the NXT (via the IR link) and stopped by the NXT when an object was detected in its path by a NXT Ultrasonic sensor. Check out the video here: http://tinyurl.com/yqa9d6.

We then extended the program by adding more motors on all four of the channels. By using the NXT-G loop block and the HiTechnic sensor block, we had no problems controlling eight motors via four channels simultaneously by cycling through each of the four channels using NXT-G. Check out the video here: http://tinyurl.com/28k7af.

There are physical limitations in controlling large number of IR channels programmatically from one NXT and one IR-Link. However, with just four channels available on the PF elements, there is no danger of the remote receiver timing out while cycling through them – and during the testing, we certainly did not come across any problems.

From a robotics point of view, the main limitation with using the PF motors is that the lack of built in rotation sensor in the motor – which means you can not (say) programmatically ask the motor to turn half a rotation or 5 degrees. This is something many NXT programmers take for granted as the NXT motor has built in rotation sensor.

This means you are forced to rely on time lengths of the motor turned on, to control the number of rotations it executes. This is one of the oldest methods used to achieve dead reckoning.

During testing (using the smaller standard PF motor under load), I managed to get 270 degrees turn on the motor by setting the timer to 200ms. Trying to power the motor for any time-lengths less than 200 ms under load did not create any motion on the motor under load.

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The second disadvantage that I find irritating about the current version of the PF motors is that it does not allow you to change the power of the motor (e.g. by using pulse width modulation speed control). This means the only three things you can do programmatically – go forward, go reverse, and stop.

Both of these issues are not attributable to the IR –Link sensor – but to the limitation of the Power Function motors and the functionality exposed by the Infrared protocol that LEGO has implemented.

Conclusion:

All in all the IR-Link makes the most of the Infrared protocol used by LEGO to control the PF motors. It is extremely easy to use even for a child, and looks elegant and consistent with other MINDSTORMS NXT sensors. The NXT-G block that HiTechnic has implemented is really simple and user friendly.

The IR Link is an excellent addition to any collection that includes a NXT set and the owner wants to leverage legacy RCX brick **or** make use of the PF motor / train control in their robotic creations. However, if the IR-Link is going to be used to control the PF motors in robotic applications, the limitations of the PF motors must be taken into account.

You can see the HiTechnic catalog of sensors for the NXT and RCX MINDSTORMS systems at: http://www.hitechnic.com.

Event:
National Space Centre, UK

The Brickish Association presents:

Star Wars: A Display at the National Space Centre

Leicester, UK. 5-7 May 2007

Articles and Photography by Martin Long and Ian Greig

Over six thousand Star Wars fans descended on the National Space Centre in Leicester, UK over the long holiday weekend of 5-7 May. The event, called "Return of the Garrison" featured many of the film characters portrayed by the fabulous 501st Legion UK Garrison and was also attended by some of the original cast of the movies.

The Brickish Association was invited to impress everyone with a display of Star Wars LEGO.

Mos LEGO

The massive custom build *Mos LEGO* was an interpretation of Tattooine and an amalgamation of *Mos Eisley* (from the original Star Wars trilogy) and *Mos Espa* (from the prequel trilogy). The centrepiece of the display was a prototype of the brand new Ultimate Collector's *Millennium Falcon*, loaned to the Brickish Association for the event. This commanded centre stage in a spectacular Docking Bay 94 diorama created by Brickish members Pete Reid, Yvonne Doyle, Simon Bennett, Ian and Julie Greig, Ed Diment, Stuart Crawshaw and Naomi Farr. Built from over 25,000 bricks, this was painstakingly replicated from movie footage to faithfully represent the various scenes from Episode IV: *A New Hope*. Docking Bay 94 was created over three weekends in the run up to the event. It was built in 10 modular sections that were assembled in place to form the basis for Mos LEGO.

A small team arrived at the venue on the evening before the event to lay out the tables and to get Docking Bay 94 assembled – this ended up being a little traumatic, as Simon Bennett (who was looking after DB94 and the Falcon) was badly delayed by traffic meaning we ended up staying much later than expected. The rest of the team arrived on Saturday morning, a few hours before the event opened to the public, to lay out the rest of the display. This all went very smoothly, and the last details were added with minutes to spare!

In total, twelve Brickish Association members contributed to the creation of Mos LEGO, each providing buildings, scenery, transportation and life-forms to bring together on the day of set-up to form the massive display, most of which had been built over the preceding four weeks. Mos Eisley is often quoted as a "wretched hive of scum and villainy"; the Mos LEGO display certainly managed to recreate a large part of that, with some cunning humour thrown in for good measure.

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When completed, Mos LEGO covered the equivalent area of about 150 standard 32x32 baseplates, around 10 square metres (~106 square feet), and included around 100,000 bricks.

The Mos LEGO display was a very big hit with all visitors to the event, many of whom returned again and again over the weekend. It was also gratifying to be able to talk to enthusiastic visitors. One of the most interesting demographic group seemed to be mums who professed a secret weakness for building with LEGO! As one woman said "I love it when he [her son] gets bored with building as it means I get to finish it for him!".

To be honest, we did get a few minor complaints from die-hard Star Wars fans. They just didn't appreciate the humour of a squad of Daleks (from Doctor Who) invading one small corner of Tatooine!

Common questions we were asked included "how long did this take to build?", "where do you get all the bricks from?", "do you work for LEGO?", "are these all made from official sets or did you design them yourselves?", "do you have instructions for any of your models?", "where can I buy mini figures from?" and "so … er … what's the Brickish Association all about then?".

Other Displays

Phil Traviss debuted his clever Expo-Txt system, enabling us to add interaction to our event by means of SMS text messaging. Visitors could send short messages to Expo-Txt to activate a speeder, trigger a walking AT-AT or just kick off some music - the Mos Eisley Cantina music being a firm favourite, at least with the visitors…!

Jason Railton brought together a collection of twenty different TIE fighter variants, many of which were the product of his building talent. Adults and children alike enjoyed working out which were genuine LEGO sets and which were custom creations. It was also staggering to see just how many people could name them!

Darren Smith pulled together an impressive display of all LEGO Star Wars sets released since their initial launch in 1999. This amazing, not to mention incredibly valuable collection was admired by all the visitors and proved to be a very useful resource when we were constantly asked questions about which set various minifigs appeared in! We also lost count of the number of times we were asked if any of the sets were for sale, despite there being clear signs stating that they were not…

Also dotted around the room, visitors could see many of the Ultimate Collector Series models built by Richard James. James Sutton's life-size Yoda proved very popular, with many children (and quite a few adults) very keen to be photographed with him. Yoda was flanked by his personal bodyguards, giant-sized minifig versions of Jango Fett and R2-D2, also provided by James.

Building R2-D2 and Vader

In the build workshop area of the room, The LEGO Company kindly provided the Space Centre with thousands of 2x4 bricks for visitors to build a full-size R2-D2 and Darth Vader. Several Brickish Association members took it in turn to co-ordinate the builds and R2 was completed with relative ease on the first day. Vader, however, was a different story! After checking the ceiling height of the room we were in, the build was very obviously going to be way too tall and some minor alterations to plans were brought into play by the time we reached waist height. Having achieved shoulder height, only the tallest adults on steps could reach to build! His head had to completed at ground level before being carefully placed on top to finish the enormous Sith Lord. Vader was built over two days and it was only possible thanks to the visitors who helped with every brick they placed. One could only guess at how many black 2x4s were used, but it must have been over one hundred thousand…easily.

A Successful Event

The whole Brickish display was a big hit with everyone, including the 501st Legion members who were frequently seen, both in and out of costume, admiring our work. Jason Railton's TIE fighter display was an especially big hit with the pilot contingent of the 501st Legion.

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Overall, everyone involved from the Brickish Association had a fantastic time, and the feedback we had from the visitors, the other exhibitors, and the venue staff was overwhelmingly positive. The build-up to the event was a lot of hard work, and the weekend itself was exhausting, but it was hugely rewarding on both a personal level and for the Brickish Association as a whole.

Special thanks go to Malika Andress and the staff of the National Space Centre for looking after us so well over the (very) long weekend.

The following Brickish members all contributed to the event:

Simon Bennett, Stuart Crawshaw, Ed Diment, Alastair Disley, Yvonne Doyle, Naomi Farr, Ian Greig, Julie Greig, Chris Hall, Richard James, Martin Long, Alison Pike, Jason Railton, Peter Reid, Darren Smith, David Tabner, Phil Traviss and Andy Watts.

Starting KOSTKY.ORG Československé LEGO® fórum

BrickJournal *visits the Czech Republic and Slovakia to take a look at a growing LEGO community!*

Article by
Jindrich 'Jindroush' Kubec and Martin 'Betakaroten' Srb

Photography by Petr 'Petrjr' Adamek, Martin 'Mates' Konvicka, Jindrich 'Jindroush' Kubec, Michal Moucka and Radovan 'Peki' Pekarek.

Year 1 BK (Before Kostky)

This is a short introduction to the Czech LEGO community called Kostky.org. The reason for starting was easy - I (Jindrich 'Jindroush' Kubec) awoke from my Dark Ages, bought some super-duper LEGO Technic sets and had the urge to discuss them with somebody else. That was during the winter of 2003/2004. Soon, I launched a web search and found lots of LEGO pages written in English and also LUGNET. After few problems I got the posting rights on LUGNET, but I was slightly disappointed that there was nobody from the Czech Republic to discuss the stuff in our native language.

So I checked the Czech language part of the Internet more thoroughly, but I found nothing except for the few personal homepages. One of the best was Rob Seifert's homepage, so I contacted him with my ideas about the Czech LEGO discussion server. I showed him the YabbSE forum which was used by the company I work for, and he liked the idea, but we both knew that the English interface would limit the user base. So we decided to use the successor of YabbSE, which was developed under the name Simple Machines and we translated it to the Czech language. I also got the permission from my boss who agreed to host the site on one of the company's webservers.

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Year 1 AK

We discussed quite a lot about the name. I was opposed to any name containing 'LUG' because of confusion with Linux User Groups so we finally settled on Kostky.org name. ('Kostky' means 'bricks' in the Czech language). On the 27th of May 2004 the first two users were created. At the end of the month, there were ten of us. And by the end of the year, it was about 75 users, but just few of those were active members. Those were the quiet times, about 200 posts per month in just a few discussion groups. From the very beginning, the forum was taken as Czechoslovak; although our countries got separated (in 1993 into the Czech Republic and Slovakia), most people understand both the languages well enough to have only one site for two small countries.

Today

Today the community has grown. There are about 1000 registered users, from them about 140 come to the site daily; about 300 come regularly every few days. Daily we produce about 100-200 posts in 36 discussion groups. I believe the site is fulfilling everyone's needs - there are various tutorials, recommendations, and reviews. Everybody can post their MOCs, sell or buy bricks and share their thoughts and opinions. Some people are organizing imports mainly from Germany (because LEGO still refuses to sell us some of the stuff), some people are in Truck Trial stuff and also the small group of us organized the trip to 1000steine Land in Berlin. Some of the Castleheads had their MOCs in this year's Classic Castle City (CCC) as well.

The law and order is guarded by the admin and two global moderators which sometimes have quite a hard time getting KFOLs 'in line', but overall I'd say that Kostky is a nice place to be.

Exhibition in Svitavy

The very first event of Kostky.org was scheduled from 18th of February to 18th of May 2007 in Town museum in Svitavy.

For most of us this was the first opportunity to meet face to face; before this the community was having only small regional Prague meetings.

The whole event was prepared in quite a rush. First contacts with Mrs. Cuhelova, the museum director, were made in the beginning of December 2006, but in the Christmas time everything got delayed until the beginning of 2007. Then Bohuslav 'Aki' Svara took the leadership from Franta Moravec (the person who came with the idea of using Svitavy's Town museum) and he quickly organized the people into actually doing something. There were seemingly unending discussions regarding what to display, who was the target audience, what should be the ratio between MOCs and original sets and so on and on. Finally, we settled on some things and here's what you would have found there:

At the entrance there was a small ticket stand where some sets were for sale, information panels with AFOLs comics, LEGO timeline and info about various internet resources presented in simple form. There was also a playtable with System bricks and two large MOCs: an automated train

layout (3x1 meters in size, including cable-railway) and the model of the Svitavy museum building in real minifig (1:40) scale. Over the director's office doors there was the Svitavy city coat of arms mosaic hanging.

In the other room there was a Duplo playtable and lots of display cases including:

Duplo scenery from original sets

Castle - lots of MOCs, original sets, some battle scenes and everything Castle ,crowned by Straz city gate.

Vikings - scenery made from all original sets

Town - original sets and sceneries made of Town sets, for example Underwater world or As Time Goes (sets of same theme but from different LEGO periods)

Town - MOCs, for example pseudo historical layout from Opava city or Prague's Nation Museum including the subway station.

Licenses - layouts made from both MOCs and original sets from Harry Potter, Batman and Star Wars worlds.

Space - large M:Tron base.

Trains - another automated layout (2x2 metres in size) and lots of static train MOCs. Both layouts are run by several RCXs.

Model Team and Technic - lots of original sets

There was also a small hall with TV showing some stop-motion animated LEGO movies and some TV spots regarding LEGO.

The opening day was really crowded! We never expected the amount of people wanting to see our exhibition. There were some short talks said, special brick cake eaten, regional and national TV spots shot, and interviews given. To us it seemed that all the people had a good time.

Recently, we were also informed by the director that the visits were above average, that all the sets for sale were sold and had to be re-ordered three times and we were asked to lengthen the exhibition for a month so the school trips which usually take time at the end of May and beginning of June can visit our exhibition.

We were also contacted by other Czech museums, so it seems that we'll stay busy next year as well.

Building in Ballabio:

Our visit at the LEGOfest in Ballabio, Italy 6-7-8 July 2007

Article by Rob Beurskens

Photography by Erik Gusting and Peter Oome

It all started at LEGOWorld 2006 in Zwolle/The Netherlands when Marco Chiappa came with up the question, if we would like to come to Italy with a layout.

Hmm… Italy. That's far away. But after a good night of sleep and checking the dates, my mind was made up, if possible I would go. The dates were perfect, right in the middle of my holiday and after checking it with my family our holiday was planned, four days in Germany followed by a week in Italy (3 days at Legofest and 4 days sightseeing) and after that three more days in Germany.
This was only the start as I convinced two friends to join us and we started to make plans for the layout.

Who are we? Well my two friends are Erik Gusting and Peter Oome and I am Rob Beurskens with my wife, Petra and two kids, Nick and Kelly.

Erik and Peter decided to build part of a city with houses, a fire department, and city hall while I made a coastline with a lighthouse, beach and apartments. The total layout was seven meters wide and two meters deep. It contained a train track, metro station and of course many funny details. The lowest point in the layout was the metro station with less than 45 bricks and the highest point was the lighthouse with more than 100 bricks. It was built completely modular and we even brought our own tables.

We would leave on July 1 for Germany, near Günsburg, to spend three days there before we would go to Italy. Two more friends joined us for this part of the journey, Leo and Iris.

During these three days we visited LEGOLAND and München, bought lots of loose bricks and enjoyed the Schwäbisch (German) food and beer.

On July 5th we said goodbye to Leo and Iris and took off for Ballabio,Italy.
We drove through Austria over the new Brenner and enjoyed the most beautiful views. It was the first time for the five of us in the Alps and believe me, it's really beautiful. We arrived in Ballabio at about 7 p.m. after a wild drive through very narrow streets following the instructions off Beppie, our navigation system (Advice: do not always believe machines).

We were welcomed by Marco Chiappa, LEGO Ambassador and the man behind the LEGOfest.

After unloading the LEGO we were brought to our apartment. We unloaded the rest out of the cars and checked in to the apartment. There was a room for every one of us, two bathrooms and a big kitchen which was also the living room. No luxury, but clean and a great view.
We parked the cars and went back to the school, were the event was held, to join the rest for dinner. Everything was arranged by Marco and after a good meal we went back to the apartment to get a good night sleep. Tomorrow we would build up the layout….

