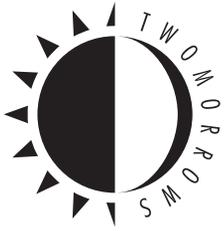


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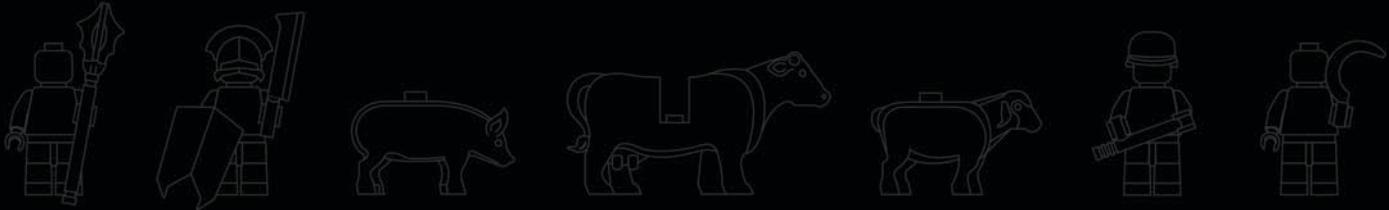
Issue 5, Volume 2 • Spring 2009

people • building • community

**Celebrating
MINDSTORMS®
with the LEGO
Group!**

**Event Report:
LEGO World Zwolle
Interviews,
Instructions
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Brick Journal

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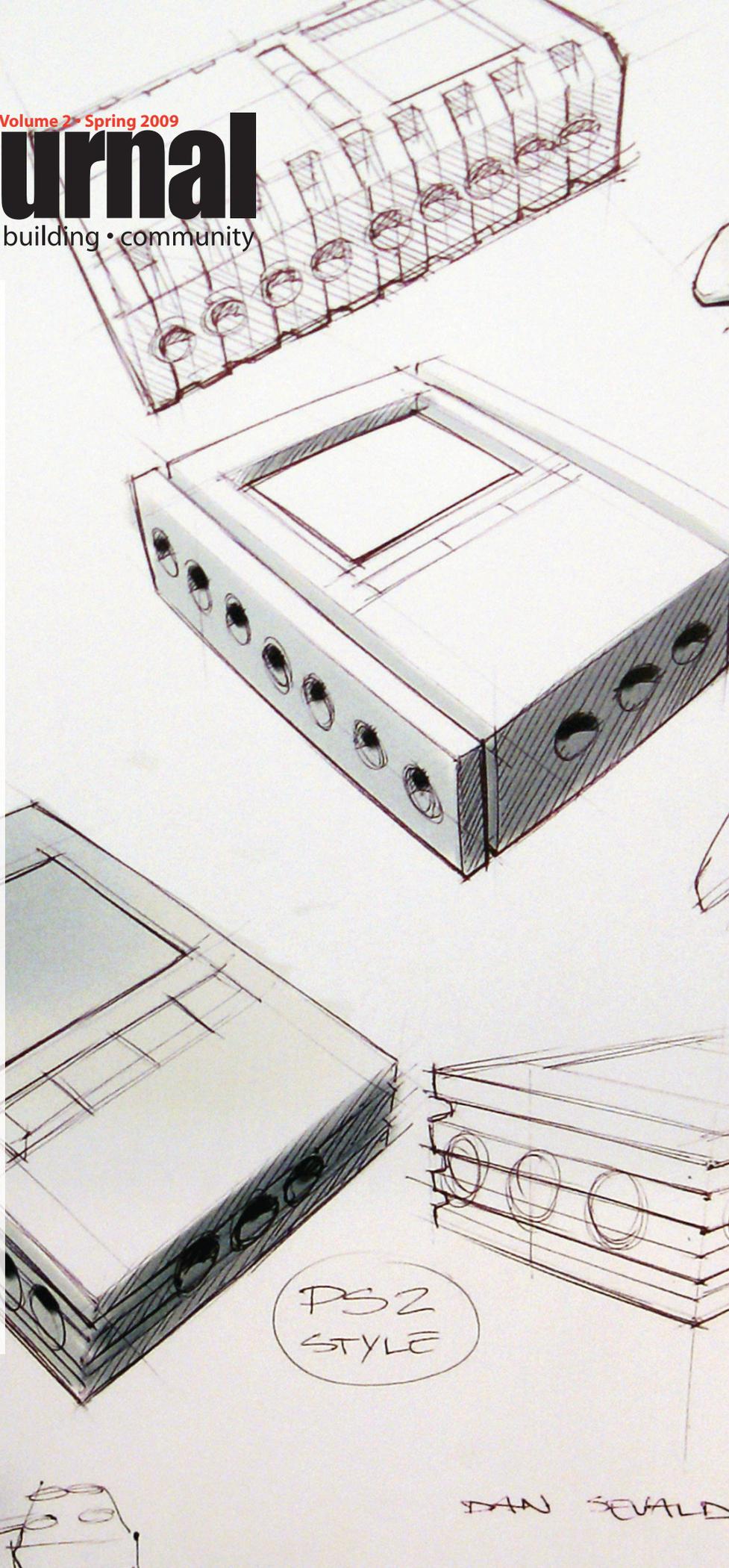
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Spring 2009

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www.Brickshelf.com

www.peeron.com

www.brickmodder.net

www.rustyclank.com

About the Cover:

Photo: Alpha Rex, the NXT robot takes a bow on this issue's cover! Photo provided by the LEGO Group.

About the Contents Page:

Photo: Preliminary sketches of the NXT brick, Photo by Joe Meno.

Many thanks to Amanda Sorenson at Pixar, and NBC for photo use.



From the Editor:

So it's been a year since *BrickJournal* went to a print issue and there have been some pretty big things happening.

The LEGO Group bucked the trend and actually increased sales last year. With the world economy in a state of decline, this is especially noteworthy. During difficult times, people turn to things that are positive and reassuring, and LEGO sales have prospered.

Circulation to the magazine has also increased, in a time where print media

is also in a state of decline. In the past year, about 300 pages about the community and the company have been released from this publication to add to the over 1000 pages that *BrickJournal* published in its online edition.

And LEGO models are being seen everywhere - in last issue LEGO bricks were used to decorate a store. This issue has LEGO models showing up on *30 Rock* and referenced in making models in the Disney/Pixar movie *WALL•E*.

It's an exciting time to be in the hobby, and I hope that *BrickJournal* captures that excitement, whether it be the excitement of finishing a new set, the excitement of creating a new model, or excitement of going to a LEGO fan event. There's always something up, and *BrickJournal* will be reporting on it! 

Joe Meno
Editor, *BrickJournal*

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.

P.P.S.... Yes, *BrickJournal* has a website: www.brickjournal.com! You can check out the news there or look at the event calendar and see what is happening near you!

Correction:

In Issue 4, the Technic for Thought model (a Power Functions based joystick) wasn't credited. The creator of the control is Jason J. Railton, of the Brickish Association in the United Kingdom. *BrickJournal* regrets the omission.

GLOSSARY

AFOL (Adult Fan Of LEGO)

NLSO (Non-LEGO Significant Other)

MOC (My Own Creation)

TLG (The LEGO Group)

BURP (Big Ugly Rock Pieces)

LURP (Little Ugly Rock Pieces)

POOP (Pieces—that can or should be made—Of Other Pieces)

SNOT (Studs Not On Top)

LUG (LEGO User Group)

LTC (LEGO Train Club)

Event Report

New York Toy Fair 2009:

The Toys Are Back in Town!

*Article and Photography
by Joe Meno*

One of the annual events for the toy industry is the New York Toy Fair, held in mid-February in the Jacob Javits Center. Toy manufacturers big and small display their latest products to attending buyers, and the LEGO Group is no exception!

This year, the LEGO Group invited media to an event before the fair to show off the 2009 product line. With over 100 new sets coming out, this year looks pretty exciting.

A returning theme this year from years gone by is Space Police, with an assortment of aliens and ships that take the usual "cops and robbers" to a new level.

Other themes are also strongly represented with sets, with Star Wars celebrating its tenth year with the LEGO Group. MINDSTORMS 2.0 was also shown here.

Here's a look at some of the many sets (and a couple of surprises) that were on display - enjoy! 

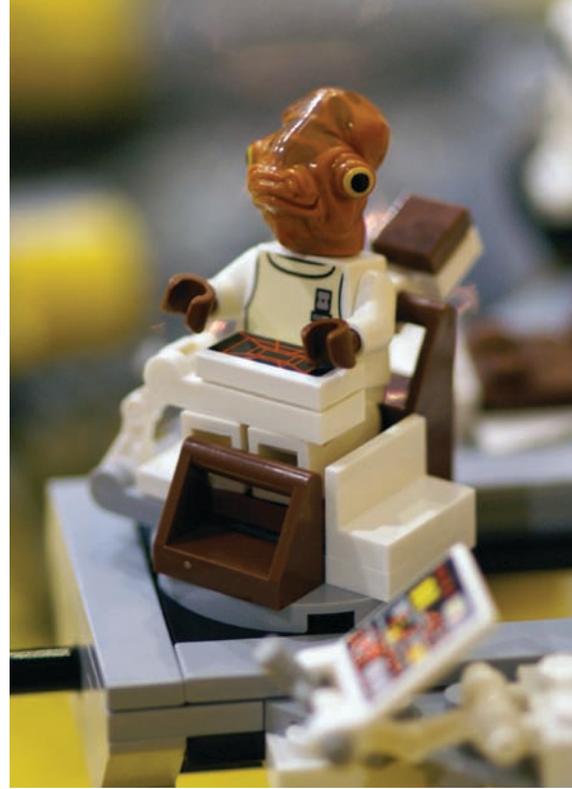
If you want to see more photos of the sets coming in 2009, including Rock raiders, Creator, more of City, Technic, and Duplo, you can go to *BrickJournal's* Flickr gallery:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/brickjournal/sets/72157613872328388/>