The next morning Erik, Peter and I went to the school at 8.30 a.m. to start building and the rest would follow us later.
This day was for building up and talking to the other AFOLs.

Again a very good day, we talked to lots of other AFOLs and during the day more and more builders arrived.

Around noon we went to have lunch at the same restaurant we had dinner the night before.

After lunch we finished building/decorating our layout and went to see what others had brought. There was something of everything, from sets to MOCs and some even brought their complete (Bricklink) store.

Later that day, Jan Beyer arrived and at dinner it was told that we would have a surprise evening, everybody should come.

And it was a surprise for sure, we could build two sets. The Eiffel tower and a great technic set; the yellow bulldozer #8275. The last one would be tested during the event.

It would be a late night again…..

Saturday morning we were expected at 9 a.m. and around 10 a.m. the event would be officially opened for sponsors and VIPs. For this part we even had a translator to avoid a language barrier. Great service and very friendly VIPs.

At about 11 a.m. the event was opened for the public and two great days would follow.

Great days of talking to the public answering their questions as good as our Italian and their English was and believe it or not, meeting Dutch visitors that after half an hour of talking told us that they lived in Venlo, the same city I live in and to make it even more unbelievable just 500 meters from my home!. The days are spent drinking lots of coffee (long live the senseo machine) and munching cookies.

Saturday evening around 9 p.m. we had a light show, this means that the public came back and the lights in the big hall (where we were) dimmed and only LEGO lights were on. This was awesome, just lights in buildings, lampposts, cars and of course, my lighthouse. We even had a beach fire on our layout. And again we closed very late, tired but it was worth it.

Sunday evening we packed the layout back into the boxes and everything was going to be stored at one of the Itlug members so we could have our holiday in Italy.

We had a few very good days in Ballabio, Lecco and Como and we finished our days in Italy with a visit to Marco Chiappa's home. We had coffee and looked at his private LEGO collection and even talked about the Legofest in 2008. If possible I will come for sure…

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Thursday morning we packed our cars and drove towards Günsburg/Germany to visit LEGOLAND (again).

We arrived at home on Saturday to look back on a very good holiday, a great LEGOfest and a lot of new parts to build an even nicer layout for next year.

A special word of thanks to all of Itlug that helped us with finding a place to sleep, arranging dinners and all the help that came spontaneously.

Behind the League: A Peek at the Challenge Creators of FIRST LEGO® League

Article and Photos by Joe Meno

For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) is a nonprofit organization that was founded by Dean Kamen (inventor of the Segway). In his words, FIRST's vision is, "to create a world where science and technology are celebrated; where young people dream of becoming science and technology heroes."

Part of the FIRST family is FIRST LEGO League (FLL) which was developed in partnership with The LEGO Group. Geared toward students aged 9-14 in the US and Canada, up to 16 elsewhere, FLL is an annual challenge centered on a particular theme. FLL teams from around the world participate in the Challenge which has two parts: the Robot Game and the Project.

The Robot Game is a set of missions that a LEGO MINDSTORMS® robot must undertake. FLL teams have to design a robot that can accomplish the missions, from building the robot to programming it to execute specific tasks. The other part of the challenge is the Project. This is a research presentation based on the theme of the challenge. Teams conduct research and create a technological or engineering solution to an aspect of the Challenge and present that solution.

Within these aspects of the Challenge, there are many other things that are taught and experienced, so FLL is much more than just the challenge. To get a better idea of the behind-the-scenes work at FLL, I visited their offices and met the people responsible for creating the challenges. To experience their event first-hand, I also went to the FLL World Festival in Atlanta, Georgia. But first, I visited Manchester, New Hampshire.

FIRST LEGO League's offices are located in a building that was once part of a textile millyard. Where there were once looms and machinery, there are now offices and cubicles. On the ground floor I met Scott Evans. He's the Challenge Developer, and develops all the missions in the Robot Game. At his office is Cindy Randall, Director

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of Research. She researches the themes for FLL and finds the experts needed to create the background for the Projects.

Creating the challenge is a team effort, with senior staff discussions and meetings being the first step in creation. A theme has to be decided, and it has to have relevance to scientific and social issues and also children. In past years, there have been challenges that have dealt with disabilities (No Limits) and oceanography (Ocean Odyssey). Last year's challenge was nanotechnology (Nano Quest) and this year's is energy resources (Power Puzzle).

Once the theme is set, Cindy researches online and in publications to find experts on the subject and contacts them to be part of planning. Simply put, it's a cold call to the experts – and, as she notes enthusiastically, they don't turn her down! "Who would turn down a chance to talk about their subject to a willing audience?" she asks. What she doesn't have to say is that her energy level also makes it easy to be convinced to help.

For what was christened 'Nano Quest', Cindy invites experts from different fields who all have some expertise in nanotechnology:

- Carol Osmer, from the Center for Nano Science and Technology, University of Notre Dame, Indiana
- Dan Barry, Former NASA Astronaut, Johnson Space Center, Florida
- Wolfgang Perod, Professor, Center for Nano Science and Technology, University of Notre Dame, Indiana
- Anna Waldron, Director of Education, Nanobiotechnology Center, Cornell University, New York
- Eric Marshall, Executive Director Tryscience.org, New York Hall of Science, New York.

Everyone met and conferred at the FIRST LEGO League headquarters for a day and a half to discuss the theme and create the setting for the challenges. While experts come from various and often opposite points of view, these meetings do not press an agenda; they make the facts known. No challenge has a point of view, but presents many sides for the FLL teams to look at and consider. Support websites and materials are also considered and planned out. During the meeting, themes are discussed to find something to which the FLL teams can relate.

This respect of the participants is a major factor in the success of FLL, as it allows them to make their own conclusions, and sometimes act on them. Cindy relates a story where one FLL team on the Ocean Odyssey challenge decided to make their topic alien species in the Mississippi River – they discovered an Asian scallop that invaded from a foreign cargo ship. The team members tracked down the ship and contacted the captain, asking him why he brought the scallops. It's not unusual for teams to visit labs and universities to get information for their Project.

While Cindy is planning, Scott starts to think about the robot game aspect of the Challenge– from the initial discussions, he begins brainstorming about the missions that can be done with MINDSTORMS robots. Sketches begin on notepads for the field layout, and some preliminary building is started. He is assisted by a LEGO Master Builder in Billund, Denmark, as mission models are defined and focused.

With Nano Quest, Scott's missions have to relate in some way to nanotechnology. His ongoing problem to solve is relating missions to the theme – how can different missions be created?

It takes some thought, with Scott having to consider the difficulty of the missions – the time limit for each match is two and a half minutes, so things need to be difficult but not impossible. The challenge takes place on two 4' x 8' tables arranged in a square- though two teams ran through the challenge simultaneously, the competition is not against each other, but against the mission obstacles.

Scott usually makes a couple of easy missions for each Challenge, some more difficult and others very difficult so teams had to set priorities for missions to run.

There is also a mission that affects both teams, so if this is done correctly both teams benefits – this emphasizes teamwork.

Some of the missions have an apparatus to activate, others have things to be moved, but all of them require a robot to operate. The design of the robot to execute all of these missions is up to the teams – they could use either an RCX MINDSTORMS brick from older sets, or the new NXT sets. Because of this transition, the rules for the missions have to be adjusted – the newer sets can do some things that cannot be done by the RCX sets as easily. As a result, an RCX handicap is made – any team with an NXT had to do more for a bonus score, compared to an older RCX robot.

After the meeting of experts ended, Cindy then spends an hour every week for seven weeks to detail the Project references and background for the teams. The teams were 9-14 year olds, so they were middle school age. What Cindy has to do is create an environment that piqued interest from the teams, as they had to create a project that in this case focused on nanotechnology. By the time the 2007 Challenge was revealed, there is a website with references on the FLL page, as well as places to ask questions related to the Project. There's a lot of links, and some of them may have seemed a little over the heads of the teams… but not really.

Scott is busy, during this time, building and sending models back and forth between Denmark and his office. His designs are looked at and refined by the model maker at the LEGO offices. Sometimes the design is refined for smoother operation, but sometimes it's refined because of cost. The final models often are better, as Scott singles out an elegant mechanical model that, when hit at a switch point, sends a series of LEGO 'atoms' into alignment.

Sometimes the model refinements don't quite work out, though. Scott shows another mission model that is rubber band powered. His initial model was powered by a pull-back motor linked to a switch that, when tripped, spun a 'molecular motor.' The final model is less expensive, but has some bugs. So for that mission, the requirements are adapted to allow for the model's behavior.

The field mat is also being designed, and that's another of Scott's responsibilities. He has to place all the missions on a 4' x 8' table surface. The missions have been defined, so he has to place them and make a graphic for the table. Since last year was focused on nanotechnology, the general pattern was hexagonal to represent atomic diagrams. There was also a LEGO minifigure drawn on the field, as one of the missions was to move some 'molecules' from a pizza (drawn on the table surface) to the nose of a person. Originally, Scott mentioned, he was going to do a graphic of a head and had some trouble trying to get the look he wanted…until he noticed the minifig on his desk.

The model that didn't quite work

Nano Quest is announced September 15, 2006. Over the next four months, teams from around the world compete in local, regional and then international competitions. The list of countries participating in the 2006 season is impressive, with teams from Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, Egypt, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Germany, Greenland, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, South Korea, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Palestine, Peru, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States.

What's more impressive is what the teams were doing – the Projects that were being researched are not typical science projects, but incredible research and development projects. Some team ideas are even being considered for patents in biotechnology and other fields. And these efforts are true to the mission of FIRST – For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology.

Atlanta has been home to the FLL World Festival for three years. In that time, the event has grown, and so has the spirit. The competing that was done to qualify for the World Festival is now different – it is now an opportunity for the teams to meet and learn about each other. For many teams, this is the first time that they have ventured to another country, and so it's a new experience.

Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, owner of the LEGO Group. watches a team at the World Festival in Atlanta, Georgia

Jørgen Vig Knudstorp, CEO of the LEGO Group, speaks at the at the World Festival awards ceremony

Each team has a space to work on their robots and a place for their project materials at an area called the Pit – so the general look is something like a science fair. Except at this gathering there are also international flags mounted, and people in their native costumes walkaround and visit other booths. It's a festival where teams exchange pins and other little gifts, like trading cards, and where different teams show their culture by demonstrations or by what they wore. It's also an event where there are just some fun things to see, like the team mascots (Penguins? Dolphins?) walking around meeting other teams.

The teams set up their robots and prepare their presentations. There are practice tables to use which are soon filled with teams practicing their runs, or waiting their turn. Over the three days of the World Festival, each team has three robot runs and one presentation session. There are also judging sessions for robots to evaluate innovations and designs. This leaves lots of time for practicing.

Presentations are closed to the public – they are done in a room with judges. Teams present their Projects then answer any questions about them. This is a large part of their final score, so there is a stress factor involved. Presentations are judged on creativity, research and their proposed solution.

The missions are done in the Georgia Dome (literally a building away), and are open to the public. Each two-and-a-half-minute run is done with six teams on a stage set up in the middle of the field. There are judges at each table and team members and their coaches and parents…and Scott. He walks around and watches – seeing how the teams had solved his problems. When I ask about his feelings on seeing his work being used, he answers, "I'm happy – this is fulfilling. But I'm also a little frustrated by how easy some of these teams succeeded!" He says that with a smile though, and a touch of admiration since he knew he was watching the top 1% of teams in the world.

Left: A team goes through a heat at the competition.

Below: Only at the FLL World Festival will you get two competing teams to have pictures taken of each other, Both these teams made a perfect score

Back in the Pit, there are other people besides the teams. The LEGO Group has a demonstration area for their MINDSTORMS sets, and some of the LEGO staff are present. These include the Head of the Americas Division, Soren Torp Laursen, Executive Vice President of Community, Education and Direct, Lisbeth Vallther Pallesen, and a few others. The head of the MINDSTORMS system, Soren Lund, was also at the booth, as well as Steve Canvin, a product manager. Later in the weekend, the owner of The LEGO Group, Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen and the CEO, Jørgen Vig Knudstorp also pay a visit to the event. From LEGO Education, Lene Friis and Gerhard Bjerrum-Andersen visit. All of them visit for one reason: this is one of the best examples of The LEGO Group making a difference in people's lives, as The LEGO Group has played a major part in creating FLL.

The difference is clear in how the teams act – while they are competing, they are not competing against each other. Each team wants to be the best, and also want their fellow teams to be their best. When two teams make perfect robot runs in the Georgia Dome, the teams get pictures taken of each other together. Teams are rooting for each other, and the goodwill extends to after hours, where there are socials for the teams and their supporters. There's a feeling of community that quickly grows from the first hours of the festival to the end of the awards ceremony.

It is also an end to a journey for all the teams. It's a path that takes teams to new places and guides them to new ideas. It also introduces the teams to people from many different countries and walks of life. And while the journey ended in Atlanta, what was really important are the lessons learned along the way, not the destination.

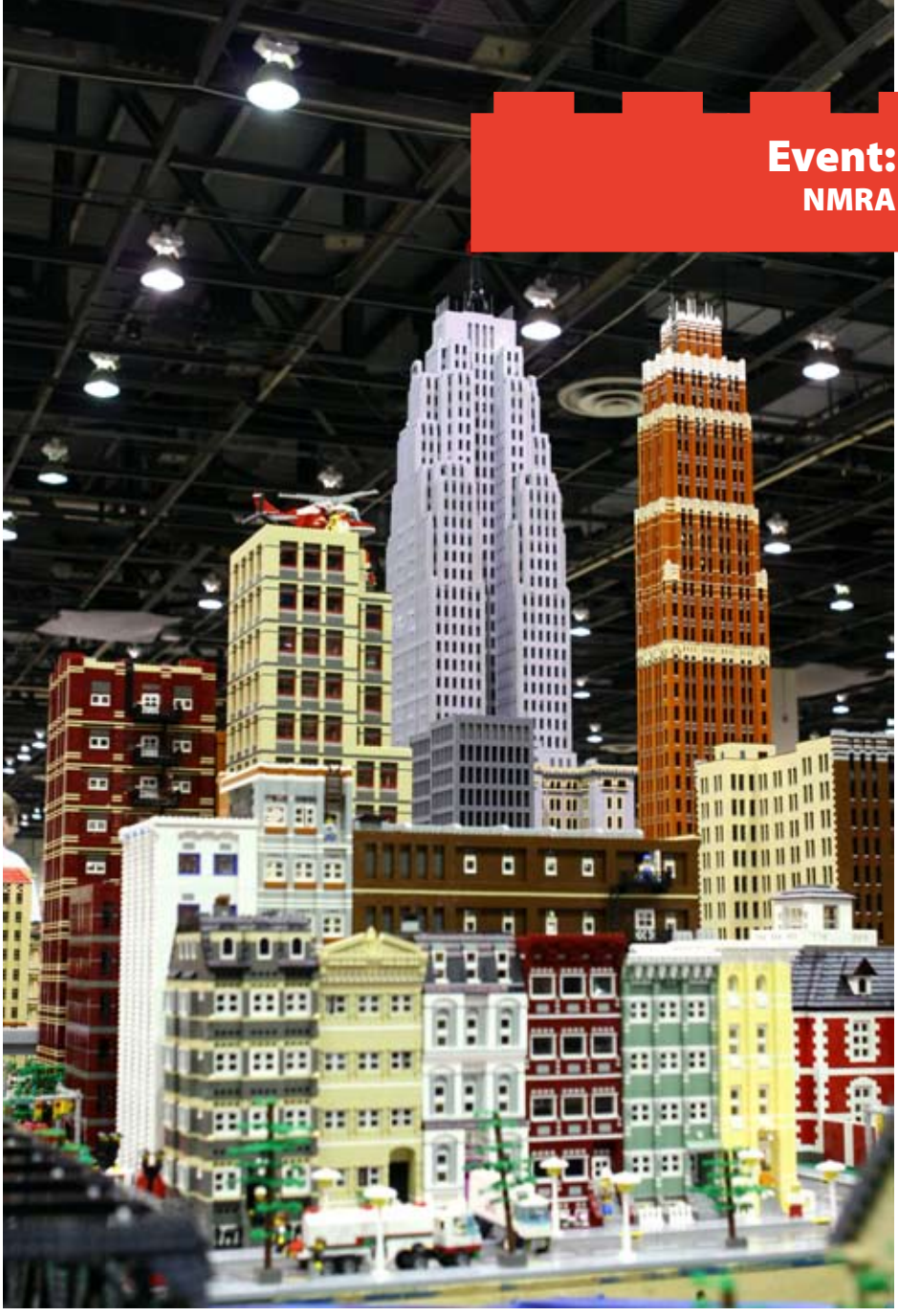
Now, another journey begins with many of the same teams that competed last year. There will also be more that will join, vying for a trip to the World Festival. And it begins like all the other FLL events; with a challenge. Thanks to Cindy and Scott.

More teams at the World Festival

A Glimpse of the FLL World Festival

Photography by Joe Meno

Event:
NMRA



The Trains go to Detroit!

LEGO Train clubs from the United States and Canada went to the National Model Railroad Association convention and presented a layout. But not just any layout...

Article by Michael Huffman, with assistance from John Neal and Calum Tsang

Photography by Calum Tsang

The National Train Show (NTS) in Detroit, Michigan followed the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) convention this past July 27-29. The show was held in the Cobo Hall Convention Center -- spanning 188,000 sq. ft, 11,000 sq. ft of which was the International LEGO® Train Club Organization (ILTCO) display. Brickworld train layout organizer, Jeramy Spurgeon, along with ILTCO president, Steve Barile, organized the layout logistics, while host club MichLTC provided valuable on-site support for the other 10 clubs in attendance -—clubs like GFLTC from Florida, rtlToronto from Canada, IndyLUG from Indiana, and COLTC from Ohio just to name a few.

The LEGO® layouts were nothing short of spectacular! Models prototypical of North American architecture included the Sears Tower of Chicago (three of them, no less), and the Fisher and David Stott buildings of Detroit.

All the skyscrapers were very overwhelming, and staggering to think of overall cost and size. Moving from layout to layout, the crowds were amazed at every detail. It was fun to overhear people excitement, finding 'hidden' vignettes scattered throughout the displays -- a homage to Mel Brooks, with scenes from *Space balls* and *Blazing Saddles;* to Michael Jackson's *Thriller* video, to a polar bear that emerged randomly from a cave; to a modified Cylon walking down a city street.

In addition to being a great show, LEGO train enthusiasts had a riotous good time together as well (as they so often seem to do!). With a little help from the LEGO Group, the group had a a pizza party. With pizza, lots of laughter & drinks, it's hard to cite only one example of the fun things that happened, but suffice it to say that "you had to be there". And be there you SHOULD at the next ILTCO convention in Anaheim, CA on July 13-19, 2008.

BeLUG at the Modelma Exhibition 2007, Brussels Expo

Event: MODELMA 2007

Photos and article by Serge Belsack

Brussels, November 2004.

The second edition of the LEGO Festival at Brussels Expo closes its doors. It was the biggest event in Belgium for BeLUG that year. Unfortunately, a few weeks later, LEGO decided that there wouldn't be a next edition.

Brussels, March 2005.

At the same exhibition centre in Brussels, thousands of women come each year to the "Creativa" Fair, a hobby fair focused especially on women's leisure activities, such as knitting etc. The organizers of this fair thought that it might be a good idea to create during that same time a hobby fair for men. "Modelma" was born.

BeLUG decided to participate as we wanted to find a new big event in Belgium instead of the LEGO Festival.

Our stand was 3x13 m and we filled the available space with a layout.Many people visited our stand, and all were raving about the MOCs we showed. We concluded that this was a good event for BeLUG and that we should participate again in 2006.

Funny anecdote: Our neighbours were the people of the Màrklin train club. They had, of course, very nice models of existing trains, but they had to purchase them in one piece, already assembled. We instead created the same models ourselves, and we built them piece by piece. The Màrklin people realized at that moment that they were missing something - the LEGO thrill. They were jealous and spent more time on our stand than on their own.

Brussels, March 2006.

2nd edition of Modelma. Same dimension of stand, but with a new layout, and this time we showed also some of the famous "heads" of Dirk Denoyelle. We saw again many enthusiastic people, and even some new members subscribed to BeLUG.
We also met some interesting people with whom we collaborated new projects after the event; some of those are already accomplished. (e.g. an exhibition at the Brussels tram museum). Surely, we were really looking forward to the 2007 edition.

BeLUG think tank, beginning of 2007.

Plans are boiling for a new strike. For this 3rd edition, we have again the same 3 x 13 area available, but this time we decided to build not only a layout, but another part of the range of things we create in LEGO. Three sections are planned: layout, GBC (great ball contraption) and special MOCs.

Brussels, March 2007.

All the plans are designed, the material is loaded into the trucks and the cars (yes indeed, we have some volume to transport). The members are ready to make this edition a success.

Early on a Thursday morning, a BeLUG construction team is working hard to fix the modular tables to put our display on. No problem for the MOC tables and the GBC part, but in the layout section there are several levels : -5, -10 and -20 (bricks) below standard level 0. These lower levels allow us to do some realistic landscaping (e.g. water parts) and subterranean constructions (e.g. subway stations).

The engineers are already testing the GBC modules while the others are still preparing the tables for the layout.

We designed the layout section not as big as last year on purpose, because it was hardly possible to put it up decently during the time that the organization gave us. And indeed, we managed to do the whole setup in about 7 hours.

(continued on next page)

Time to welcome the visitors to the fair. The constantly moving balls of the GBC attract people to our stand. Many of them didn't know that LEGO could create so much movement. While the kids were trying to follow one of the balls throughout the series of modules, the fathers were curious about the technical part of this animation.

The layout part is a classic. Nevertheless, we are trying to bring something new each time.
For the first time almost all the buildings were finished on all sides. This gives us the possibility to put them on the layout in every possible way, instead of just the front side. There's also a trend now to build more and more realistic things, based on existing models - Belgian trains, trams, buses, subways and buildings. Don't need to mention that it gives us a kick when people recognize the real life original.

The people of the Brussels tram museum whom we met at Modelma in 2006, were also present and gave us the opportunity to show some of our models in the showcase in the stand of the Brussels public transport authority, so that BeLUG was represented on two stands on this fair.

After three editions, we have to conclude that Modelma is for BeLUG the most important event of the year in Belgium with a lot of visitors, and again this year some new members! The GBC was definitely something to come back with next year.

The breakdown after the fair went very fast this time - within only one hour everything was packed and ready to go.... to the next event.

Brickworld Universally Successful

By Bryan Bonahoom and Adam Tucker, Event Coordinators

Adam Tucker (left) and Bryan Bonahoom

The idea to hold a convention in Chicago was born during the House of Bricks show in April 2006. Wow, this seems like a millennium ago now. While it took 14 months for the idea to solidify into something tangible that we all know as Brickworld, they were a fast 14 months. And, thanks to a lot of effort from coordinators, presenters, sponsors, and registered attendees, Brickworld was a phenomenal event!!

Looking back, there were a few rough spots that need to be worked on next year. There were a few forgotten name badges, a misspelling or two, some hiccups in the room layout, a little too much optimism for some of the collaborative displays, and the ten places we moved the "LEGO Lady" to before we finally settled on a nice spot in the back of the room. But, thanks to the efforts of everyone there, these minor issues were transparent to everyone except those involved.

Registrants participated in great sharing and camaraderie. There were many wonderful presentations. There were amazing displays from some of the simplest creations to the many complex creations. The labors of love that absorbed countless hours of dedicated effort. The sheer quantity of bricks on display for each other and the public in that 15,000 square foot room leaves no way to describe what you saw when you walked in. There are no words that do it justice. It was like one big happy family of 290 people and 1,000 creations (maybe more).

What was the best moment of the weekend? There was no "one" best moment. There were many best moments. And, the list of best moments most assuredly is different for each person. As for us, the top ten best items are tough to list because we can think of so many more and we are probably forgetting twice as many as we remember. we do remember one thing: SMILES – lots and lots of SMILES!!!

We are writing this article carefully. We are afraid to mention any one creation as "my favorite" because all the creations were incredible or inspiring or shocking or amusing or just plain amazing. If we list one creation, we would then want to list them all. There are thousands of pictures on the internet. WE invite you to spend some time getting inspired by them all. And, we challenge everyone to take your own creations to the next level for Brickworld 2008. Find a way to collaborate with someone to make a new uniquely themed item. Do something different that you ever did. Make a film. Build bigger. Build smaller. Incorporate Mindstorms in your creation. The list is endless. The more you create; the more creative you become. And, your willingness to share your experiences and thoughts is what will make Brickworld 2008 even better.

We look forward to seeing everyone in Chicago. Mark your calendars for June 19 – 22, 2008. And, watch the Brickworld website for updates. Thank you everyone for helping make Brickworld 2007 a success.

Brick Meets World

Article by Joe Meno
Photography by Joe Meno and David Gregory

2007 was the first year of Brickworld. Held in Chicago June 24-26, this event brought in LEGO fans from across the US and even from Europe. The LEGO Group also took part in the convention, with staff from the US and European offices visiting and presenting.

The entire weekend was busy, with Friday being reserved for Brickworld registered attendees only at the venue. Presentations were held not only by builders, but also by some of the LEGO staff.

For those wanting to see LEGO fan models, there were creations of all shapes and sizes, including small vignettes that could fit in one's hand and 10-foot skyscrapers. There were train layouts spanning multiple tables and a cityscape – the first appearance of the Apocalyptic Mecha City Project. The AMCP had robots, tanks and soldiers fighting in a war-torn urban layout. Sniper bots were taking shots from roofs, while infantry squads ran between buildings and counterattacked.

There was also a castlescape, with dragons. One dragon flew over the landscape menacingly, while another (a much larger one) was on a neighboring table. One castle dominated the are with its size and…blackness. It was made almost completely of black LEGO elements.

There were other things that went on too – you could watch a Brickfilm (a stop-motion movie done with LEGO elements) or you could buy out of production sets and parts.

One of the largest single areas was the Great Ball Contraption, where participants build modules that deliver LEGO soccer balls to each other. Each module fits a common standard, so the result is a long continuous parade of soccer balls, moved by conveyor belt, wave motion machine, train, or even robot.

Speaking of robots, the LEGO MINDSTORMS fans were able to participate in a couple of events: a MINDSTORMS sumo, where bots had to push each other off a circular arena, and the Indy 5.0, where robots raced each other around a racetrack, without any assistance!

The LEGO Group provided a little of everything. Upcoming sets were previewed and there were a couple of building contests , including alternate model contests for some sets and for twenty lucky attendees, a speed build on an unreleased Castle set. Richard Stollery, Director of Community Experiences, spoke at the Brickworld keynote. During his speech, he introduced himself, and gave a presentation about some of the projects that were being worked on at the LEGO Group. At the LEGO tables, people could play wit the new Power functions sets.

Saturday and Sunday were even busier because these were the public days! Over the two days, over 3500 visitors took a look at the models layouts and chatted with many of the builders. In the center of the display room, there were constant MINDSTORMS competitions running, with crowds of onlookers watching. Others were playing with the new LEGO sets at the LEGO table, and others were marveling at the train layouts.

The best description of Brickworld is from Richard Stollery:

> Brickworld 2007 brought to life the "endless possibilities" of LEGO. It was inspirational for everyone who attended from the LEGO Company. To see what can be created and to see the emotions that the creations can stir in individuals is wonderful to witness. I was watching the children's faces and the adults too when they came in to the hall and their eyes lit up.

Other comments came from attendees:

> My family had full registrations for the show. That is the only way to really see Brickworld!
>
> When we first walked in on Friday afternoon, my seven year old son said "I think I have gone to LEGO Heaven".
>
> My daughter most enjoyed the irony/subtle humor that some of the builders incorporated into their displays, such as the Dunkin Donuts - Krispy Crème truck wreck in front of the Starbucks Coffee Shop.
>
> I work in the mining industry and my favorite display was the gold mine, mine and train being guarded by 'Fluffy' the 3 headed dog. Also, the walking dragline display should be given an outstanding award designation.
>
> *Yvette Gengler (als provided photos at left)*
>
> While I didn't have any displays at this event (it was my first, after all), I will say I had a wonderful time. Next to just seeing all the incredible displays and using those to help imagine what I could create once I got home, my favorite part was "manning" the front door while our Guard took a break. It was during this time I got to see the initial response from tons of children as they peeked into the display room. Many responded with, "Whoa!!", but a few jumped up and down and yelled out unintelligible words of excitement. I was

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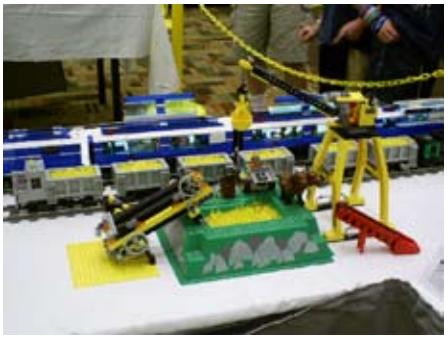


able to walk my 6 yr. old son through. After 2 hrs. he needed a sugar break and time to play with his mini-figures he bought. By that time my wife showed up so he spent another 1 - 2 hrs. showing her everything!

Dave Herring

Next year, Brickworld will be returning to Chicago, bigger and better than before – hope to see you there!

Brickworld will take place June 19-22, 2008. For more information, please go to the Brickworld website: http://www.brickworld.us

What I Did This Summer, or My Brickworld Adventure

Article by Melody Krützfeldt
Photography by
Melody Krützfeldt and Joe Meno

This is my personal perception of my first time in the USA and to a US event. Here's how it went…

Due to where I live, it takes around 3 countries to get to the US (from Germany to Denmark to The Netherlands). I can't help think that I am catching a plane full of Smurfs though; the KLM hosts are wearing blue and white as part of their uniform colours. I am happy to see a LEGO set available on board (#2928) but since I already have enough things with me, I decide to risk it and buy them on the way home.

I finally land in Chicago; 7 hours time difference and I am feeling a little tired as I had to get up at 4am (yawn!). I walk around and yay!, someone friendly is there to pick me up. (Thanks mate!).

To the hotel we go…one of the first people I meet happens to be a crazy guy named Joe. Anyone know him? He does a magazine called BrickJournal.

After a while, new faces emerge and I start meeting people I've only known by name or photo, and here they are in the flesh! I am still feeling sluggish and the reception area is cold! Brrr! I suddenly realize I've forgotten my toothbrush and toothpaste; typical, isn't it? So I ask at the reception desk where I can get a set, and instantly they hand over a toothbrush and toothpaste. Whammo! Now that is service!

While waiting for my roommate to arrive, I meet three lovely ladies from LEGO whom I first met in The Netherlands while waiting in the baggage check line. I wished I could refresh myself and one of them offered the use of the shower in her room. Oh, that was appreciated. Now I just have to face the fact that if I go to bed at 12ish am, it would be like going to bed at 7am my time! Urgh!

More people are arriving. I see Jan Beyer and Steve Witt… also Richard Stollery is around here somewhere…

My roommate finally arrives and we check in. After putting away my stuff it is time to go back downstairs to meet people and watch what's going on. This lasts several hours as they do at most events. Around 8pm I register at the booth; here I receive my goody bag filled with yummy items. There's also an event program detailing all the events, presentations and talks held by the attendees.

Around 9pm the event kits are unveiled, that is if you could see up to the front of the room. I see at least one I am interested in buying. Throughout the evening Jan & a LEGO designer, Simon, are building Café Corner sets which are to end up as a super sized Café Corner. I am amazed to see Jan building so I must take a picture or two. I can tell Simon the designer isn't a real AFOL. It's obvious building isn't his forte. I decide to join him and show him how it's really done as Jan has already completed most of his building by this time and Simon really needs to catch up.