STAR WARS





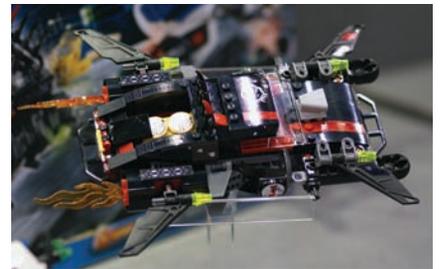
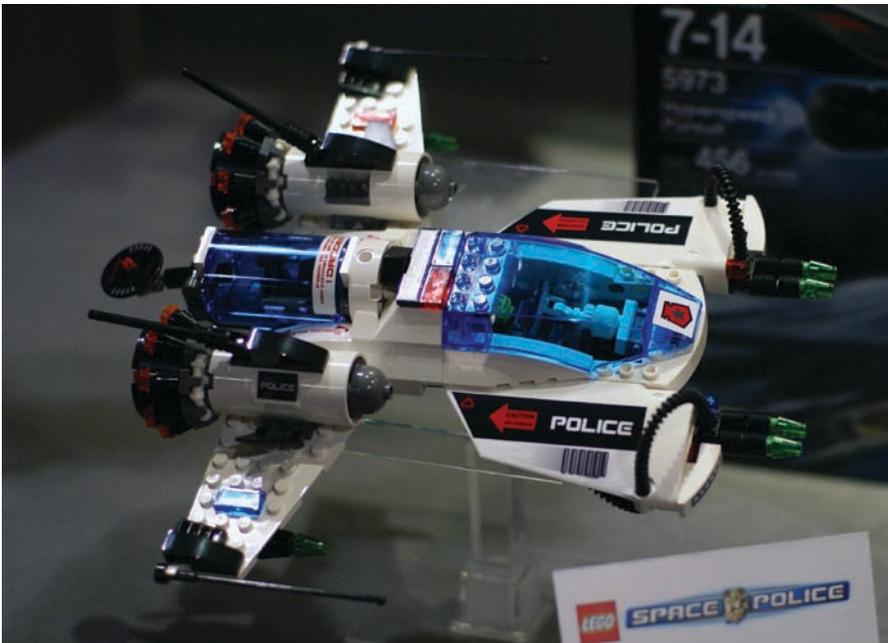
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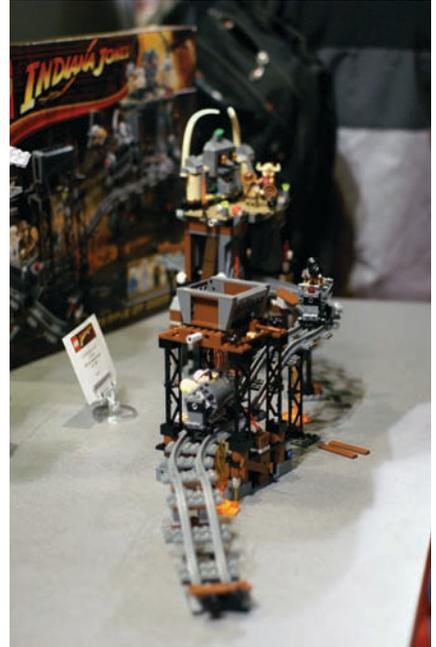
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SPACE POLICE

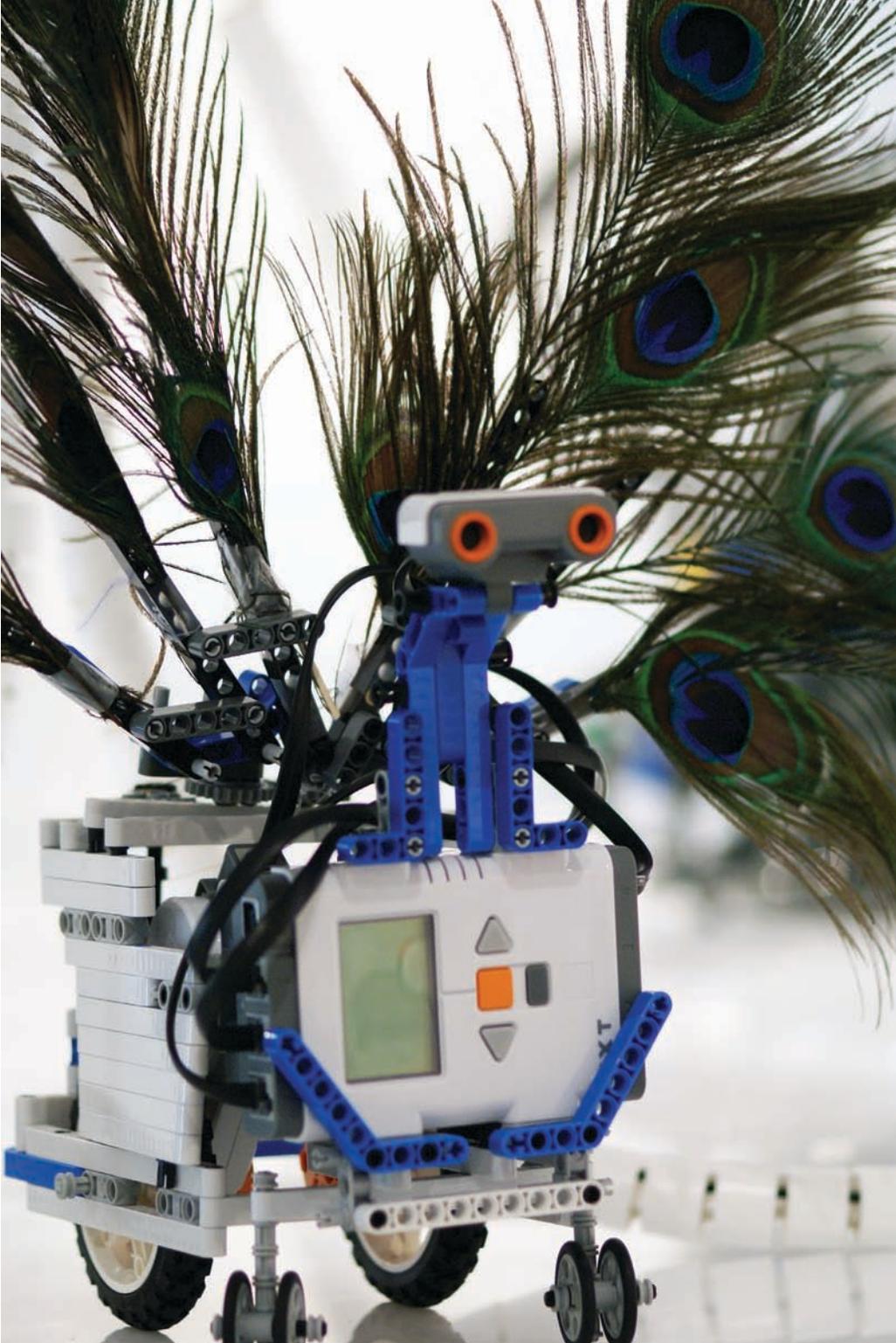


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CITY





From RCX to NXT: Celebrating 10 Years of MINDSTORMS!

*Article and Photography
by Joe Meno*

On November 20, 2008, there was a celebration at the LEGO Idea House in Billund, Denmark. The occasion was an anniversary — the tenth anniversary of the LEGO MINDSTORMS system!

Guests were invited from the LEGO Group and the LEGO MINDSTORMS fans, who have played an important part in the success of the set, from the first-generation yellow RCX to the NXT. The party was a collection of the builders and the creators of the LEGO MINDSTORMS system, and had speeches from the owner of the LEGO Group, Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, Torben Ballegaard Sørensen, a former LEGO Employee and now member of the LEGO Group Board of Directors, and Søren Lund, Senior Marketing Director, Product and Marketing Development.



Previous Page: Faye Rhode's NXT powered peacock.

Left: Torben Ballegaard.

Right: Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen.

Below Left: David Schilling.

Below: Four of the MINDSTORMS team honored at the celebration: (from left to right) Soren Lund, Torben Ballegaard, Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, and Tormod Askildsen.

Bottom: Tormod's MINDSTORMS award.



Kjeld and Torben talked about the beginning of LEGO MINDSTORMS and how the LEGO Group and MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) worked together to create what became the LEGO RCX, and how LEGO's marketers doubted the success of what was then called the P-Brick. As a result, the LEGO MINDSTORMS system was initially placed under DACTA (LEGO Education's original name). LEGO MINDSTORMS "wouldn't die," Kjeld admitted with a smile. In fact, MINDSTORMS grew and was made into an independent unit.

Søren talked about the final element behind the success of LEGO MINDSTORMS – the fans. Opening up the software and for the NXT, the design process, to the fan community took the system to a new level. Most of the fans attending were part of the design team, and a couple were involved even before then. One of them, David Schilling from USA, talked briefly about working with the LEGO MINDSTORMS team since 2005. David spoke about his participation in the MUP – Mindstorms User Panel, whose members got named MUPpets.



After the speeches, the eight persons recognized as most influential behind the development of the LEGO MINDSTORMS system were presented with a chrome gold RCX brick – the first programmable LEGO MINDSTORMS brick. Those recognized include:

Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen,
Owner, the LEGO Group

Torben Ballegård Sørensen,
LEGO Group Board of Directors,
formerly head of the Special Project
Unit that created MINDSTORMS

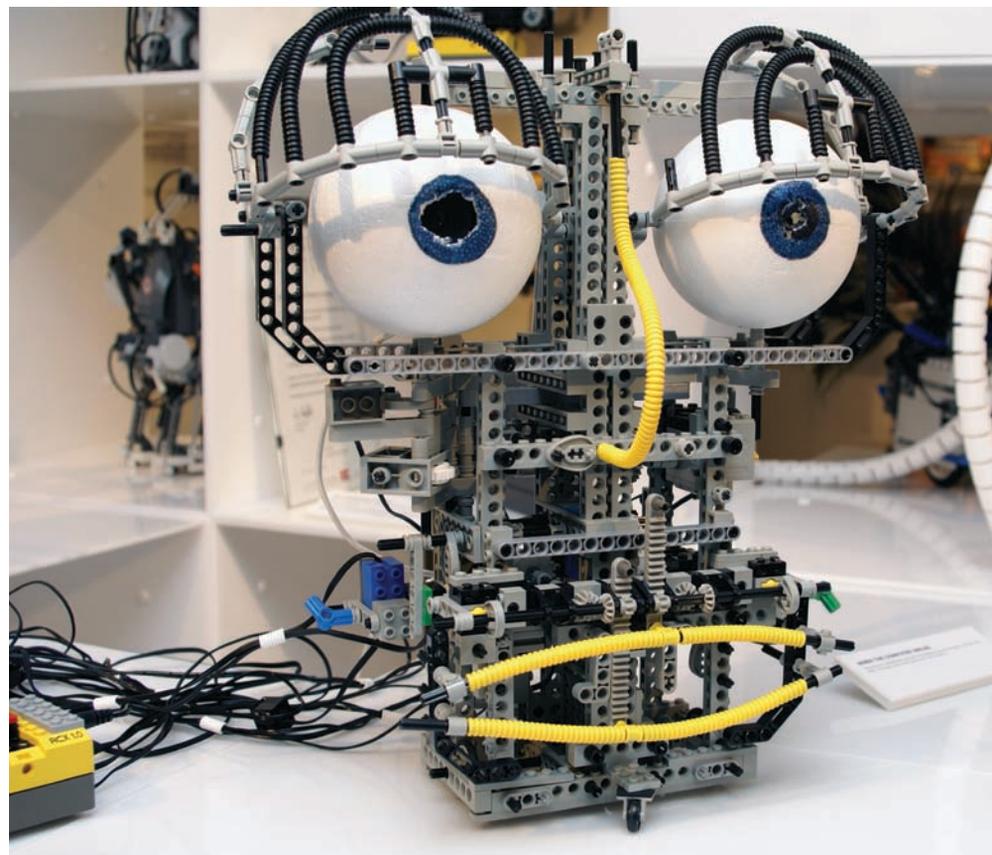
Søren Lund,
Senior Marketing Director, Product
and Marketing Development

Tormod Askildsen,
Head of LEGO Community
Development

Linda Dalton,
Vice President, LEGO MINDSTORMS
Marketing (1997 - 2001)

Robert Rasmussen,
LEGO MINDSTORMS Development
Team Head (1997 – 2003)

Mitch Resnick,
Director, Lifelong Kindergarten
Group, Massachusetts Institute of
Technology



Top: Chris Anderson's NXT-guided plane.

Above: An RCX robot that sees with web cameras in the eyes and smile.



and **Mike Dooley**,
LEGO MINDSTORMS Director of
Development (1997 - 2001)

Cake was served, then guests were led upstairs to see a new display in the Idea House chronicling the history of LEGO MINDSTORMS. Outside the entrance of the display room hung the LEGO NXT – steered radio control plane built by Chris Anderson, editor to WIRED Magazine and one of the packages payloads used on the HALE (High Altitude LEGO Extravaganza) Project, where LEGO MINDSTORMS NXT robot packages were released from an altitude of over 100,000 feet! GOING INTO NEAR SPACE! Inside, robotic sets from the past and present were displayed, as well as fan-created robots. The very first LEGO RCX brick (serial number: 000001) was shown, as well as models used in

designing and refining what became the LEGO NXT brick.

Online Bonus!

Go to BrickJournal.com to get instructions on how to make a mini AlphaRex!

What was most impressive about the event was not only the models built by LEGO designers and fans, but the guests themselves. Almost every person had some part in the success of the LEGO RCX and LEGO NXT sets and they were all ages, from teenager (the youngest guest was 17) on. For some, the LEGO MINDSTORMS brick was a step into a new level of creation, for others it became a new way to play. For all, though, the LEGO MINDSTORMS sets have provided ten years of enjoyment. And the community it created continues to create.

So where will LEGO MINDSTORMS go in the next decade? LEGO MINDSTORMS robots have gone into space, and underwater. They have flown and crawled, walked and rolled. But what lies on the horizon? Whatever it is, the future looks bright for LEGO robots! 



Top: MIT's P-Brick.

Above: Bryan Bonahoom's tic-tac-toe playing robot, WOPR.

Right: A truly robotic WALL-E.





Angus MacLane at Pixar.

The LEGO brick has been an inspiration for many in the film industry. Take Angus MacLane, for example. Since joining PIXAR Animation Studios, he has been part of such now-classic movies as *Toy Story 2* and *WALL•E*. Most recently, he directed a short film that is on the *WALL•E* DVD about another robot, *BURN•E*.

During this time, he also returned to LEGO building as a hobby, showing off his models in a Flickr gallery online. As a result, he has been recognized for not only his MOCs but also for his Pixar-based MOCs, including his rendition of *WALL•E* and *BURN•E*. *BrickJournal* was able to talk to him about his work and his hobby in a phone interview which quickly became a conversation.

BrickJournal: When did you start LEGO building?

Angus MacLane: I started when I was 3 or 4. The first book I learned to read was the Star Wars popup book. I kinda grew up in that era where the original Star Wars trilogy was coming out so LEGO was a natural fit for building spaceships. I was into building LEGO really early on and think that I kinda grew up in a building household. My parents were...I don't know if they were hippies or bohemians or whatever...but they were students and didn't have the money to buy me a lot of plastic toys, especially vehicles. My father and I made most of my toys. We'd get an action figure, then make the X-Wing fighter out of wood instead of buying it. I have some fond memories of making tons of custom vehicles as well as branded stuff such as Castle Grayskull and the Cobra HISS Tank from GI Joe. I didn't appreciate then for how special this was. I thought that all parents did this. That was kind of the do-it-yourself generation and this was their approach to parenting. But LEGO [sets] was something I did get because I think it was, um, really difficult to make...(laughs) to make the individual bricks would not be cost-effective, so I didn't have very many LEGO sets growing up. My first set was #445, the Police Unit, where the minifigs didn't even have faces and then after that, I got into LEGO Space and never looked back.

Of course, when I was a teen, my parents gave away my LEGO [sets] to friends and I got them back, so when I got them back, when I was probably 21, most of the pieces had teeth marks on them, so I ended up getting rid of a lot of them, because they did

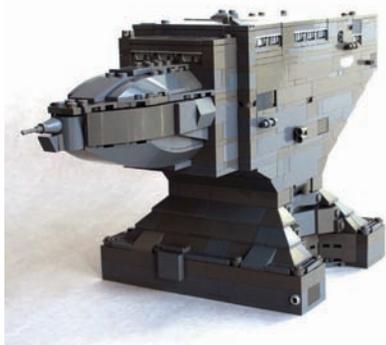
Angus MacLane:

LEGO Building and Film Making

Interview by Joe Meno

*Photography
© Disney/Pixar*

The Space Dwarf's Anvil ship revealed, as WALL•E peeks from the bottom corner.



not fit with my new sets.

I did finally use one of the [older] pieces in a MOC. I did a flying Thor hammer called the Mjolnir Cruiser and I used a faucet from one of the old bathroom sets that had a chrome sink. Apparently this was really, really rare. When I posted the image (on Flickr) I got a lot of chatter, like "whoa, where did you get that?" I guess I had it from this set 261 Bathroom from 1979 or something and it had somehow stuck around. So occasionally, this comes in handy.

That's from your Space Dwarf models (a group created by Angus, seen on his Flickr gallery), right?

Yeah, and I have another model that you can release of a matching anvil. It's basically a *Slave 1* anvil spaceship.

And you built a LEGO WALL•E!

You built a LEGO WALL•E! It was amazing! You totally scooped me on that – I was just sitting on it and then you built one that was awesome!

Well..

Then I had to rebuild mine after I saw yours. I gotta be honest, the way you dealt with the head was so great. I wasn't happy with the solution I was coming up with but I love the way you used the cheese wedge (a 1 stud by 1 stud by 2 plate slope, named after its resemblance to a wedge of cheese) to get that roundness. I think that was really good. I'm still not totally happy with the way I solved that problem. But I was really impressed with yours.

I was staring at yours and the first thing I noticed was that you made his eyes smooth, and I was envious of that. I was just staring at your version of the head because the head design was completely different from mine. But it was a different philosophy of design than mine was. Mine was basically, um, there was a certain amount of license I went with in terms of the studs...

Yep!

...and not studs because he was supposed to be clankety anyways, therefore I was allowed to do that. That and the accidental mixing of old dark gray and new dark gray. That happened very humorously because the workspace I have has very yellow light, so I can't tell.

(Laughs) Good for you – you don't stress about it.

WALL•E with his
cockroach
friend, Hal.



No, I really don't care about it. One time I just put it out in the light and went, "eww...." then I looked at it again and thought "It actually looks about right. Okay, back to work"

Yeah, I stopped caring (about the different shades of gray) because you just can't worry about it. With him [WALL•E] it's great because the color difference adds something to the overall piece.

I think what's interesting about yours is that I was hung up on so many things because I know the character, the actual physical character, so intimately. There were design compromises that I wouldn't have made that you did really successfully. This is similar to an author adapting his own book to the screen. Sometimes you want to have someone else to write the screenplay because they won't know what to cut. I think your objectivity really helped the piece.

For me, there were a few things I couldn't compromise on just shapewise – there were things that were important to me. Luckily for me I had a long time to think about it and I ended doing two or three different versions of as we were making the movie. And so it was kind of a bit of a cheat, because as the character's was changing I would have to update the Lego version. In fact, my WALL•E I built in gray until I saw yours – I hadn't updated the color because when I had built him originally we hadn't settled on the character's coloring

yet.

I'm glad you liked it.

The Other WALL•E

During the time that Angus was working on the movie, I saw some footage of the cute robot and decided to build him. My decision was made a year before the movie came out, which made building very challenging.

At that time, there were only a couple of movie teasers and posters, so beginning was rough. My dimensions were determined by the size of the caterpillar tracks that had just come out in LEGO sets. However, it took a couple of months before photos and footage were released that showed the overall size relationships for WALL•E.

Photos were found on some Disney fan websites and also on YouTube, where a couple of presentations of WALL•E showed not only the relative size of each part, but how they folded in. Five months before the movie's premiere, I started to build the body and motor box. It took me another 3 months to tear it down and build another box - the Power Functions motors I selected to drive the treads were too big. The die cast toys were starting to appear, so after a little searching, I found a model for reference. It took another three weeks of intensive building to finish WALL•E, adding a third motor to allow the head to nod, and Power Functions infrared sensors on the back.

The end result? A remote-controlled WALL•E that could move and nod. The model was put on Flickr a week before the movie and went viral, with thousands of people looking at him. He was displayed at Brickworld in 2008, and won an award for Best Mechanical Creation.

Instructions for this model are in progress, so stay tuned! 

—Joe Meno





BURN•E, as seen in his film short above and built by Angus below

You also built a BURN•E.
I did build a BURN•E.

Where is he?

The Lego BURN•E was a crew gift to the crew that I made the film BURN•E. I wanted a thank you gift for the crew that was very personal to me that they couldn't get anywhere else. I designed, bought the pieces and put every set together myself as a limited edition of 100.

You also want to build a mecha right now? Where do you want to go in terms of building?

Yeah, I'm trying to. There's a sensibility that I'm trying to explore but haven't found that much time do so. I like building stuff that has a story to it, like the Space Dwarves or the clown tank. It's a bit like illustration in building. I'm trying to communicate a funny concepts as clearly as possible. I'm trying not to take the building too seriously.

You see some creations and they have a ten-page backstory and it's great that the creators are coming up with that, but with so many MOCs to look at, you just want something that reads really clearly. Especially with the internets where you have these little postage stamp pictures.

When I look at pictures of creations by my favorite builders on Flickr, it is not hard to understand what they are building. The MOCs read even though the pictures it is really small. Or if it isn't clear what the creation is, there is a probably a general visual interest of the picture to make me want to click on the thumbnail. So for me readability is a primary goal. I strive to make stuff that reads really, really clearly.

With Lego bricks there's different several types of design. There's like what LEGO would design, that has a certain amount of durability and simplicity. In contrast there is the full-on "I have tons of money and I can make a spaceship that sits on my front lawn and has 200 clear yellow windscreens and 12 docking bays." The ship is amazing, but LEGO is not going to build that for a variety of reasons.

There is a sweet spot of building where the creation is what LEGO would do just a few more pieces and a little less durability. I think you're getting that most notably in - I could single out builders like Chris Giddens (Fazoom on Flickr) - he's doing stuff where you see his building technique, they're still



really simple but he combines pieces together, like in the engine area, that are really, really simple but so detailed. They strike this nice balance akin to the way the minifig caricatures a real person. There's a sense of LEGO design I think he taps into that's pretty amazing. It's the creations that do more with less that really blow me away.

There's a unification of color that Mladen Pejic (<http://www3.sympatico.ca/mladenpejic/>) has always done that is mindblowing to me.

The ships that nnenn (Flickr) makes are a real inspiration. There is a clear overall design as well as well-considered details. You can build infinite stuff with LEGO, but to take the time to make it really simple and elegant at the same time is well worth the time and effort. If you look at the design aesthetic of say, the first alien design (by HR Giger) from the movie Alien, where you have smooth parts where your eye can rest and then a lot of detail where it counts. Visually you get the general idea of it's this monster that's not cluttered, but it has detail when it needs to. This "general to specific" idea of building is what I'm drawn toward. If you can simplify your MOC and still have that elegant form that is built in a way that you ask the question "I don't know how that was put together", that's the gold.

That's why I really like building in microscale.