Now it's time for dinner and a few of us go in search for food. We have a nice chat and get a few things sorted out.

Later that evening a game of Dirty Brickster is held, but I didn't take part. From what I can tell, it isn't much different from the European versions.

I compare the presentations and talks to 1000steine-land; they also have them. Brickworld has quite a few and you are not able to attend them all due to the time and that they

overlap…and it's quite hard keeping up with the program, at times we need a reminder, or we have to carry the program around with us. (Having it posted up on a projection screen at the beginning would have been helpful).

Per usual, it is common to go to bed very late or early the next morning. I went to bed at a decent time because I knew I had to get up early, but sadly I didn't sleep well due to too much light through the curtains and people snoring).

This morning, Friday, I'm feeling not so good…still trying to adapt to the time zone and getting hardly any sleep. It is time for a drink filled with caffeine! Instead, I find Joe and he hooks me up with a nice, healthy fruit juice. Mmmm, pretty much costs the earth too! Hint: when going to events held at a 5-star hotel or the like, bring your own drinks and snacks otherwise you end up spending an arm and a leg.

So the day begins. Set up time for all the MOCs. The Café Corner build is still going on (there are enough sets to make a very tall building). Talks about Mosaics, Great Ball Contraption and The Brick as a Medium are going on while a First LEGO League Mindstorms competition is underway in another room, and Simon holds a presentation on Creator products; way to go Simon! BTW, Simon has hair like the characters from EXO-FORCE, don't you agree? ;)

Now it's Joe's turn. Yep, he's holding a presentation on…you guessed it, BrickJournal. I sit with Sean Kenney and Jan; they are quietly laughing about something. Is it something Joe said, or? Joe does a good job and people are interested in what's going on with the magazine.

Throughout the day there are plenty of meetings: NXT programming, the Ohio Toy Museum, building Town and Train MOCs on angles, a Space building competition, rock crawling practice, insurance and more! Around 4pm is the opening ceremony and Richard Stollery is the guest speaker. There are some funny times and we find out what Richard's favourite LEGO theme is. Richard also has some pictures to show of the new licensed theme, Indiana Jones.

Time for dinner, some fun, and a few activities back at the hall, then later on we are going to the LEGO Store! YAY!

Many of us are very excited and curious about seeing the LEGO store in Northbrook, for me it is the first time to a US LEGO store and I am really looking forward to it.

Truckloads of us arrive at the store and are waiting outside for it to open. Special arrangements were made just for us so we all have to spend big. I go in, look around and grab what I want, then look some more. There are a few interesting bits here and there but I am also a little disappointed. Maybe I am a little spoiled with the stores and Billund back in Europe. This store is small and I was hoping to get some really cool stuff I can't get back home. But, the atmosphere is great, the store is buzzing with people…maybe it has never been that packed before. I find a couple of Duplo Dragon Friends on sale to take home. Sweet!

I ride back with Steve Witt and Claudia from LEGO and it was fun…until we get lost. It takes a little while but we find our way back safe and sound. I hang around for a while and take some pictures then go up to bed.

Saturday, and what a day! Today the public will come through. Everything is set to go…and here they come,

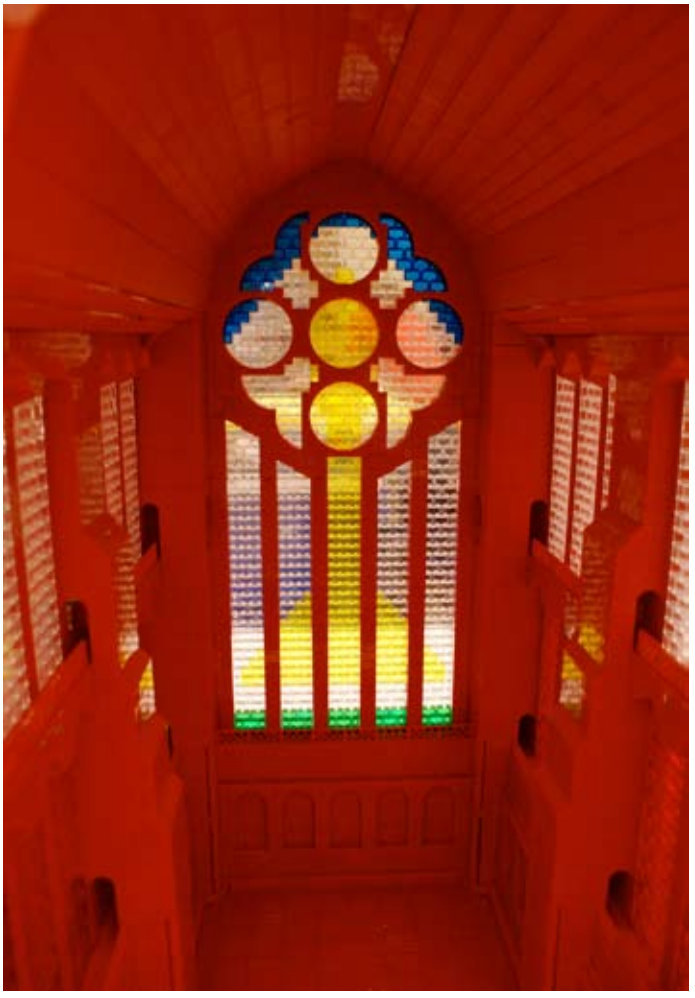
pouring in! The kids had fun and the adults too. It's great to see their faces as they gaze around at all the things made of LEGO. It is a very good turn out for the first day.

At 4pm the hall closes to the public and the attendees gather around once more, this time for the Brickworld Awards Ceremony. (in your goodie bag there was a sheet to judge the MOCs you thought were best.) Presentations, appreciations and awards are given to various people for different activities, best MOCs in various themes, organizing the event and more. Then more activities are held, such as the Castle Build Competition where 20 people have to build an alternative to a selected Castle set. I can tell you there are some amusing entries! Thanks to Tommy, the BrickEngraver, I am able to do some shopping to bring to my fans back home, I mean, my family. The night ends with several events – the Charity Auction, Dirty Buildster, and a very cool movie that I miss the start of. What I do see is a groovy Star Wars film that keeps everyone laughing. Now on to bed.

Sunday morning. I had another night where sleep is almost non-existent and I am definitely feeling it. Part of me is looking forward to going home today, but I am also sad because I'm having so much fun!

Here we go again, the public pours in and it is another busy day. I do the photo thing then get all packed and ready to go. There are some more events happening today, but I have to leave midday and don't get to take part. I say goodbye to those I finally got to meet after all these years; that is a highlight for me.

The convention was good. I had a lot of fun, it was nice to finally be able to attend a US event after reading about them online for so long, it was great to meet old and new faces, and to see all the models. I recommend anyone to go and have fun. Brickworld publicly was quite successful, fan wise it was ok. For the next year there are a few improvements to be made, but did I mention that this was a first time event? To be honest, that wasn't obvious. While most events do not run perfectly, I think this one had a good start. I found the event had a different feel to it overall, than European ones, but not in a bad way. Hopefully I can come back next year!




Brickworld

75 Years and Still Building: The LEGO Group Celebrates!

Article and Photos by Melody Krützfeldt

It started with a duck…

Once upon a time, there was a duck. He was a lovely wooden duck, made by a man named Ole Kirk. One fine evening, Ole's son, Godtfred, proudly came home to his father and told him that they had earned extra money. That day, Godtfred had been down at the local train station with a couple of boxes containing wooden ducks to be delivered to a local Danish company.

The ducks, which normally had three coats of lacquer, only received two coats, as Godtfred wanted to save the company some money. Ole was not impressed and Godtfred was told to go back to the station and bring the ducks home again to be recoated with a 3rd coat of lacquer. Ole told his son, "you're not going to bed tonight, young lad, until the job's done – and nobody's going to help you."

Years later Godtfred said, "that was a lesson about quality I've never forgotten" and since then, the duck became a symbol for the standard of quality that the LEGO Group still possesses today.

And this is one reason why the LEGO Group used the duck as their symbol to mark its 75th Anniversary.

While the wooden duck was not the first thing made, it was one of the first, along with many other wooden toys produced by the company. It wasn't till later on that the famous plastic bricks were produced as we know and love them today.

Two generations come together: Godtfred Kirk Cristiansen, the man who established the LEGO Group, and his grandson and current owner of the LEGO Group, Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, talk over a car built by Kjeld.

3 generations and 75 years later…

Fast forward to Billund, Denmark - Friday, 10th August, 2007. It was on this day that back in 1932 Ole Kirk started the company that so many have grown up with. 75 years later, now one of the world's favourite brands, LEGO, celebrated their anniversary with one huge party.

The event began with a range of activities in 29 tents that lasted throughout the day including; a film quiz, music quiz, LEGO MINDSTORMS, LEGO Mosaic building, chocolate fondue, beverage bar, bungee run, dance lessons, jumping castle, hammocks & relaxing music, mechanical bull ride, blow-up activity gym, stand-up comedy, Opera, Jazz music, mimes, magic and more!

The 'Anniversary Mosaic' was built by LEGO employees throughout the day with help from LEGO fans. The 1.7 x 6.8 meter mosaic consisted of sixty-four '48x48' baseplates. There were four sections consisting of 16 baseplates each. Approximately 37,000 '2x2' plates were used to complete the mosaic.

Also included in the celebration were various performing artists; girls dressed in red, black, white & yellow - to represent the colours of LEGO. And not to forget, LEGO fans were in attendance, displaying models they'd created.

During the celebrations, Kjeld Kristiansen (owner of the LEGO Group), Jørgen Knudstorp (Chief Executive Officer of the LEGO Group) and Jette Orduna (LEGO Archives Manager), met with the AFOLs. During this meeting several gifts were presented to the LEGO representatives. These included three wooden commemorative plaques (which encased transparent brick mosaics) and a large baseplate of '75' vignettes from various AFOLs.

The event was also attended by approximately 2,500 LEGO employees, both current and retired and of course, the LEGO fans. For the fans, it was a wonderful opportunity to meet and greet with the LEGO employees from the past, present and future. The fans were able to talk to different employees about their models, the company and more. It was also a great opportunity for the employees to see what fans are doing with the product they help to produce.

Retired LEGO employees shared their stories of when they first joined the company and what their role was then. The current employees shared what division they work in and what they do. And the future employees, who were soon to start work within the company shared their excitement in joining. Each fan has their own special memory and story to tell of what they got out of the day, but it was fascinating especially to talk to the retired employees of how things used to be, before today's technology and the ranges of parts and colours that currently exist.

To finish the Billund celebration, a concert was held at that celebrated the music from the past 75 years. Over the three hours of the performance, there were 8 bands that played the songs of each decade. Orchestra music was followed by swing, then Elvis songs, then ABBA, to name a few.

The Celebration of 75 years of The LEGO Group was not only celebrated in Billund, The LEGO Group also celebrated with parties in stores and LEGO buildings worldwide in various ways… (See London article in this issue). In Billund it was a fantastic day, the weather was beyond beautiful and so many were very happy to be there!

Till the 100th Anniversary! Cheers!

A Timeline of the LEGO Group

1932: Ole Kirk begins making wooden toys

1934: The company changes to the LEGO name

1949: The product range includes LEGO building bricks, the forerunner of the present-day LEGO brick

1958: The final LEGO brick with its interlocking principle is invented and patented

1960: Production of wooden toys ceases

1968: LEGOLAND Billund opens

1969: Launch of the LEGO DUPLO brick

1978: LEGO Technic launched

1978: Minifigure launched

1998: LEGO MINDSTORMS launched

1998: Licensing agreement with Lucasfilm Ltd. (Star wars products)

2001: BIONICLE launched – the first LEGO story developed from scratch

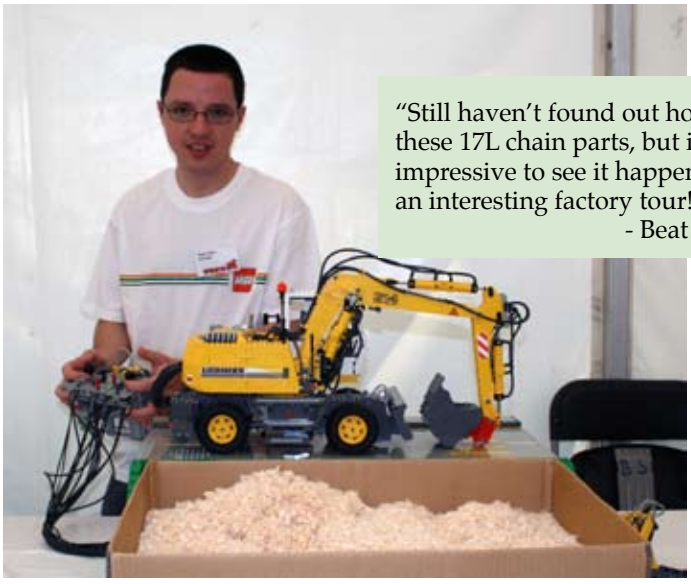
2007: Employees all over the world celebrate the company's 75th anniversary

Time-line from the LEGO Life magazine used with permission.

"A great day with a lot of great experience and a lot of nice LEGO workers. It was a very nice party with some great stuff, like Chocolate fondue, standup comedy and a lot of other fun stuff. It was also great to meet all the other AFOLs at this great party! Thank you to you all!"
- Caspar Bennedsen (Denmark)

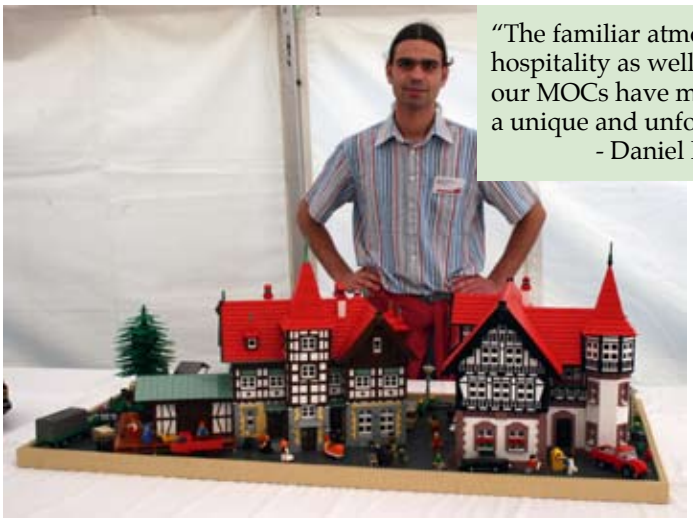
The LEGO Group invited some adult LEGO fans to their celebration - here are their comments with photographs from the party...

"Starting with the factory tour the day before, sharing ideas with other AFOLs and designers in our tent, getting "knighted" by Kjeld when he talked to me and checked out my model, and finally the Legoland "group experience" the day after, these 3 days will be some of the most memorable LEGO-related moments for me ever. Thanks!"
- Andreas Engel (Germany)



"Still haven't found out how they mould these 17L chain parts, but it's definitively impressive to see it happen. Many thanks for an interesting factory tour!"
- Beat Felber (Switzerland)

Bagpipers perform at the event



"The familiar atmosphere, the hospitality as well as the interest in our MOCs have made these days to a unique and unforgettable event!"
- Daniel Kampa, (Germany)

"Absolutely amazing, a company party with 2500 kids and no adults"
- Christian Krützfeldt (Germany)

Kjeld at the party, with a gift - a mosaic

(Left to right) Jette Orduna, Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, and Jørgen Vig Knudstorp all of the LEGO Group, hold the mosiacs presented to them

"When I was a child, I never dreamt I would attend the 75th Anniversary celebration of the LEGO Group! The best party I have been to within the last 75 years! Here's to the next 25 and 75 years!"
- Melody Krützfeldt (Australia/ Germany)

"Regardless if you are a company owner, CEO, employee or fan - at the 75th LEGO anniversary party everyone showed his and her enthusiasm for the little plastic bricks"

- Holger Matthes (Germany)

One of the party performers

"A very special moment in time that shall never be forgotten… New friends were made; a great time had by all, with the timeless LEGO bricks! 75 years come and gone, here's to 75 more!"

- Megan Rothrock (Denmark)

"It was a beautiful event. The way LEGO made the party for the employees was so lovely" - Anja Sander (Germany)

Inside one of the party tents

"It was really a pleasure for me to show the employees what fans are doing with "their" bricks. I wish I had more time to talk with all the friendly people, or even be able to replay the day"

- Stephan Sander (Germany)

The entire adult fan group

"An incredible day! The Danes certainly know how to throw a birthday party"

- "Primus" Burkhard Schlömer (Germany)

"It was truly an honour to be among the chosen ones. And since I don't participate in many events it was a great opportunity to meet other European AFOLs" - Maarten Steurbaut (Belgium)

"Great day! Great meeting the other AFOLs and seeing their models. Great seeing some of the LEGO employees that I have met during the years"

- Knud Thomsen (Denmark)

The greeters to the event, in brick colors

The Brickish Association Celebrates LEGO's 75th Anniversary!

Event:
The LEGO Group at 75

By Martin Long and William Howard

On Friday 10th August, eight members of the Brickish Association attended the 75th Birthday Celebration at the LEGO offices in Slough. The day started at 10am with us arriving from various parts of the UK and being greeted by Vanessa Wilcock - our host for the day. We were shown to the meeting room where we were to give our presentation and the restaurant where there was space for us to display our models. We then set about unpacking, setting up and getting our laptop hooked up to the projector for our presentation. At 10:30am we were greeted by Richard Stollery, dressed very casually in polo shirt and shorts – but more about that later!

Richard gave us a tour of the building. First, we were taken to the European Consumer Service Centre. It's truly amazing; very friendly and informal. It comes across as a great place to work and they have many current sets made up and available to help answer any questions. We learned that you need to be able to speak two, preferably three, languages to work there full-time as they handle calls from all over Europe. As we continued the tour, we were made to feel very welcome and the rest of the operation seemed to be equally engaging and friendly.

At 11:30am the meeting room filled up with LEGO employees. After a brief introduction by Conny Kalcher it was our turn. Martin Long introduced the Brickish Association members and William Howard then continued with the first half of the presentation, handing back to Martin for the latter half. The presentation explained AFOL culture, language and terminology in the UK

(continued on next page)

and across the globe, then focused on the models and displays that Brickish Association members are involved in around the country. Ed Diment's HMS Edinburgh got the biggest WOW; BOLOCS got the biggest laugh; and the Great Western LEGO Train Show video came pretty close to a standing ovation - so all-in-all we made a great impression. The presentation finished bang on time and was followed by a short and interesting Q&A session.

Lunch was buffet style, with the added excitement of pulling your own ice-cream cone (a lot harder than it looks) and trying to avoid dribbling chocolate down your front from the chocolate waterfall. The interaction with the staff continued over lunch, so we all got to know each other well.

After lunch, we gathered in the foyer for the team mosaic race. The mosaics were pre-printed on sixteen 48x48 baseplates - one of the LEGO logo and the other of the famous red duck - the tesserae being 2x2 plates. Team Duck were the winners, but it was a close run thing, going to the last few plates on the final baseplate.

After the mosaic race people returned to finish lunch, dunk a few more marshmallows in the chocolate fountain and change into their fancy dress costumes for the afternoon party. We packed up our MOCs and donned our costumes too. Around 2:30pm various characters started appearing - Lara Croft, Chewbacca (Richard Stollery - which explained the very casual dress earlier), several Pink Ladies, an 80s roller-skater (Vanessa), Austin Powers, a mutant turtle, Superman, Indiana Jones, a punk, several hippies, Sergeant Pepper, Captain Jack Sparrow, Trinity, Scooby Doo – you name it!

The afternoon/evening party was held at Stoke Park. The weather was stunning and the venue was perfect. The afternoon events included a bouncy castle; a surf riding machine (rather like a buckin'-bronco except you are expected to stand up!); a coconut shy; a hoop-la; garden Jenga; amazing displays by a speed painter who could paint a giant Robbie Williams face upside down during "Let Me Entertain You" and a very non-politically correct comedian who possibly didn't get an audience for his second set...

The Brickish Association members were asked to judge the staff fancy dress - the winners being Pippi Longstocking, a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle, and the two 118 girls.

The party then continued with a superb BBQ, music and entertainment provided by Chappers and Dave from BBC Radio 1 and a disco until Midnight. Oh, and quite a lot of alcohol! All in all, it was a superb day and we as the Brickish Association felt privileged to be a part of it.

The BA members that attended the event were Martin Long, William Howard, Michael LeCount, James Sutton, Jason Railton, Phil Traviss, Yvonne Doyle and Duncan Titmarsh.

Event:
Building Asia Brick by Brick

Building The Ideal City in Asia

Interview by Joe Meno
Photography provided by ArtsAsiaPacific and People's Architecture Foundation

Building Asia Brick by By Brick is a traveling exhibition that is currently touring China. The result of a partnership with *ArtAsiaPacific* magazine and People's Architecture, this exhibition will conclude in New York City in 2008. A combination of educational workshops and display, LEGO bricks were selected as the common medium for a group of international architects to build their ideas of "design innovation that look to the future and the past," as stated in *ArtAsiaPacific* in its Summer 2006 issue. Each architect used 7800 LEGO elements of varying dimensions to make their

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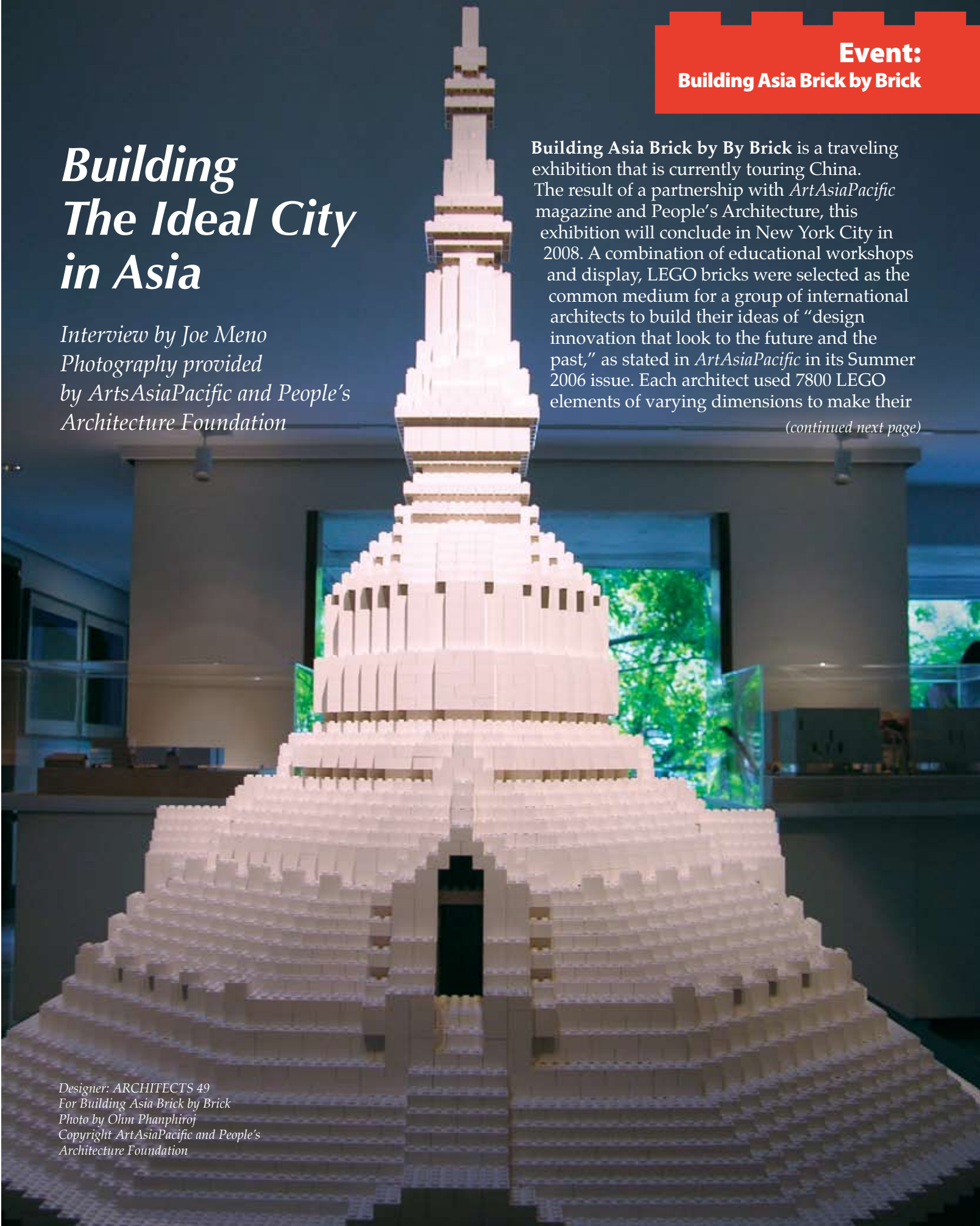
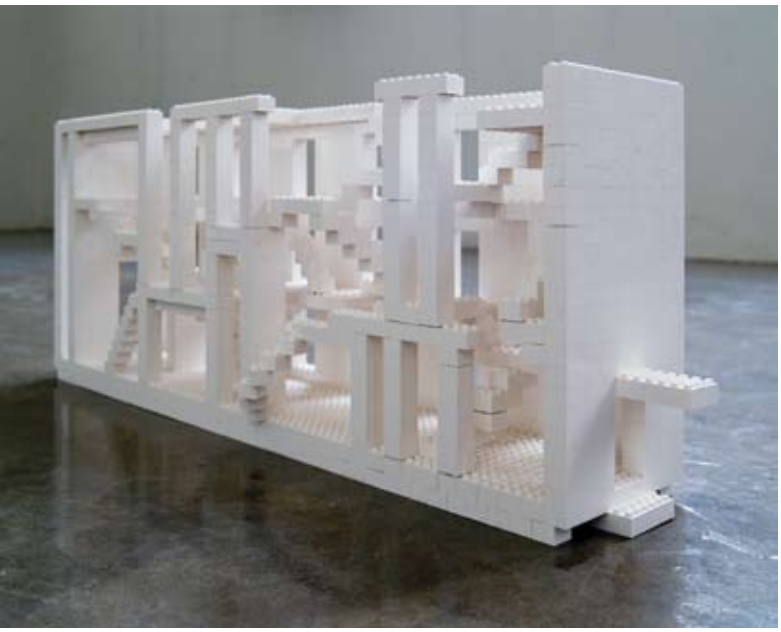


Designer: ARCHITECTS 49
For Building Asia Brick by Brick
Photo by Ohm Phanphiroj



Designer:Yung Ho Chang and Lijia Lu
For Building Asia Brick by Brick
Photo by Andy Brilliant
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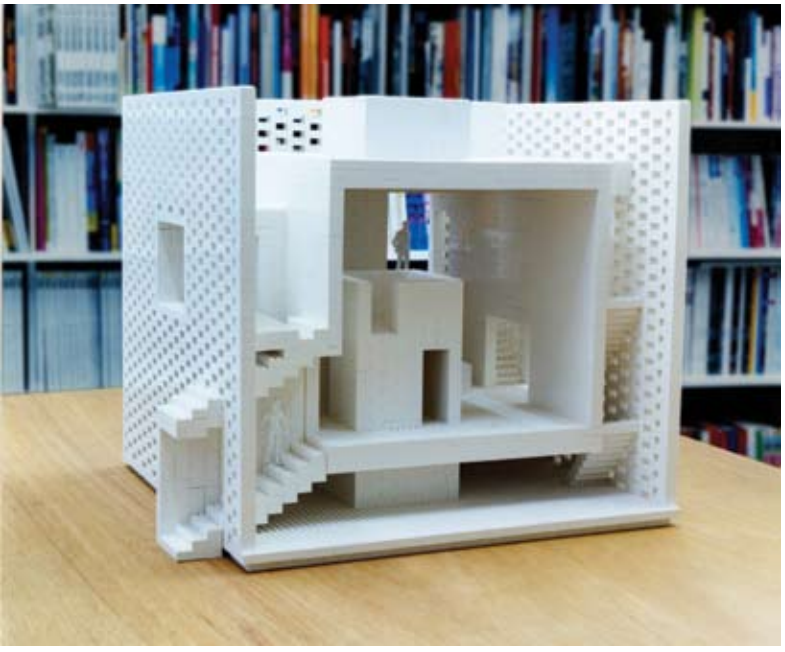

Designer: Atelier Bow-wow
For Building Asia Brick by Brick
Photo by Hiroko Matsubara
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BrickJournal interviewed Andrew Maerkle, Deputy Editor of *ArtAsiaPacific*, and Wei Wei Shannon, executive director, People's Architecture Foundation to find out about the workshops, LEGO building in China, and the public reaction to the exhibition.

What is Teach Through Play, and what are some examples of using this approach in the exhibition?

Wei Wei Shannon: At each location, we invite local university students to run workshops with local kids to build their ideal vision of the city they live in. If it is in Shanghai, they build an ideal Shanghai; if it is located in Guangzhou, the local students and kids build their ideal Guangzhou. Through these interactive activities, the university students play with kids, and both students and kids teach each other about different approaches to creativity, urbanism, and architecture. It's a great opportunity for the students to work through concepts they are learning in their coursework and for kids to begin thinking about their living environments in a proactive way. And of course it ingrains a sense of self-sufficiency in the participants, rather than traditional pedagogical approaches.

What is some of the educational programming that was developed by People's Architecture and the Soong Ling Foundation?

WWS: So far the educational programming has been developed by People's Architecture and collaborating universities and students, and the Soong Ching Ling Foundation has not been involved, although we will work with them at a later phase of Building Asia Brick by Brick. As the exhibition has traveled through three cities, we now have Ideal Guangzhou, Ideal Shanghai, and are in the process of building Ideal Beijing.

Since the readership of *BrickJournal* is primarily English, can you give some information on how LEGO is regarded in China, or better yet, why you chose to use LEGO bricks as a medium for this exhibit?

Andrew Maerkle: LEGO just seemed like the perfect medium for engaging with architects in a creative way. So many architects admit that they first developed their interest in architecture through LEGO. We were looking for a way to communicate the ideas that leading architects working in Asia and the Pacific employ in their practices, but we wanted to do it on a spontaneous level where people could really see the process at work, as opposed to an analytic or theoretical level.

WWS: LEGO has been in China since 1992, but was never a big hit. LEGO never found the right way of marketing itself in China. But slowly, I think LEGO China began to understand that Chinese kids like to build in general, making models of buildings and cities…that's another reason why LEGO China really likes our BABB exhibition and program and has been really supportive in seeing it through.

How has reaction been? How many children/ adults/families have participated?

WWS: The reaction is great. Since the exhibition is in public malls at the moment, there are tons of children, adults, and families that come to participant. Some kids come back over and over again to do our workshops. And some kids are really genius, making models that are amazingly sophisticated. It is really rewarding to see this.

As we were planning the project, *ArtAsiaPacific* and People's Architecture really considered what kind of audience we wanted to reach in China. We could have pursued opportunities in Beijing at a place such as the 798 art center, but we felt that would drastically limit the audience to one social group. We quickly decided that we wanted to be in as public a space as possible in order to reach a broad audience that might not be aware of contemporary art or architecture or have access to it, but could still appreciate the uniqueness of the models on display.

How did you select the architects for the exhibit?

AM: We selected architects who really stand out for their commitment to working in unconventional environments or using unconventional materials and concepts. Bernard Khoury, for example, works in Beirut and deals with the city's war torn history as well as its uncertain present. Atelier Bow-wow, in Tokyo, have coined the term "Pet Architecture" for their repurposing of that city's challenging urban space.