Yep. You're forced to make different decisions that you would in minifig scale. That was the most interesting thing about building BURN•E. When I had to build him, it's sort of micro, but really it's about a minifig scale. And price was an issue, as well as what [parts] can I get a lot of – those considerations are put into it. I think when you put limitations on yourself in any artistic discipline, limitations are a good thing. Think about how the movies that you react to or stories you react to, not everything is presented to you. Some stuff is left to the imagination and so if you can find a way to put limitations into your work you'll find a really rewarding experience. Work with limitations, I guess I'm trying to say.

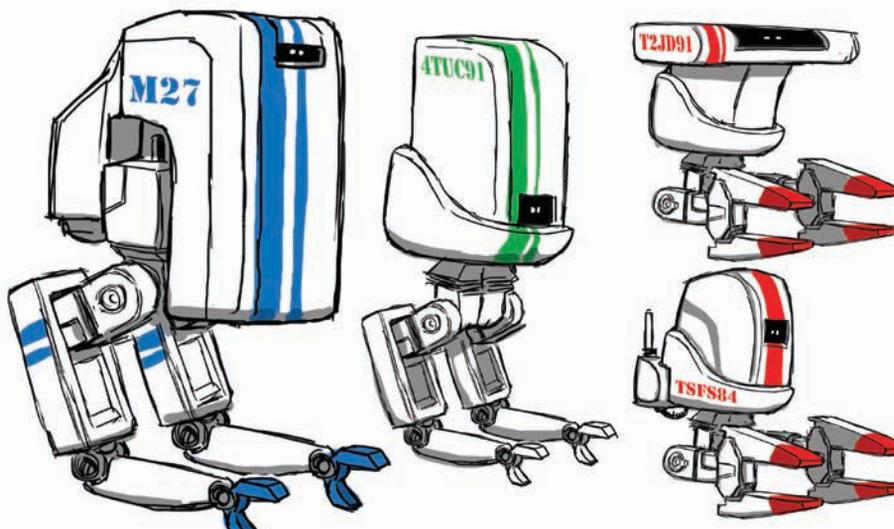
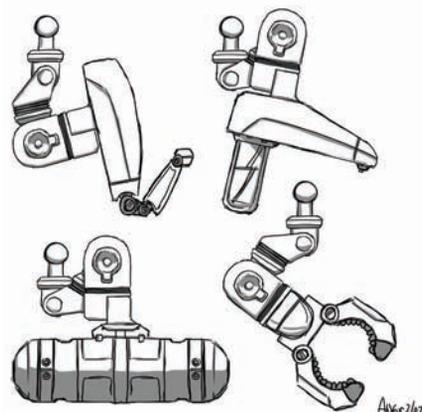
Sometimes I like starting with a set. Right now, I'm working on the Power Miners – the little 8957 powersuit thing. And just starting with that, how can I make it better? I like the set, but just how can I add to it and what would I do using the design aesthetics of that series, that I enjoy, how can I make it the \$20 set? Or the \$30 set? Or something they could never build because of the wide variety of constraints that LEGO has to deal with. That's a fun exercise for me.

I think LEGO does a great job of striking a balance between the consumer and adult fans. They do a wonderful job of community outreach and they are a business. But because they have adult fans, or teen fans, they are subjected to internet criticism. So they [LEGO] do so much and oftentimes they are not given enough credit for what they are up against, especially in this market. SO- I think it's important to recognize for every one or two things you may not agree with, they do 90 to 100 things that are absolutely amazing. It's fortunate that we even have this wonderful product to even criticize.

I fully agree. One more question, you mentioned on the WALL•E DVD that you designed the robots like LEGO?

I designed a lot (but not all) of the background robots on the *Axiom*. I had this idea about organizing the robot parts to be interchangeable like LEGO elements. I pitched this concept as a cost-saving measure by reusing assets and as a benefit by adding realism: this would make the robots appear that they came from the same manufacturer. By making separate elements and combining them in a LEGO-like way you could see a repetition of shape and image but each of the characters would have similarity of the individual parts, but each would hopefully have a unique silhouette.

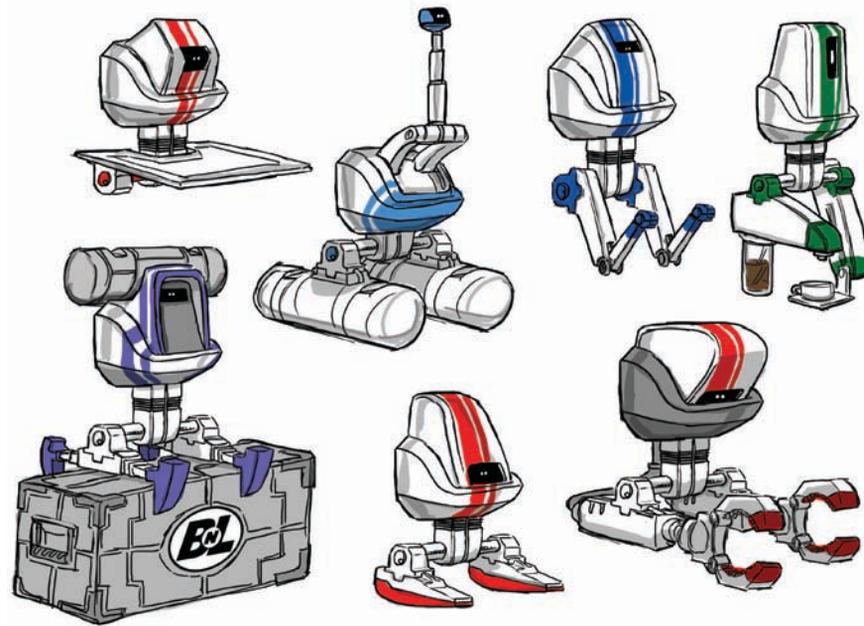
Some of the sketches done by Angus of robot designs.



That's great. I saw that and saw some of the sketches in the Art of WALL•E book and I didn't immediately realize the modularity until I watched the DVD...it all makes sense!

You've done some other models from some other Pixar films... the doors from Monsters, Inc. Any others?

Let's seem, I got a Luxo lamp I did...I want to do a SUPPLY•R (from his BURN•E film) next. I haven't done that yet. I don't know ... A lot of the Pixar films are really organic forms. I love the stuff that Count Blockula (Mike Crowley, who does figures) does, that kind of building - I'm totally blown away by that, but I'm just not that organized to have enough pieces or colors set up to do that. I should probably get around to doing some more stuff like this but I haven't done that much recently.



AN653/07

So the answer is no - what a lame answer!

I was just asking (laughing)!

Anything else you're looking forward to building?

I would really like to make a 1:12 or 1:18 scale ED-209 from Robocop. I have one that's around 2 inches tall, but they had those engine pieces from Jack Stone that look just like the ED-209 arms. I tried to figure out a way to put that together on that scale. So someday, something like that.

I think right now I'm just trying to figure out ways of doing stuff that's funny. I want to find time to build. It's really hard right now with the amount of stuff I have going on.

I'm looking forward to you build something from Up!

Yeah, I'd like to. I think that doing a Carl, because he's so blocky would be great. I don't think I have enough brown and tan. Maybe I should see. It's just the amount of pieces you have. I need more brown I guess. I better buy that Sandcrawler that's been on sale forever.

I can always send you some...it's not like I'm lacking

Well, I don't know if I have room for it, but if you have some brown you can let go of, I'll take your brown!

Okay (laughs) I guess I better wrap this up..

Yeah, but I love your publication. Please continue!

I'm working on it, and with stuff like this...I think we'll be going for a while.

Yeah. Yeah, it's really wonderful. Whenever I read it, there's some stuff I am more interested than others and I think that speaks more to the versatility for LEGO that so many wide variety of genres and interests are in LEGO. I'm only interested in a very small subset of space, mecha and sculpture and I appreciate the other stuff, but I love that

The Space Dwarf's Anvil ship revealed, as WALL•E peeks from the bottom corner.





BrickJournal covers everything. And I only wish there were more instructions, because I love instructions.

Funny you mention that...people have been wanting instructions to my WALL•E!

Yeah, well how hard...I couldn't even begin to tell people how to build mine. It's so much time to invest. I love how you have micro instructions. I think that's manageable. I just don't have the time to do that for mine. I don't know about you.

I'm actually building mine on an application that actually cranks out instructions (LPub, developed by Kevin Clague)

Wow. Good for you!

It's like 1000 parts. I didn't realize that until afterwards. Hopefully I will be able to turn those around and make them a free PDF. My publisher said there would be instructions in Issue 4 of *BrickJournal*, but I said no, and the advertising was never changed...so..

Oh boy..

Yeah, oops. Anyways, this looks like a good place to wrap up...

Thank you so much!

Thanks so very much – great talking to you! 📺

You can build Angus' BURN•E on page 54, and see more of Angus' LEGO models at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/27826007@N05/>



Oct 1st-4th, Seattle Center Exhibition Hall

AFFOLs

Adult Female Fans of LEGO



Jennifer Joy Poole

Country: US

Hobbies: LEGO, writing, reading fantasy, music, playing with my son, husband, & friends.

Age first started collecting/building LEGO?

I started in my late twenties. I am a huge Harry Potter fan and my in-laws knew it. So for Christmas one year they all got me different Harry Potter sets. I loved it. It was so much fun. But then I thought I loved the scene where Harry gets his wand at Olivander's. LEGO didn't make it. My husband, bless him, said 'Well I still have some LEGO in the attic. Why don't you built it yourself?' He might claim now that was the stupidest thing he ever did. I finished HP scenes that LEGO made smaller or I created huge scenes that were never touched on.

As a child, did you play & build with LEGO?

I may have had some LEGO as a child but not much. I probably would have used it to build houses for dolls or something.

Why are you an AFOL?

I found out about a LEGO event in my hometown that also advertised to bring your own sets. So I did. Little kids came trickling by, most of which loved *Harry Potter*. One little boy realized I had customized some of the *Harry Potter* characters that LEGO didn't make. He was thrilled, jumping up and down saying, 'She made the Weasley twins mom. She made the twins.' I was hooked. That level of joy on a kid's face is all I could ask for. However many hours I spend on sets the end result is about seeing those happy little faces. It also gives me a chance to extol the virtues of reading good books. I have several sets that do not occur in the *Harry Potter* movies so the kids have to go read the books to find the scene.

On a basic level though, LEGO lets me be creative in a very concrete way. You are making something with your hands. You are watching it grow and change as you work on a project. You can see what you have accomplished. There is a serenity about finishing a set.

How many hours do you spend LEGO building?

That depends on the time I have and what I want to build. Most of my LEGO time is just about planning & gathering the right parts. The actual building will take a few hours unless there is some motion in the set that isn't working quite right. Then it is the job of my graphic designer husband to help me think of a better way to make it.

I created a Whomping Willow but it just wasn't right. My husband suggested making the truck of the tree move as well as the arms. That helped a lot.

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

Obviously *Harry Potter* but I use a lot of Castle parts. At big shows I am put in the castle section. But I use minifigs from all kinds of sets. The Indiana Jones sets have been a treasure trove on parts





for me. I am probably going to need to expand to another book series soon. Just to annoy my husband maybe I will do the *Twilight* Saga. That certainly would get the attention of tween girls. LEGO would need to create some wolves though & vampire heads...or maybe just pale minifig heads.

What do you like most about LEGO and their products?

They are well made. I know that if a set goes crashing to the floor, none of the pieces will get messed up and I can put it back together easily. Plus I let kids touch my sets... so they have to go back together easily.