Since we were also planning on exhibiting in China, we also placed an emphasis on Chinese architects. Although all of the participating architects are highly regarded internationally, few of them really fall into the model of "starchitect" reaping a lot of media attention these days.

How is Get It Louder (a touring exhibition of young designers and artists that displays in China) involved in this?

WWS: Get it Louder! director Ou Ning found out about our project and he loved the idea. We are considered as a special project in Get It Louder!. Also, given our interest in public venues, participating in Get it Louder! was an easy decision as it tours throughout China in public malls. We have also been invited to participate in the Shenzhen Biennale of Architecture & Urbanism in December and will produce our own stand-alone exhibition in Beijing in early 2008.

The exhibit started from a feature in AAP magazine in June 2006 - how long did it take to get from article/idea to actual exhibit – and what were the challenges that had to be met?

AM: We started organizing BABB in early 2006. Once we knew who we wanted to invite, getting the architects on board was easy. All of them responded very quickly and were enthusiastic about the project. Producing the exhibition has certainly provided challenges. We took our time finding the right partners to work with in China and lining up the right venues, but everything ultimately fell into place.

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Designer: Bernard Khoury/DW5
For Building Asia Brick by Brick
Photo by Roger Mourkarzel
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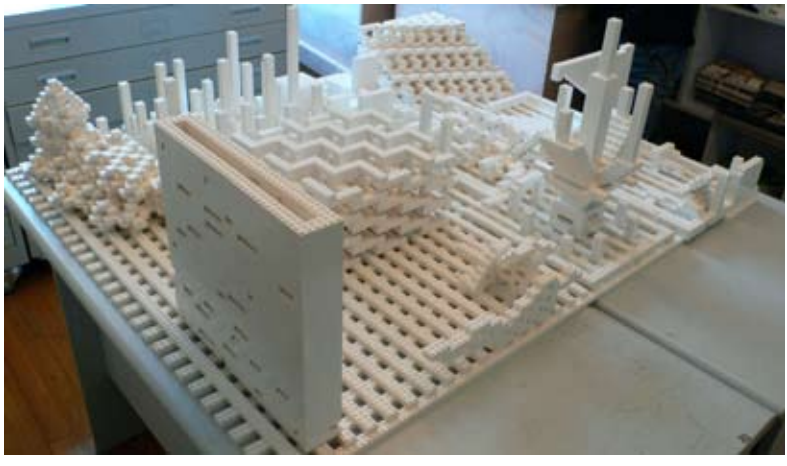

Designer: Scenic Architecture
For Building Asia Brick by Brick
Photo by Scenic Architecture
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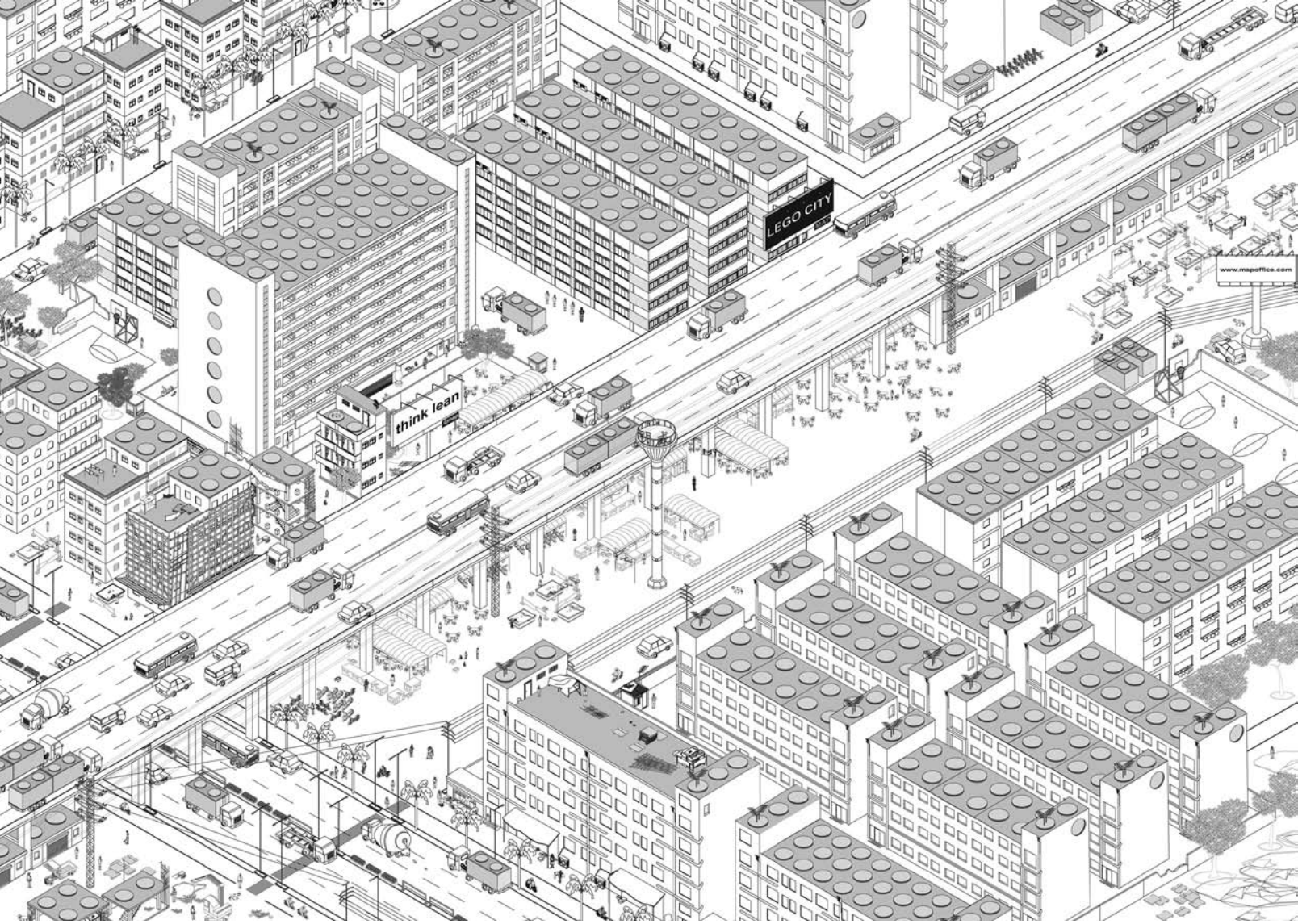


Designer: Map Office
For Building Asia Brick by Brick
Photo by Map Office

What were the additional models commissioned for the exhibit?

AM: For the magazine feature, we kept an even distribution of architects from different countries so we could give readers a broad view of what is happening in Asia and the Pacific right now. But once we considered the scope of what we could do in China, we recognized the opportunity to open up the project to more local architects.

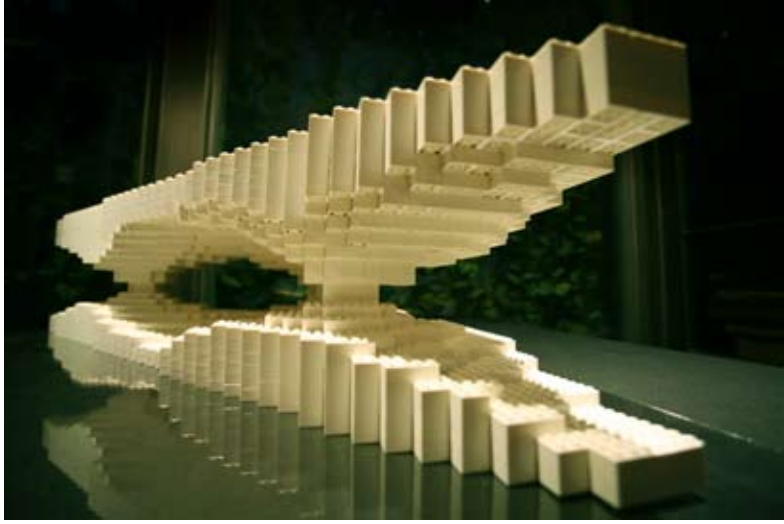
The additional models are:

Atelier Li Xinggang
Map Office
MADA s.p.a.m.
Scenic Architecture
Urbanus
Special contribution by Ai Weiwei

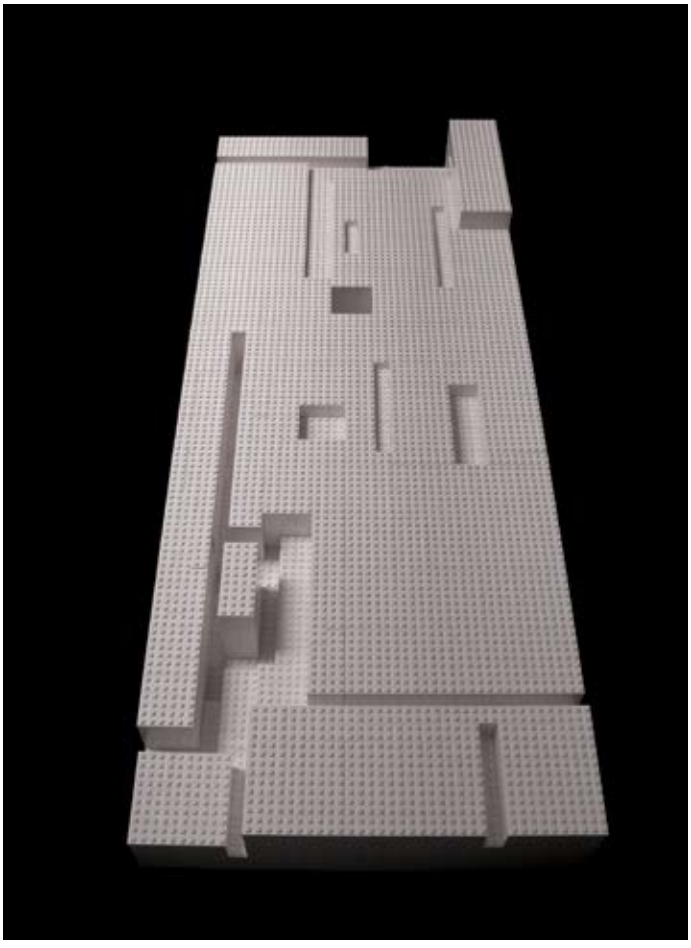
The partnership between ArtAsiaPacific and People's Architecture has been really great, I think we both recognize the significance of what BABB can offer, combining a creative challenge with education and awareness activities. People's Architecture have really spearheaded the programming in

China and it was such a thrill to click onto the BABB blog and see the pictures of the kids looking at the models and participating in the workshops. It was just how we imagined it, but at the same time it really exceeded our expectations.

Building Asia Brick by Brick is still touring as of presstime. You can check their website for venues and more information: http://www.peoplesarchitecture.com/brickbybrick/index.html. BrickJournal would also like to thank *ArtAsiaPacific* Magazine and the People's Foundation for the interview.



Designer: MADA s.p.a.m.
For Building Asia Brick by Brick
Photo by MADA s.p.a.m.
Copyright ArtAsiaPacific and People's Architecture Foundation



Designer: Mathew & Ghosh Architects
For Building Asia Brick by Brick
Photo by Mathew & Ghosh Architects
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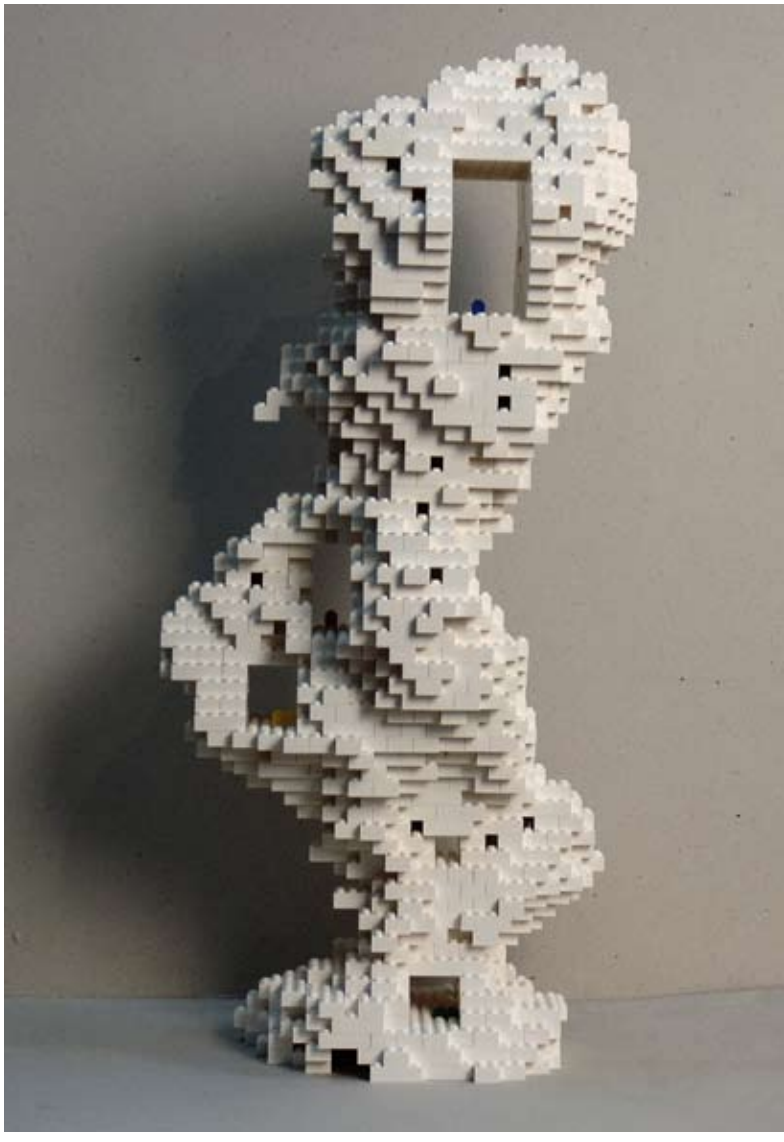

Designer: Atelier Li Xinggang, China Architecture Design & Research Group
For Building Asia Brick by Brick
Photo by Atelier Li Xinggang
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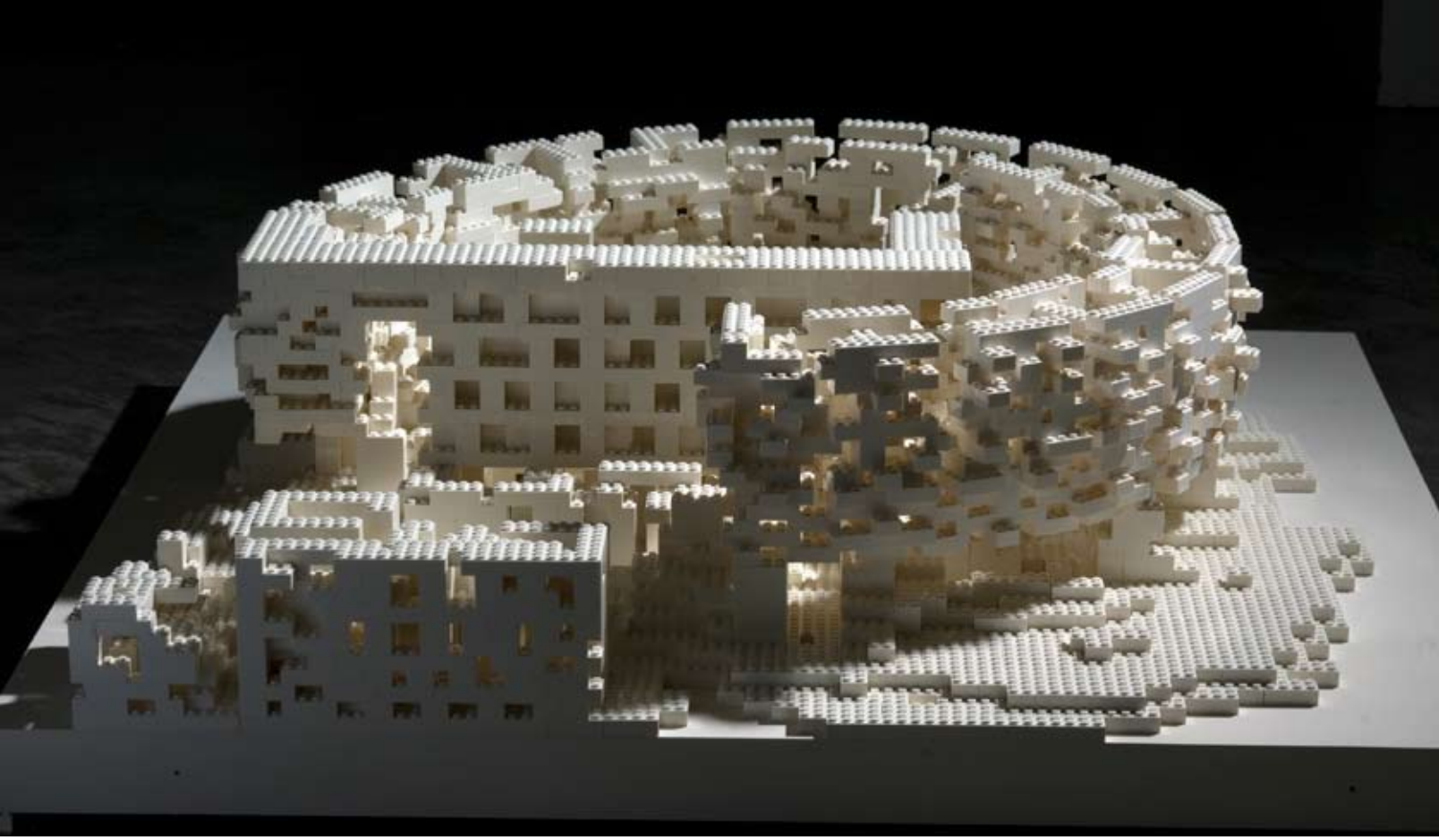
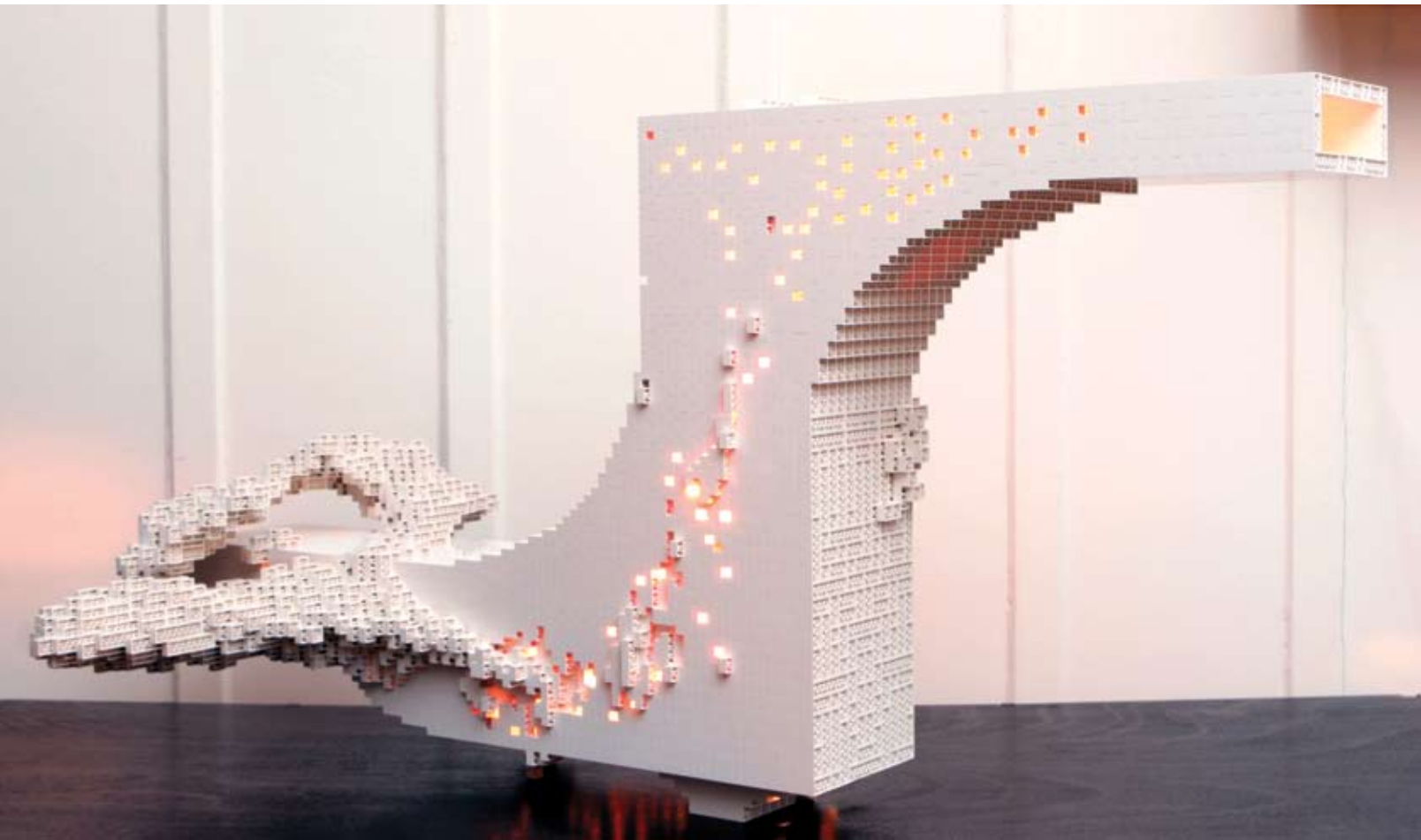


Designer (above): Urbanus Architecture and Design
For Building Asia Brick by Brick
Photo by Urbanus Architecture and Design

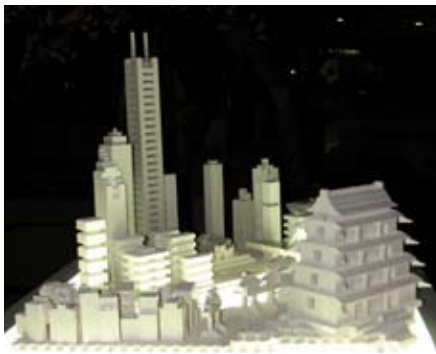
Designer (below): SciSKEW Collaborative
For Building Asia Brick by Brick
Photo by Masahiro Shoda



Photos courtesy and copyright ArtAsiaPacific and People's Architecture Foundation

Ideal Guangzhou

When Building Asia Brick by Brick arrived in Guangzhou, local students were asked to build their ideal city. Here is the result of their building.



Building Asia Brick by Brick: Shanghai

Alban Nanty, a *BrickJournal* correspondent was able to visit the display on its last day and sent these photographs. Above is a group of models of the Shanghai TV Tower. Right and below are someof the models displayed, and top right is one of the building areas for people to participate.

Event:
1000steine-Land

Celebrating Five Years of 1000steine-Land

Tegel - Berlin, Germany 24th-26th August, 2007

Article and photos by Melody Krützfeldt

This year was 1000steine-Land's 5th Anniversary! The event first started back in 2003 as both a private and public event and was held in Berlin at the Novotel Hotel with around 1500 visitors. In 2004, it was held again at the Novotel Hotel in Berlin, with around 1800 visitors. In 2005, the location changed and was now located at the Palais am See, Tegel in Berlin. 2005 was a big year, with 2700 visitors. In 2006, also in Tegel, the event had the biggest public attendance so far with 3700 visitors though in 2007 (Tegel), it logged a more disappointing attendance of less than 2000 visitors.

This year was an interesting event and it was clear that a lot of organizing went into it. I say interesting because while there were many highlights and positives, there were also a few downsides. The downsides were a few things, such as for reasons unknown, lack of public attendance (as noted above, there were less than 2000 visitors over both public days) also the building and the location. Hopefully next year the event will be held in a better venue that is more accessible for both the public and parking.

While the location had a few downsides public-wise, it was a fantastic location in its own right, situated on the waterfront near the tree-lined riverside, where many 'short-tour' ferries waited for passengers. The area at this time of the year was quite pretty while the foliage was fully leaved. A children's play area was close by, ducks and swans gathered around and there were small mobile stores selling snacks and other foods. On the other side of the building, the path led to a

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pedestrian mall, lined with restaurants on both sides of the street, where you could find many different international culinary delights. At the end of this street-mall was the underground train that could take you through the many paths of Berlin.

In spite of having less public visitors, this year had the largest number of registered members attending – around 245 members from Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and other parts of Europe. Around 90 LEGO fans displayed their models (MOCs) in an exhibition area of around 2,000 m². Also attending the event were 18 LEGO employees from different departments of the company such as Quality, Corporate Communications, Public Relations and PMD Marketing Team including eight LEGO designers. Accommodation was only a short drive away where most attendees stayed; a special rate was organized for the large group.

Thursday -
Preparations for the event kicked off on Thursday. In order to set-up, members were encouraged to attend this day so they could set-up their MOCs and register (you could also register on Friday and Saturday). Unfortunately for the organizers they had access to less room this year compared to the previous year, but it worked out quite well in the end anyway. Upon arrival and registering, members received their engraved name badges, a specially printed 1000steine.de cup, some hand-outs and a bag full of fabulous goodies (congratulations to the organizers on this!). An event planner/time table and a map of the exhibition area were also available. There was also a 1000steine magazine for each member, which was given on the Saturday night (if you want to purchase a copy, please email René: rene@1000steine.com)

Friday -
Friday was 'AFOLs only day', a time where only AFOLs (and their families) could attend and take part in the day's events. The day started around 9 a.m. in the morning with a speech from René Hoffmeister (one of the event organizers) using a projector to go back-in-time over the past history of 1000steine.de, 1000steine-Land and associated events. René also acknowledged several loyal long-term members 'old-timer' with engraved bricks, who have been involved in the German AFOL community for a long time (as the speech was in German, I sadly could not understand everything that was spoken about).

Richard Stollery, Senior Director, Consumer Experiences LEGO was next up (see photo at right). This was his first time attending a 1000steine-Land event. During his keynote speech he introduced himself and using a projector; he talked about his life (during the past few years), his previous and current positions at LEGO, a few LEGO facts, Indiana Jones and his experiences with the company. He also announced René Hoffmeister of 1000steine.de as the new and 6th LEGO Certified Professional!

After a small break, next on the agenda was a speech from Jim Foulds (USA) and Elizabeth Rankich from LEGO Universe, about the upcoming online game being developed by the LEGO Group and NetDevil. They gave an overview of what LEGO Universe is about. AFOLs in the audience asked various questions regarding the project. Those who were interested could obtain more information about how to sign-up as part of the team.

The day continued with several activities including presentations, MOC tours and a few other goodies. The MOC tours (which continued throughout the weekend)

were hosted by the members who built the MOCs or had displays, they included: a typical village built by Ben Beneke, a city house, Island Langeoog, swamp scenery/landscape, a few ships, village street scene, Moonbase and an extra large version of LL924 (originally set #924), Japanese manor and an almost complete Star Wars set collection.

The presentations were: LEGO Universe (as mentioned above), Brickfilms, Mosaics with Picto-Brick, LEGO resources for AFOLs online, MLCad virtual Bayrische S3/6 (a steam engine), Internet law, new LEGO power function elements (electric motors and controls), new LEGO model sets (held by LEGO designers) and LEGO quality (held by Bjarke Schoenwandt). Throughout the day various building competitions and concept tests were held. During the tests, children of various ages tested new up-and-coming sets. The day ended late in the evening with cocktails, prize draws and auctions.

Saturday -
Saturday morning started with prize draws, setting up of the CC Project (Café Corner – see separate sub-article), the History of the Minifigs (see separate sub-article) and putting barriers up around the MOCs. With everything ready, it was time for the public to attend.

The event opened for the public around 11 a.m. and closed around 7 p.m. While the public attendance was not strong, AFOLs enjoyed having more time to spend with those who were interested about their MOCs and being able to talk about the world of LEGO. You could try your luck with 'Tombola' lotto (this is where you buy tickets and if you find a number, it corresponds with a winning prize). There were many fantastic prizes to be won!

Outside, a '2x4 brick throwing' competition was held, this was to see who could throw the brick as far as possible, using LEGO catapults. Seven AFOLs took part in a speed build, a tradition of a 1000steine-Land event: Caspar Bennedsen, Ewald Full, Jan Katanek, Bruno Kurth, Holger Matthes, Casper van Nimwegen and Tobias Reichling, together, they started a new world record time of 2:53:27. The set? It was the new Star Wars set #10179 - UCS Millennium Falcon! In the evening many AFOLs gathered around to play a humorous game of Dirty Brickster.

Sunday -
Sadly, it was the last day of the event. The day started out with prize draws and MOC tours: Dresden Church, light Tower from Alexandria, Café Corner project and a presentation of Mosaics using PicToBrick. The exhibition was open to the public around 11 a.m. and closed around 5 p.m.

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Another speed build took place, this time it was the Eiffel Tower (set #10181), starting with a new world record of 1:20:56 - six AFOLs took part in the speed build: Christian Kupper, Lukas Frisch, Marco Tagliaferri, Heiko Baum, Peter Vingborg, and Stephan Elster. Throughout the day the public wandered though, just as amazed as those who passed through the day before. Being a Sunday and shorter opening hours, the public attendance was less than the Saturday. With all the visitors more or less gone, it was time to pack-up and put the MOCs away. The Millennium Falcon from the speed build was auctioned off with one happy bidder.

While most of the exhibition was mostly MOC displays, there were also plenty of bricks to buy in many of the stores (mostly found upstairs), always a bargain to find and always that special part you have been seeking for so long. Everything from old sets to LEGO clothing could be found. A LEGO brand store was also present, selling many of the latest products.

Overall, the event was excellent and a lot of fun! The public had a good time and loved looking at all the models and the children were even more excited and quite possibly inspired. For the AFOLs, it was nice to meet old and new faces, to participate in the activities and to share the passion with those who understand the love of the brick! This is an international event, so 'everyone' is welcome! Till next year, be there or be square! ;)

Many thanks to the organizers and AFOLs for putting on a great event!

Competition: With compliments of the organizers, we have **1** '1000steine-Land' goodie bag* to give away! In order to win, answer this question: In what year did the first 1000steine-Land event begin?

The first correct answer, wins! Please send answer to: mel@brickjournal.com
Winner will be announced at http://www.brickjournal.com

*

Goodie bag contents:

1x 1000steine-Land printed carry bag
1x 1000steine-Land note pad
1x 1000steine-Land printed DUPLO brick (not with the LEGO logo on the back)
1x 1000steine-Land post card
1x 1000steine-Land magazine (in German)
1x 1000steine-Land event map and time table
1x 1000steine-Land event set (police car)
1x LEGO ruler
1x Clikits promo
1x Racers set
1x Pack of Bionicle stickers
1x Legoman pin/ broach

Event:
1000steine-Land

Café Corner Project

Article and Photography by Melody Krützfeldt

One of the biggest highlights of 1000steine-Land was the 'Café Corner Project'. The project was organized by Andreas Böker who announced it through the forum of 1000steine.de. The project was situated on the top level of the event from Saturday to Sunday. The display was around 24 meters in length and approximately 14.4m² in size.

The idea of the project was to build a house, building, apartment, shop or anything that could possibly connect with the Café Corner set. For consistency throughout the project, a guide was available with a diagram of a layout and that the sidewalks were preferably to be similar to the original Café Corner set. Due to many different sizes and styles of buildings, it was also preferred that the sides of the buildings to be presentable in case they were visible. The height per level was to be around 8-12 bricks for the basement area and 8-10 for all other levels.