5 parts you would love LEGO to produce:

- 1: More minifig heads. Not everyone is Caucasian & male & smiling/screaming.
- 2: More female bodies that don't look like so buxom shall we say.
- 3: Better minifig tools or equipment. I think that is specific to my needs though.
- 4: More Transparent clear brick of all shapes, sizes and colors. It adds life in a way I don't know how to explain.
- 5: The big one - Wolves! I love wolves. They finally made some cows...now wolves. Not dogs...wolves.

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

I always got along better with guys than girls so its not bad, now that I am accepted. My club is great in that





regard. There was never really any big deal about being female because there were other women in the group. During shows is where it is the most obvious, there is an issue to parents at least. I get lots of mothers who want to shake my hand for being female, using literature, talking to their children or letting their kids touch my sets. Most of those things are my personality & my niche. The female thing always throws me, because what am I supposed to say, 'Thanks...I'm happy to be female.' I don't feel like I am representing my gender or anything. I'm just doing what I love.

It is hysterical the number of times people assume my husband is the creator and I am helping out. Granted that is normally family model for couples with LEGO.

Is LEGO doing enough to promote their products towards girls?

Why do you need to promote to girls specifically? They use pink to promote girl sets...I hate pink. I have always hated pink. I don't go near boxes that are pink. Pink is for Barbie, dress up, and dolls. LEGO is not any of those things.

The girl sets have better animals and sometimes better tools. Quite honestly, if you provided more minifigs in 'guy' sets that would help. The new Castle Medieval market, rocks. There are several minifigs of a variety of ages, two home like buildings, & lots of intricate details...I think that is a great set that girls would love. If it were in a pink box though, I might have been suspicious.

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

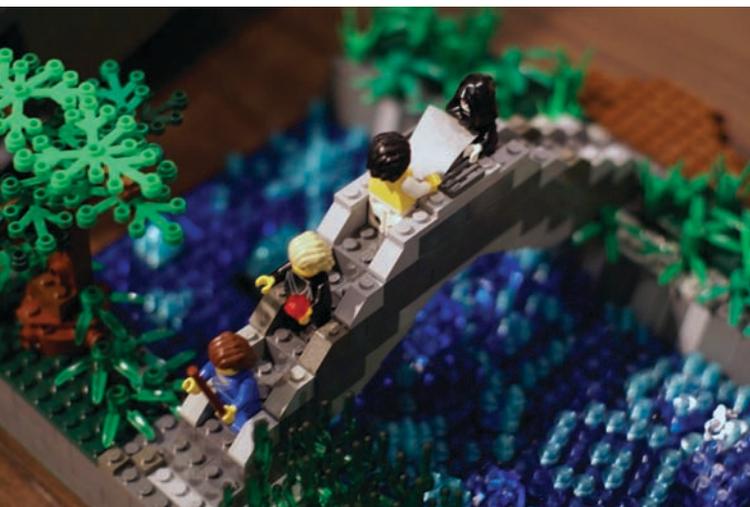
Picking themes that are more girl-friendly would help. I'm not saying you should have a Barbie crossover or anything. That would make me sick. Hey maybe they should create Twilight sets for the tween girl market... HAHHAHA ...every male I know is cringing at the moment or they are asking themselves what Twilight is. Okay so maybe providing more female characters in sets might help too. How bout an Amazon theme...now every male I know is thinking of Princess Leah's bikini. Not sure I want to go there.

Let me try again. Universal fact: little girls like fairy tales. That might work.

Get ready Castle guys, you are about to be taken over.

Any other comments you would like to share?

LEGO is fun and about fun. As an AFOL if you are taking yourself too seriously or you aren't having fun...take a break. Don't resent your LEGO. That is just heartbreaking to see. If you no longer want the hassle of exhibiting, then don't. Create because you love it & it brings you joy, not because this is your assigned hobby. Life's too short to waste energy like that. 



Country: Japan

Age: Around 40.

Hobbies:

Reading, gardening (especially roses), making handicrafts, good conversations, imagining and dreaming, and of course LEGO building!

Website or Brickshelf gallery:

<http://STUD-and-TUBE.com>

<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?m=MisaQa>

<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?m=MisaQa>

How long have you been building or collecting LEGO sets?
Since 2002.

What percentage of your spare time do you spend LEGO building?

I build most intensively in October and November.

During that time I do less housework (oh no!) and get less sleeping time in because I try to squeeze in as much time as possible to work with LEGO. During this time I am also likely to think about LEGO while I'm at work.

This year August was same because I was busy building "Juno Garden" for Brick Fan Town 2008.

Other seasons and times of year, it varies.

What is your favorite LEGO theme?

It's hard to say, because my favorite theme changes. This time last year no one could have imagined that I would create the dragon model. Next year I might possibly make a model of something like Gundam, although it isn't likely.

What is it that inspires you about LEGO products?

I am inspired by the small and convenient new parts.

If you could design any new parts what would they be?

Slope, Inverted 30 1 x 1 x 2/3

How is it being a female in the AFOL community?

Sorry I have no answer, because gender is not important at all when I create with LEGO and talk with my AFOL friends.

Can you think of any ways to encourage other girls to build with LEGO sets?

I would like to see a LEGO theme that is based on a town without conflict or crime like the classic LEGO Town.

How relevant do you find the products the LEGO Group makes that are aimed at girls?

The face of the doll of Belville is eerie for the Japanese.

Neither horse riding nor the castle is far apart from real life and stimulate a child's desire.

Clikits are a lot of fun, but a lot of girls cannot use the product for creation. Scala is much the same. The module town sets like the Cafe Corner, Green Grocer, and Market Street are very good sets for girls to build and play with. The classic town Main Street set number 10041 is very good too. These sets have universal themes, even though they are not designed particularly for girls. I'd like to add that pink parts alone are not enough to make a girl satisfied with a LEGO set.



AFFOLs

Adult Female Fans of LEGO

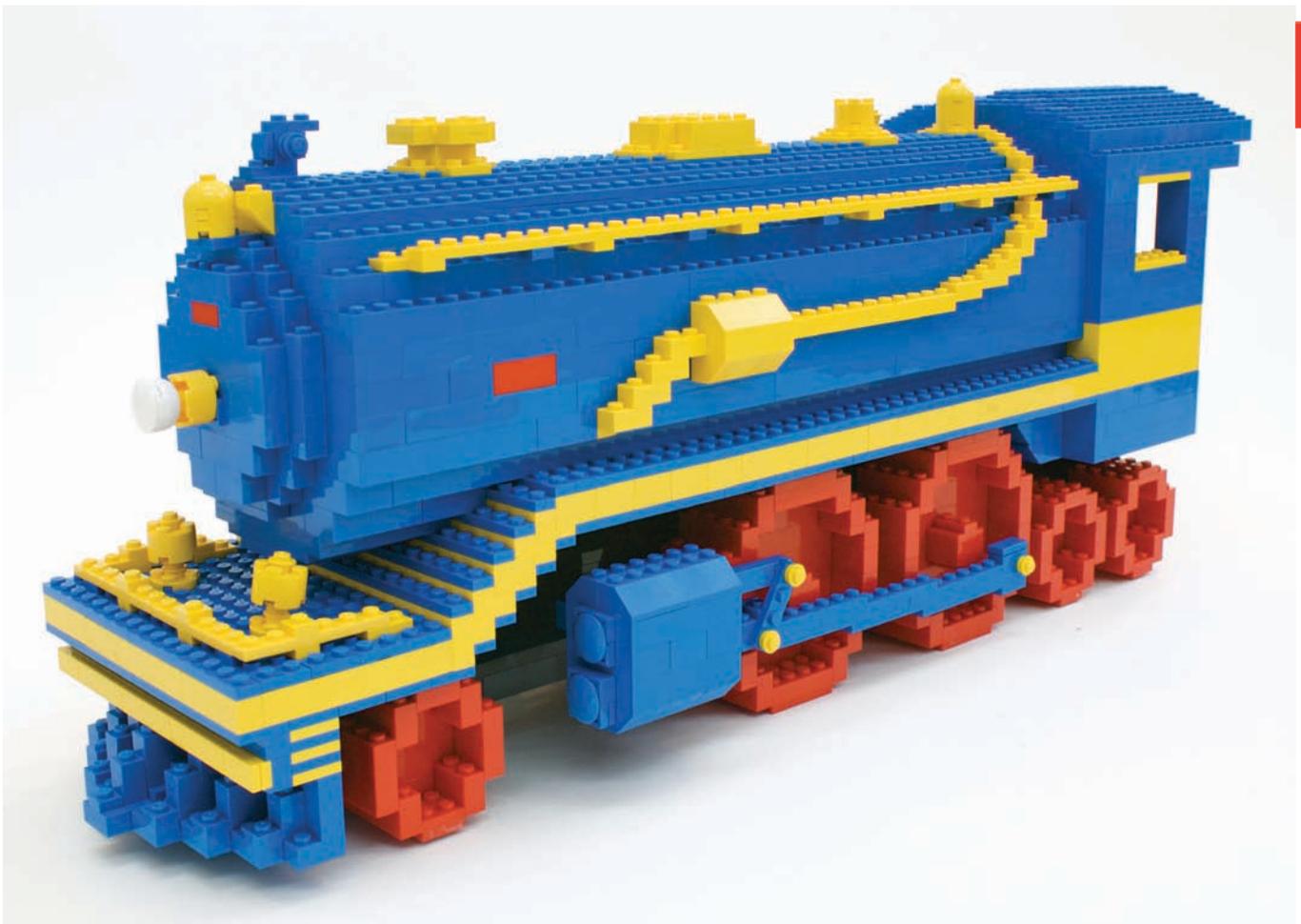


MisaQa

*Interview Edited by Nina Chatelain
Photos by MisaQa*







NBC's award-winning sitcom "30 Rock" recently saw its characters Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) and Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) build a LEGO train in a timed building competition.

The train sculpture was actually made by LEGO Certified Professional Sean Kenney, who tells us how it all came to be.

LEGO toys on NBC's 30 Rock

A train for 8 million people

Article and Photography by Sean Kenney

In October 2008, the writers of NBC's "30 Rock" stumbled across LEGO Serious Play: a real-life team building program that uses LEGO toys to help employees think creatively. The show's writers thought it would be hysterical to place their quirky characters into such a situation (grown adults playing with LEGO toys — how zany) and wrote the idea into the script.

Since they needed to actually have LEGO models built as props for the show, the show's production designer Teresa Mastropiero searched for LEGO builders, and eventually found me.

With only a week until the filming, we spoke on the phone about the logistics of getting models made for (and delivered to) the show in such a short time; When Teresa men-

tioned they filmed the show at Silvercup Studios in New York City, I laughed out loud and told her, "That's two doors down from me."

Teresa immediately walked over to my studio and we started brainstorming. The script wasn't finalized yet, so we weren't even sure what I needed to build. A human head? A skyscraper? A car? She photographed some of the LEGO models in my studio to give the writers some ideas.

In the meantime, the writers sent a copy of the script to Julie Stern and Michael McNally (Brand Relations, The LEGO Group) to make sure they approved of the idea. It turned out that they were both big fans of the show, and were happy to hear about the project!

The big toy

After some script iterations, the writers decided they wanted their characters to build a LEGO train. Teresa visited my studio again with some train photos and we tossed around more ideas. Teresa and I passed on the idea of a modern electric engine or subway car, and opted for a nostalgic “choo choo train”.

Even though I haven’t built a lot of LEGO trains, my father is an avid model railroader and I’ve been exposed to model trains all my life.

I felt it was important to use bright primary LEGO colors to make the toy feel as child-like as possible, and to contrast the plain-looking executives in the scene. I also wanted to keep the construction “basic”, (studs up, basic bricks) so that the model was quickly identifiable as “LEGO” in the few seconds it would appear onscreen.

The train is built entirely with basic bricks in a standard “studs up” fashion. It’s about 2 feet long, glued, and uses nearly 2,600 pieces.

I was most inspired by a photo Teresa showed me of an old Lionel train from the 1950s, painted in bright yellow, blue, and red. I used it as visual inspiration while modeling the shape and design of after a photo of an old steam engine that I found online.

Using photos as reference, I drew sketches onto special “LEGO scale” graph paper that I’ve made myself. Then, using the graph paper as a mathematical guide and photos as a visual guide, I built a prototype. Finally, I duplicated the prototype, gluing as I went. This all took about 20 hours.

The production designers needed 8 copies of the train... one for each team in the building competition. With only 5 days until the filming, however, there wasn’t enough time (or budget) to build and glue that many. So we decided that I’d make one “nice” train for all the foreground shots, and then seven “blocky” trains for the background.

I made the remaining seven trains very basic and boxy, using almost exclusively 2x4 and 2x8 bricks. These trains were not glued, so that we could dismantle them to look like they were at various stages of completion during the filming.

Quiet on the set

The crew asked that I come to the filming, set up the sculptures, and help with any last-minute changes. After five long days of building, I arrived with several crates of loose LEGO bricks and the 8 trains. It was a frenetic scene with hundreds of people filming, acting, carrying props, carting food around, wiring up equipment, applying makeup, and more.

Propmaster Kevin Ladsen brought me into a quiet back room that we’d be using later during the LEGO scenes. In back of the room was a man wearing a headset and a lot of walkie-talkies, fussing with a clipboard. Kevin introduced us: “Sean, I’d like you to meet our director Steve. Steve, Sean’s helping us with the LEGO scenes later.” The director shook my hand and kindly thanked me for coming to help. I realized halfway through my handshake that it was Steve Buscemi!

He and the crew were unbelievably friendly, and even let me sit in the director’s chair to watch a scene come together. Executive Producer Diana Schmidt brought her 8-year old son to the studio when she learned I was there;



Building the train

Sean prototypes the model (left), then builds a glued copy (right).



Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) completes the LEGO sculpture to win the race.

Photo courtesy and ©NBC 2009

we all spent hours playing with my buckets of loose LEGO bricks as we waited for our scenes to begin.

Last minute changes

The scene with the LEGO train is a tense rush where two characters played by Tina Fey and Alec Baldwin race to complete the LEGO model before the competing teams.

But there was a problem. As scripted, at the last minute Tina's character was to confuse a wheel with the circular front of the train. The wheels, however, were red and the front of the train was blue ... Tina was concerned that only a great idiot wouldn't notice a missing wheel that didn't even match.

We all gathered and tossed around ideas: I suggested perhaps she was looking on the wrong side of the train, trying to put more wheels on one side than the other? Yes, she thought, and what if the wheel looked just like a smokestack? So while they quickly reworked the script, I cobbled through spare parts and made a smokestack that looked like the wheels.

We placed the seven blocky trains on the other tables and partially disassembled them, scattered LEGO pieces everywhere, and they filmed the shot many, many times. (With Tina swinging the glued train over her head!)

In the second shot, her character drops the train off-camera, and returns on-screen with it broken. Tina, Steve, and I gathered around a table and tried to figure out what would look convincing. Should it be completely smashed? Should

it be cracked open like an egg? Split down the center?

They liked the look of a clean split, so I quickly pried one of the blocky trains apart, splitting the top from the bottom. It was very unstable (even with some quickly added extra structural bits) but there was no time to spare.

They began shooting the scene; a crew member hiding behind a table would hand the two halves to Tina, who would then swing them around as she delivered her lines. Pieces flew off, the model creaked and popped, and in between each take I scuttled out behind the table and pressed all the bricks back into place.

During one take, Tina got halfway through her line and yelled "Aah! I actually dropped it!" I ran out and rebuilt it (not well, but good enough) in the 30 seconds between the takes.

"Thank you, Sean!" I heard come from Alec Baldwin's booming voice as everyone chuckled.

Finishing up

Later, after cleaning up the loose bricks and broken trains, I relaxed at the catering table and grabbed a danish. It had been 10 hours that I was on set, and I was sharing tales of the day with crew members.

"Where'd you get that danish?" they asked me.

"There's a table over there with some coffee and things," I replied. "But it's really stale; I wouldn't recommend it."

"That's a prop!" 



The show's namesake, 30 Rockefeller Center

**You can purchase 30 Rock Episode #309
"Retreat to move forward" on iTunes.**

More photos at
http://www.seankenney.com/portfolio/steam_train/



Tina Fey (left) and Alec Baldwin rehearse



In addition to the glued train used for close-ups, Sean made seven extra blocky trains



Ty's

Extra Credit

*By Ty Keltner
Photography by Todd Paris*

LEGO has always been a passion of mine. The first set I actually remember getting was 6659 TV Camera Crew, though I know I had many sets before that. It's actually somewhat ironic since I would grow up to get a degree in Journalism-Broadcasting and work as a reporter and anchorman for a while. My interest in LEGO waxed and waned throughout the years but stuck around enough to make it into my adult life. Luckily my wife was open to inheriting a large LEGO collection when she married me. I even built a LEGO mailbox to hold all the cards at our wedding.

In 2006 I decided to get a Master's in Business Administration. To ease the bills, my wife and I moved into the campus married-student housing. I couldn't fit much of my collection into such a small apartment, but I managed to keep enough around to make me happy.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks campus has a few odd buildings. Walking around campus on a daily basis, I got to thinking if I could make a neat replica of one of them. I've made thousands of buildings, sculptures, creatures, cars and spaceships before, but this time I wanted to make something big. I mean really BIG.

So I took on my "most ambitious project yet," making a model of UAF's Gruening Building. The building is named after the late Ernest Gruening who was a Senator from Alaska. The eight-story building was dedicated in 1972 and is modeled after the FBI building in Washington D.C. In those days, construction planners felt universities could be a source of riots and political unrest, so they built the Gruening building with no ledges or elements that would make it scalable. Thus, the building is basically a big concrete box with windows. I thought it would be easy to duplicate with LEGO.

While I worked on my degree over the next twelve months, I also worked on my building. Much to my wife's chagrin, a large gray structure and thousands



of gray LEGO bricks consumed the kitchen table in our tiny apartment. Eventually the model became perfect minifigure scale at two and half feet tall and three feet wide. I couldn't fit it out the door so I used Technic pins so I could split it in two and reconnect it later.

The model contains thousands of pieces including 1024 windows, 23 doors, and over 2000 profile bricks. The model also used thousands of common gray bricks, and eight 15'x15' baseplates for the ground and roof.

I ran out of gray bricks very quickly, so I ordered whatever I could off eBay and Lego.com. Overall, I spent \$1152.29 on the model—something I kept hidden from my wife until I had finished. The hardest part about building the model, was the waiting. Ordering pieces is fun, but waiting weeks for them to get to Alaska is torture.

I entered the model into the campus student art show, where I won a merit award for sculpture, much to the ire of the art students who said a business student should not be allowed to enter.

Building the Gruening building was great, but one extra thing I did picked up more attention than the actual model, and far more attention than I ever imagined...

I don't know anything about creating a webpage, so I started a web comic as a way to teach myself how to build a website. The comic is dedicated to a team of Lego builders that construct the Gruening Building. I took pictures of the construction each step of the way and had workers build the whole thing.

In the comic are Lego versions of University of Alaska Fairbanks Chancellor Steve Jones, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin and made-up characters as well. Each panel features jokes about UAF that range from parking services to the poor taste of campus water.

I told the UAF Publications and Marketing department about the huge replica and they did a feature story for the campus' main website. The story was picked up by the local newspaper and TV stations, then the AP wire spread it across the nation. That's when things really got out of hand. Soon I started getting e-mail from people in Wisconsin, Oregon, and other places all over the country who had somehow found the website and loved it. TV stations in Texas, North Carolina and other places were running the story. I even got interviewed for a couple of nationwide radio news programs.

One specific panel of the web comic garnered a lot of attention. Page 18 features a crowd of Legomen swooning over Sarah Palin. That was enough to get my work featured in a host of political blogs that I had never heard of. The page was also a big hit with the state legislature, Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski's office and a number of other places. Months later Palin was chosen as Senator John McCain's running mate for the presidential election and the website saw a spike in activity.

Still, even before the nomination, the campus got so much positive press about the building that they bought the model from me for three times what it cost me to build it. Not a bad graduation present! The LEGO Gruening building will soon be on permanent display in the student center on the UAF campus. 

Ty's Keltner's Lego Gruening website is available to public perusal at <http://thekeltners.net/ty/LEGO/legogruening/INDEX.HTM>



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Twelve Questions:

Luis Castaneda, LEGO Set Designer

BrickJournal continues its interview series with LEGO staff members with a designer from the STAR WARS theme!

*Interview and Photography
by Megan Rothrock
Art by Luis Castaneda*

BrickJournal: How long have you worked as a LEGO Designer?

Luis Castaneda: Two happy years!

I understand you're from Guatemala, how did you end up as LEGO Designer in Denmark?

My Wife is Danish. After finishing my design education in Copenhagen, I worked one year as a concept artist for a video game studio. After that I found out that LEGO was a Danish company (I always thought that it was German...) and that they were looking for designers (!) The rest is history.

Guatemala and Denmark seem to be quite different countries, was it difficult to adapt?

It was difficult and challenging, like any good adventure! And with the love and support of my wife and her family it's been the best one so far...

What LEGO themes (that you can tell us about) have you worked on?

I've worked on Mars Mission, STAR WARS and several Conceptual Themes that I can't disclose.

Of all of the models that you have built, do you have a favorite?

Probably the giveaway mini models I've created for *Brickmaster Magazine* (*Venator Cruiser*, *Turbo Tank*, *Republic Gunship*, *AT-TE*, seen below and next page) It was very challenging to work with so few bricks and make them look like the ones in the films.

Where do you draw inspiration from on a model like the Mars Mission Switch Fighter where there is no obvious source material like with STAR WARS?



Luis' rendition of the Venator Cruiser

From many different places, from sci-fi films, concept art, anime and of course from the brilliant work of fellow LEGO designers and LEGO fans.

I do a fair amount of sketching before I start building and it is here where all the inspirations, ideas and influences melt, for me to shape with bricks afterwards.

You used to work as a storyboard artist for a computer games company, how does working for LEGO compare?

I think that if you're lucky enough to work doing something you really like it doesn't matter where you do it. I used to love working drawing story- and concept-boards for the Gaming Studio I was working for, the project was really cool and the people involved were great, but at the end of the day I didn't get to build my concepts into LEGO and see my characters turned into Minifigs!

Is there any cool artwork that you can share with us? (Not necessarily from the games you worked on.)