There were a few actual 'Café Corner' style buildings but extended versions. Many of the buildings varied in size, some tall, wide, small and so on. There were 96 buildings built by 21 participants in total, some of the buildings you could see in the city included: a bank, Cafés, restaurants, Smart car building, cinema, hotels, casino, ice cream store, music store, two LEGO stores and more.

Everyone involved was amazed at all the buildings and that so many participated, it was also very interesting for the visiting children and adults! The lights in the room were dimmed later on to show all the lights in the city flashing or the vehicles that were lit up, one building was even on fire! Ok, not literally, but in LEGO style, with a fire truck putting the fire out.

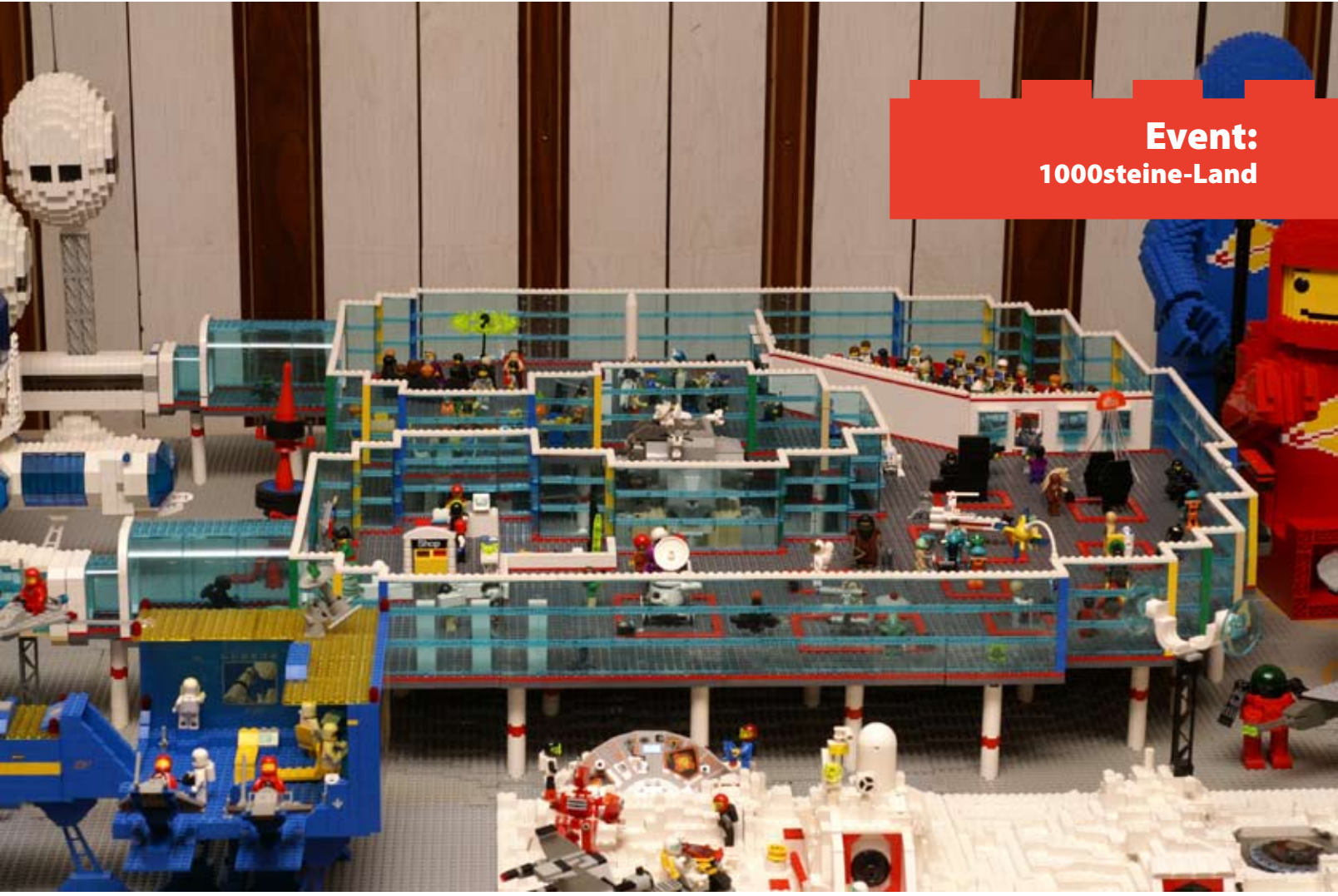
A special building was built by LEGO designer, Jamie Berard (also responsible for designing the actual Café Corner set) as a prize for the winner who is voted the best building. Jamie built a beautiful Town Hall building with a removable roof and many fantastic features. For more pictures of the Town Hall: http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=272790

(continued on next page)

Towards the end of the event, the best buildings were announced, 3rd place went to Marion Opperman, 2nd place to Andreas Opperman and finally, 1st place to… Andreas Böker, for his 'dark red & white' building. Congratulations to the winners of this fun event!

Due to success, it is possible that something similar could also happen for next year's event and if so, it will be something to look forward to!

Many thanks to Andreas Böker, for organizing the project.



Event:
1000steine-Land

Moonbase Module Project

Article
by Melody Krützfeldt

Photography
by Sacha Broich

1000steine members continued the community project this year with another Moonbase module layout.

Around 20 members built interconnecting Modules and various free standing models (fill-ins and decorative pieces) for the gigantic layout. This year's layout was larger than last years by 4 baseplates, 176 '48 x 48' baseplates, 70 modules, area in total: 6.9 meters x 9.2 meters.

The layout came together as planned although a few of the modules were shifted around for better viewing. The idea of the Moonbase layout is that all the modules are to connect together through passages, and although it may sound complicated, they are designed with only a few guidelines.

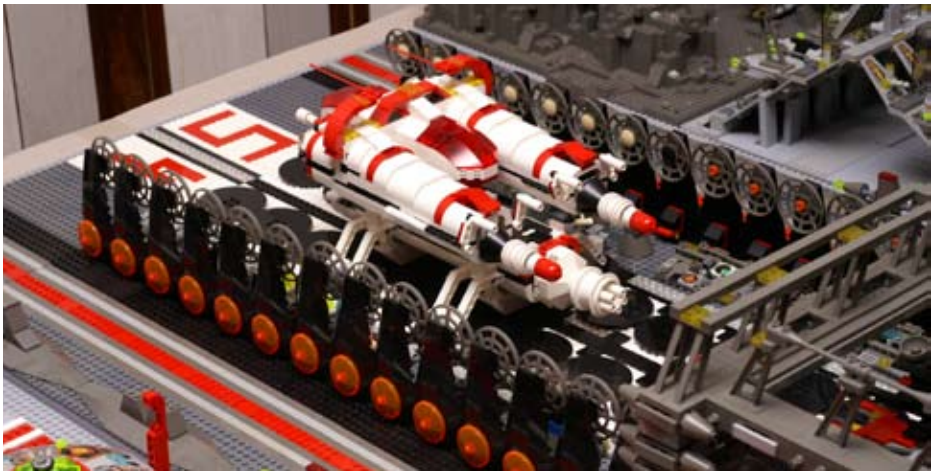
Once all the modules are set-up, the layout came alive! This year's layout included: three monorails, radar, MechBay, Exploriens Lab, Space Police, Apartment Tower, Medical Station, Classic Space, Crystal Crossing and much more!

The layout was fascinating for children of all ages to look at, with the atmospheric sounds in the background and the models coming alive with moving vehicles and radars spinning. Already, the Moonbase team is in preparation for next year's layout. If you want more information and can read German, please visit the website: http://www.moonbaseforum.de or for more information on how to set-up your own Moonbase, in English: http://www.zemi.net/moonbase/

Many thanks to the Moonbase Team for their help.

Links:

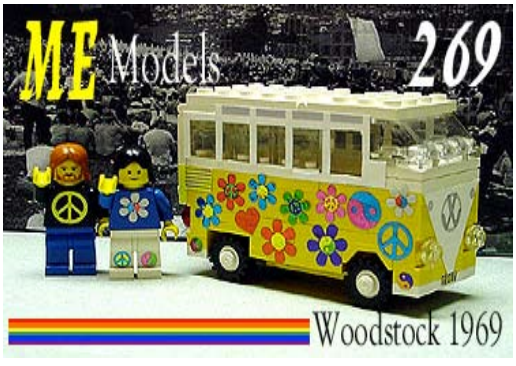
http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?i=2684143
http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=256670



ME Models Classic Auto Series

New 2007

New for 2007 from ME Models! We have designed exciting classic cars and vans for your home layout. Each set comes in a sealed collector box, with a high quality laser instruction booklet and NEW for 2007 – high resolution vinyl "die--cut" decals! The decals are easy to apply and do not leave any residue upon removal! Be on the look-out for additional designs. Please go to www.me-models.com for additional information and to place your order.



Last Word

Bricks For Thought

So ends another issue of *BrickJournal*.

You might be wondering why the last couple of pages are for the goofy pics.

I originally wanted this space to be different from the articles because of the tone that I thought the mag would have - a little serious, maybe a touch pretentious. I wanted a place where I could have some photos with our guard down - fun photos that would say, "Hey, we aren't ALWAYS serious about the building or the events or..."

However, *BrickJournal* turned out becoming more laid back than I expected. The voice of the magazine is confident, knowledgeable, and has a sense of humor, which isn't a reflection of the editor, but the community. It's a lot of fun (and sometimes work) to finish an issue, but there is always something new inside the pages.

There is one constant thing in the magazine though...there are always smiles inside. Goofy or not, we a re a generally happy group, and it's always fun to go through photos from events to find the funny pictures. This issue, there were a lot of events, so here are some pics of some of the faces of the community. Some are well-known, some are not, but all are part of the community.

Hope you get a smile from these like I did!

Joe Meno

Editor








LEGO


HOW















AC/DC

AFOLs by **Greg Hyland**

TOPIC: LEGO SHOULD GET INDIANA JONES
AUTHOR: CalvinC182@nerdmail.com

I think LEGO should do Indiana Jones sets. It would be so cool! I mean, they already did "Adventurers" which really was Indiana Jones, but a real Indiana Jones would be so much cooler than Johnny Thunder! Imagine all the cool sets that they could do. And with the new movie coming out next year, these sets would surely sell good. They could make a whole big set with the whole...

A FEW DAYS LATER...

LEGO Group Secures Exclusive Construction Category Rights to Indiana Jones™ Property

LEGO Group, the world's leading construction toy manufacturer, today announces a partnership with Lucasfilm Ltd. to produce building sets based on the Indiana Jones franchise – one of the most globally successful movie series ever made.

Three worldwide blockbuster films, and the highly anticipated May 2008 premiere of the new Indiana Jones movie, will provide inspiration for a series of highly iconic and action-packed build-and-play adventures of the rogue archaeologist and hero.

TOPIC: INDIANA JONES= >:(
AUTHOR: CalvinC182@nerdmail.com

LEGO Indiana Jones is a terrible idea! This will destroy the awesome Adventurers line, the same way Star Wars destroyed Space and Harry Potter destroyed Castle. Why would they PAY to get the license, when they just could have done more Adventurers sets? No wonder the company is in so much trouble! With moves like this, I don't know how much longer I can stay with this hobby!

Next summer, the world gets bigger...

Brickworld™ 2008

JUNE 19-22

June 19-22, 2008 • Chicago, Illinois • www.brickworld.us

Now in its 4th Printing!

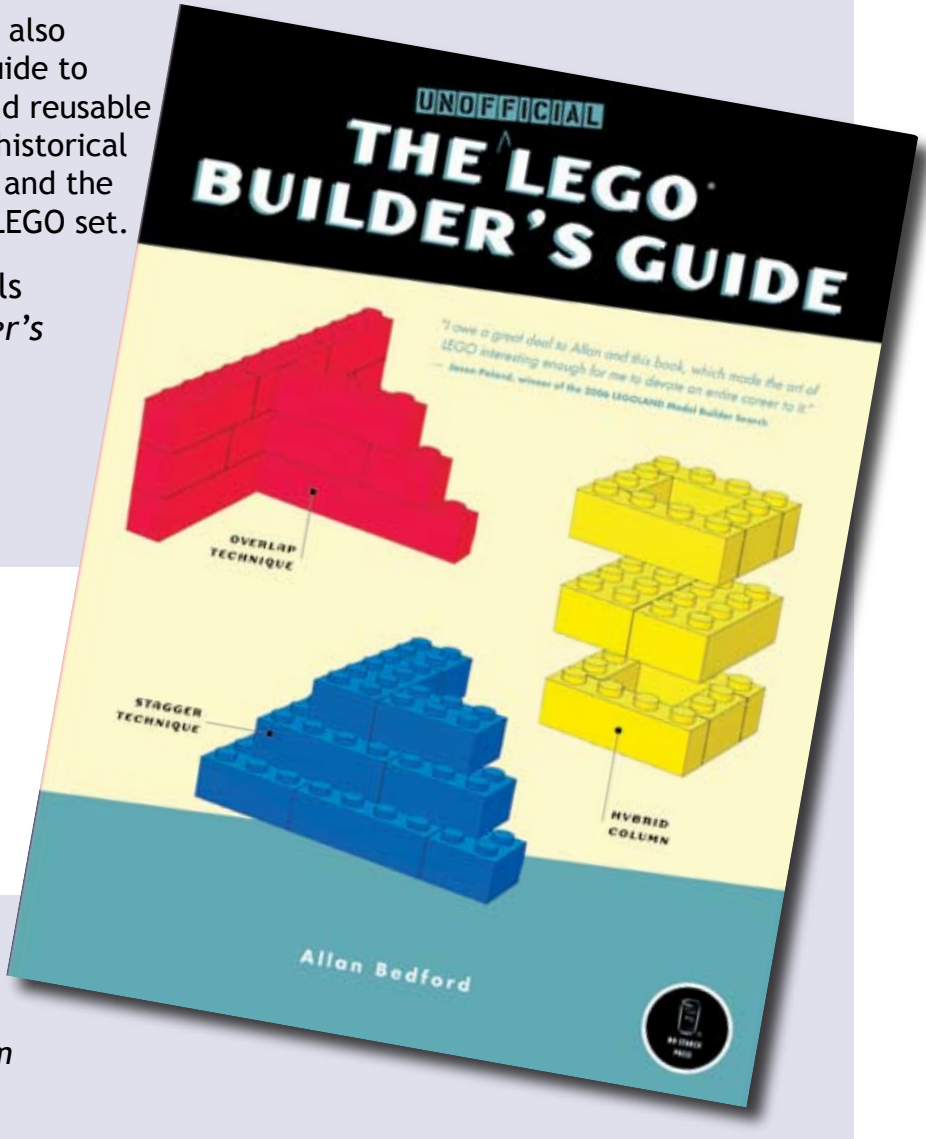
Build A Firm Foundation for Your LEGO® Hobby!

Have you ever wondered about the basics (and the not-so-basics) of LEGO building? What exactly is a slope? What's the difference between a tile and a plate? Why is it bad to simply stack bricks in columns to make a wall? *The Unofficial LEGO Builder's Guide* is here to answer your questions. You'll learn:

- The best ways to connect bricks and creative uses for those patterns
- Tricks for calculating and using scale (it's not as hard as you think)
- The step-by-step plans to create a train station on the scale of LEGO people (aka minifigs)
- How to build spheres, jumbo-sized LEGO bricks, micro-scaled models, and a mini space shuttle
- Tips for sorting and storing all of your LEGO pieces

The Unofficial LEGO Builder's Guide also includes the Brickopedia, a visual guide to more than 300 of the most useful and reusable elements of the LEGO system, with historical notes, common uses, part numbers, and the year each piece first appeared in a LEGO set.

Focusing on building actual models with real bricks, *The LEGO Builder's Guide* comes with complete instructions to build several cool models but also encourages you to use your imagination to build fantastic creations!



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by Allan Bedford
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