These are some character renderings I've done for inspiration. They are purely from my own imagination and have no relation to anything I'm working on at the LEGO Group or information we've received from Lucasfilm.

Do you have any other hobbies or interests outside of work?

I train Kendo and Aikido.

I draw and paint digitally and with traditional media.

Love to chill watching films (horror, sci-fi, fantasy, anime, old Samurai films)

I like playing strategy video games.

What do you enjoy most about working as a LEGO Designer?

Working with bricks and Minifigs!

Is there anything that you would really like to build, but you don't think LEGO would ever make as a set?

A LEGO version of Warhammer (a futuristic wargame)!

Do you have tips for anyone who might want follow in your footsteps?

Dreams are potential adventures, take them seriously and do something about them. 



A Warhammer soldier built by Luis.



A sample of art from Luis.



Luis' rendition of the AT-TE.



Photograph by Tommy Andreasen.

LEGO TV Commercials: Bringing LEGO CITY to Life

Have you ever watched a LEGO® CITY TV Commercial and thought: “Hey, how do they do that?” In October of 2008, BrickJournal went to Copenhagen, Denmark to find out how they make the magic!

*Article by Megan Rothrock
Photography
by Megan Rothrock and
Tommy Andreasen*

The studio was larger than I'd expected. There were LEGO models all over the place, and a massive green screen behind it all. I was nearly blinded by all of the lights, and with the heat they gave off it felt like I was in Florida! What I didn't realize at the time was they were actually shooting three advertisements during the eight-day shoot. One was for LEGO CITY Construction, another for LEGO CITY Farm, and another a website project. The team had been there for three days already.

I first met with Tommy Andreasen — his role is Senior Concept Art Director for LEGO. He walked me over to 'Main Street,' a very large LEGO street scene filled with mini figures doing all sorts of things, even two that were robbing the bank! “You won't see it in the spot, because it goes by fast —all of the activity and detail brings our LEGO CITY to life!” Tommy continued, “The Designers have a lot of fun setting the scene for the mini figures.”

The History of LEGO CITY

Four years ago, Tommy Andreasen and Thomas Sebastian Fenger came up with the concept for a LEGO CITY to be built entirely from LEGO Bricks! They felt it was a shame that the city and backgrounds in commercials were not built out of LEGO elements. However the logistics of such a task were challenging, to say the least. The city would need to be built and a lot of bricks would be needed. It would then have to be stored somewhere safe, and then transported up to Copenhagen for the TV shoots, then there would be constant repairs and upkeep to make to the city. This was all a huge undertaking but the team felt that it was well worth it in the end, as the quality shone through in the finished products.

LEGO CITY (as it is called internally) is used not only for the TV advertisements but also in photo shoots for the Christmas and other posters and stills for the LEGO catalogues. LEGO CITY was built in Billund, with some of the buildings glued and some not. It had to be a generic city that did not distract from the product and was able to be reused for different TV spots. It is entirely modularly built on 32x32 baseplates to allow for different looks and layouts when needed. All of the buildings are facades with paper inside of them to prevent light seeping out of any cracks or windows. They re-use the same buildings year after year but for a new theme the environment changes and as a result, they have to build more. The first LEGO CITY had 486,000 LEGO bricks, and now the estimate is over 1.3 million LEGO bricks! Because of this, LEGO CITY is very well cared for and the team is reluctant to loan it out for other purposes as it might get damaged.

The LEGO CITY TV Spot team has, for the most part, been the same core team since the transition from LEGO 'World City' to the present LEGO CITY. The key idea was to make it an evergreen product. Tommy proudly stated that



we are 'back to classic'. It has taken some time but LEGO CITY now has its own identity, when you see a blue box on the shelf, you know it's a LEGO CITY box. "Back when we started, we wanted to make it clear you can build it." Said Tommy "We wanted to make a spot where we solve problems through building. Building makes it better! The LEGO CITY is running smoothly, then a 'HEY!' problem occurs, we show the quick build, and then everything is back to normal. Creativity and versatility are key points to our spots.

Quiet on the Set!

Above: Setting up lights and the camera as the shoot takes a little discussion.

Below: The Design Team put mini-figures on strings climbing buildings and walls, walking in the streets, robbing the bank and more. Activity adds the detail, bringing LEGO CITY to life.





The "HEY" Cometh:

Tommy tells: The first 'HEY!' sequence was inspired from the film *Planet of the Apes* (the original Charlton Heston one), the scene at the end with The Statue of Liberty on the beach. We first had a fireman (like Charlton Heston) on his knees screaming "Nooooooooooooooooo!!!" This was a bit too severe for LEGO so we had to come up with another catchphrase. We wanted to use the [word] 'HEY!' [because] it's simple and universal, not needing to be translated. Everyone knows 'HEY!' or so we thought! In the beginning the 'HEY!' was translated by some of the markets (German and Danish) into something like 'Get the big crane over here.' We had to communicate to the market leads that 'HEY!' needed to be in there as it was.

In the beginning, they had three versions of each spot; so there were three different ways to solve a problem. But this was a bit too much to cram into a spot, and they decided to keep it simple, not to over-complicate, and to have a clear direction.

Top: The center stage for the Construction site and Construction crane spots, and yes, those are tan cliff walls, which are not available.

Left: LEGO Designer Henrik Andersen sets his crane model up for the next scene.

The Process

They start with storyboards, quick sketches drawn onto paper showing the story in a visual way, and setting up the camera shots. Then they create an animatic, which is a rough 3D runthrough of the TV spot. It is very primitive using mostly placeholders. But by creating an animatic, it allows for the timing of the spot and camera angles to be worked out. The animatics are done 'out of house' by a company that LEGO hires. The 'key frames' are printed from the animatic; giving the crew a visual to refer to, so everyone knows what is going on with the shot.

TV Magic:

There are two LEGO Designers on set at all times. The Designers bring five of each model to the shoot, two glued and three loose. The LEGO Designers take part in pre-production meetings to discuss the animatics, so they can help contribute to how the background will be built for the TV spot. When they get to the shoot they have to unpack, and assist with the build up of all of the background as well as their own models. They also are armed with drills and electric screwdrivers, and a large set of hobby tools. For the LEGO City Construction shoot there was point where a plate swings over on a crane and lands with a thump on top of four 1x1x5 poles. In order to achieve the effect of weight, a heavy metal plate was glued underneath, and then the connection points were drilled out so it would land at the same point on every take. Henrik Andersen, a LEGO City Designer, also drilled out the studs on all of the poles and ran thick wire up through the middle of them, then glued the supports in place to help stabilize the model during filming.

At another point in the spot, a crane comes swooping in with a roof to put on top of a building. Torben Skov, also a LEGO Designer, glued tiny magnets under the plate of the roof section and another magnet in the back corner of the building. The angle of the camera will be from below so you won't see the magnets on TV.

Everyone on the crew wants to achieve



This was used in the background of LEGO CITY Farm spot to integrate Farm, and still keep it with-in LEGO CITY world.



There is some method to the madness. It may look like a jumbled pile of LEGO bricks, but it is actually a very carefully set up iconic pile. It's very tricky on one hand it has to look like a pile, on the other the viewer needs to recognize that it will be something in the end.



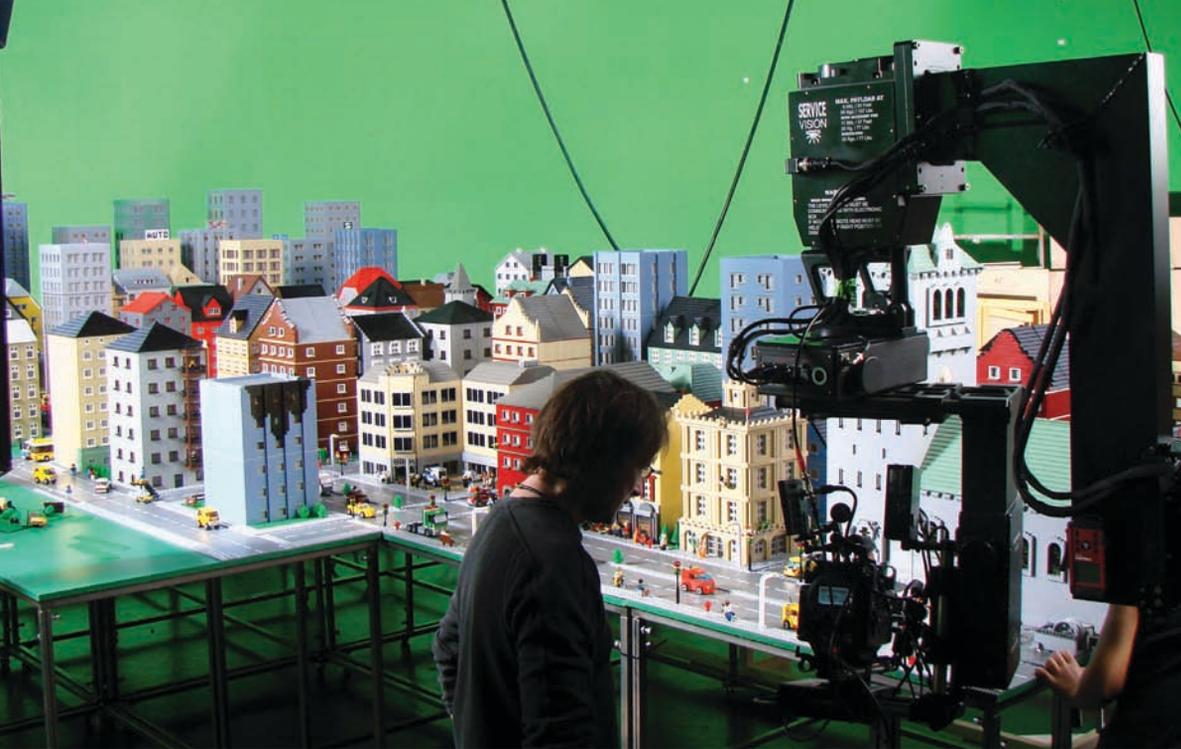
Another street in LEGO CITY.



Here are some props and buildings that might be used in these scenes or maybe in future spots.



Every building in LEGO CITY is taped up, and vellum added to the windows, both to create a solid look to the building, and opaque the windows allowing some light through but reducing reflection.



perfection and I was a bit surprised to see just how much is done on site during the studio shoot. Tommy explained, "We now shoot in Digital format, so rough editing is done and spliced into the animatics, though we will still need to match the contrast, lighting etc. in post." The motto is do as much as you can when you can — studio time is very expensive, and if the crew goes one hour over it's double pay, and keeps getting higher by the minute.



It's All in Her Hands!

It is quite common to see real hands building and playing in LEGO TV spots. But I was quite surprised to discover that they were not a boy's hands, but a girl's! They use older girls, in this case a 12-year-old's because girls have more precision with movement, and more focus, and agility and they have delicate hands that can pass for a 7-year-old boy's.

I had a chance to talk with the 12-year-old Danish hand model Kamilla (who spoke very good English). "I think it's fun! I like to be here on the TV shoot. I have six brothers, so I have played with LEGO before," she said. When asked if her brothers were a bit jealous that she got to be in a LEGO TV commercial, and play with LEGO all day while they are at school, she replied, "They are proud of me. I got special permission from my school to be here. I have homework to do here as well. Sometimes it can be very long breaks."

Does she like LEGO? The answer is quick: "LEGO is cool! I built it when I was little." Will she be excited to see what the final TV spot will look like? "Yes, and when the film comes out I can say to my friends, those are my hands!" she exclaimed.

Shooting:

The days are long, on average ten hours a day for eight days. Over the years, they have found it best to shoot both first and second half releases at the same time because it takes so long to set up all of LEGO CITY and break it all down again.

The camera movements are done manually so they can control the speed they want and timing has to be perfect. Kamillas' hand movements, the focus of the camera, and the movement of the camera all have to be in sync.

However accidents can happen in the LEGO CITY! Just the day before they were shooting the main street and a camera hit a building, collapsing the bridge! (No mini figures were harmed, fortunately!)

Quick Build:

Ever wondered how they build those LEGO models so fast on TV?

I talked to LEGO Designer Henrik Andersen about it. The secret is that the model is broken down into sections to assemble. Some of the studs are filed off to make sure that only the correct placement of each section is possible. Henrik explains, "I look at the model to see what is logical to take off. The Crane is most difficult to do as it is in twelve to fifteen sections. Some of them, like the Crane arm, are glued, so you don't have to worry about them breaking while the camera is rolling. The model must be

Top: In this scene the camera needs to follow along with a LEGO truck model, the timing must be perfect to achieve a clean shoot. Photograph by Tommy Andreasen.

Above: Kamilla, the hand model for the TV spot at work.

stable in order to get clean movement during the shot.”

Starting with the model fully assembled. Kamilla takes off the sections in a pre-determined order. She must set each section down and flat away from the main model. If there is the slightest wobble when a section is set down, the shot must be re-done. Many takes were made to achieve a perfect runthrough. When the team is satisfied they run the footage backwards, slightly sped up and presto: the LEGO model is built super-fast!

Matching the Box Shot:

One of the most difficult shots is the final part of the TV advert. The model must be exactly as it appears on the LEGO Box but with the background environment from the shoot. They have to be careful and pay attention to the lines, colors, etc. as later it will be merged with the artwork on the box as the camera pulls back (out of the models' background) to a wide shot and you see the model on it's box, as it appears in the shops.

Duckzilla!

The LEGO CITY TV team was also shooting several short minute and a half films for the internet. One will actually have a live duck used in it! This is the first time in anyone's' recollection that a live animal has been in a LEGO TV spot. He will be waddling right down Main Street. There is a building contest online connected with the films, which is a new concept and they are excited to see the result!

Uninvited Guests!

When more than one theme is at the studios shooting in the same weeks, sometimes some 'guest' mini figures can appear. It seems that LEGO Designers from a different theme sometimes sneak their mini figures into the set of another theme. There was a rogue Exo Force figure walking down Main Street that was quickly removed from the shoot and the night before *BrickJournal* arrived, tons of stormtroopers invaded LEGO CITY! They were everywhere, climbing on the buildings and hidden inside the houses. Henrik Andersen, and Torben Skov had to be sure to find them all, so they would not end up in the footage!

CGI Guidelines:

It was explained to me only 33% of the advert can be CGI (computer generated images) and cuts from CGI and back to the real product can only be done three times in any one commercial. These are the rules set in place by the Toy Industry in the USA and UK and the LEGO CITY team understands it is very important that the customer does not become confused or disappointed when buying the product, so the team works very hard to adhere to these rules. In fact they try to use as little CGI as possible to focus on the build and the cool models. They want the customer to come away with a positive reaction to the TV spot. However the LEGO CITY Team members are purists. Everything in the TV commercials has to be done in LEGO. The one exception is the HEY! Sequence in each spot (where the mini-figure calls out) which is done in CGI.

It's a Wrap!

My day at the LEGO City shoot was amazing! It was impressive to see how everyone worked so hard as a team to achieve the desired result. I also enjoyed learning about the process to make a LEGO TV spot. I look forward to seeing the final TV commercials! I would just like to thank all of the team for making *BrickJournal* feel so welcome even though they were so busy. Thanks guys! 



More than 96,000 lightsaber blades are hand-glued to create a field of wheat for the LEGO Farm advertisement



A view of LEGO CITY Farm set with the Skyline in the background. Photograph by Tommy Andreassen.

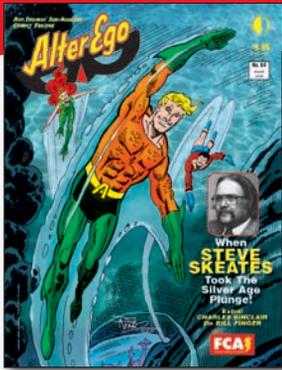


All of the sets are designed to be modular and set up on risers, to allow for different scenes. For this scene they added a street that will have a truck rolling into the construction yard.



The support struts for the overhead bridge that runs through the city. Photograph by Tommy Andreassen.

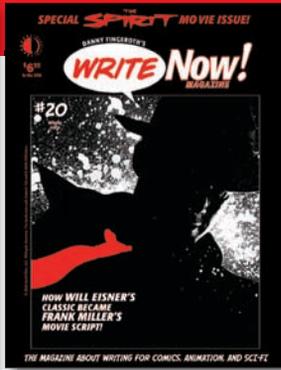
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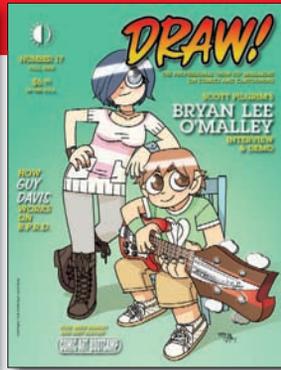
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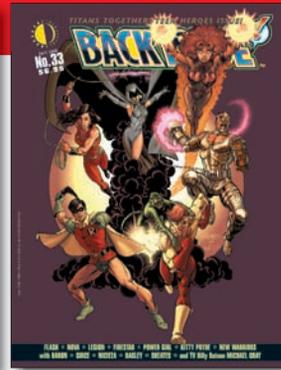
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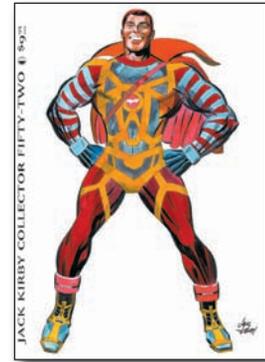
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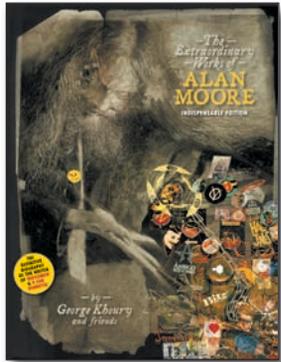
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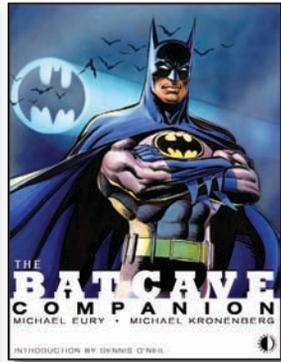
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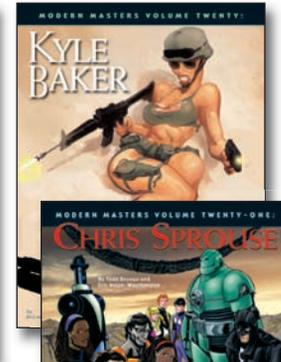
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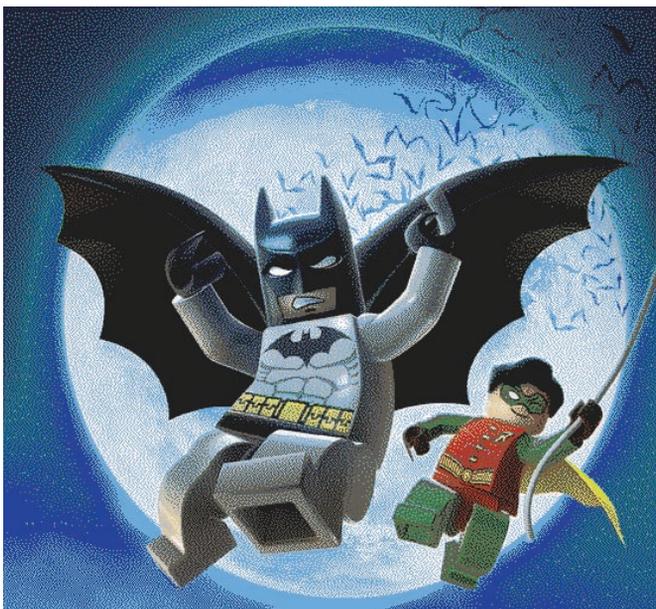
I was commissioned by Warner Brothers Interactive last year to build a mosaic for their LEGO Batman Video Game Launch Party in New York City. It was quite a challenge, not only because the mosaic itself was tricky, but the timeframe was too. Unlike a fan-created model that can be built over months or even years, I had only a few weeks.

I was initially contacted about a month before the event would happen, which for the type and size of model they wanted is plenty of time. At first they asked if I could do the LEGO Batman Logo. I said I could, and quickly drew up a design on brick paper. Now for those of you who are unfamiliar with brick paper, it is special graph paper that LEGO Master Model Designers use to draw out a design, basically making a blueprint before they build it. About a week after they first contacted me they changed their minds and asked if I could do the video game cover art. That was fine too, but I had to completely change

Capturing the Dynamic Duo With Only LEGO Bricks and Plates!

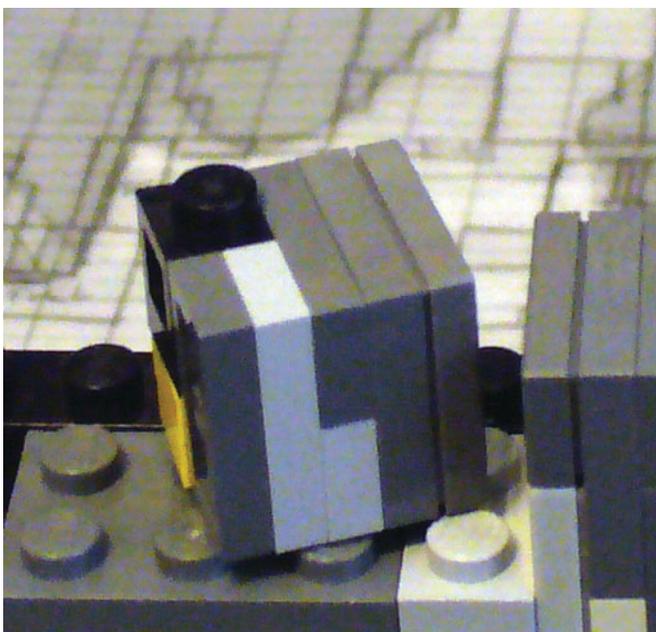
*Article and Photography
by Mariann Asanuma*

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Preliminary color study of mosaic, using Bob Kojima's Bricksaic program, which can be found here:

<http://www.fial.com/bob/partscatalog/aboutbricksaic.php>



Above: One of the plate and tile built squares.

Below: Closeup of Robin.



tactics. The LEGO Batman Logo is a relatively simple design. It is big, bold lettering on a black background and requires only four colors – red, yellow, black and white. The video game cover art on the other hand is a lot more complicated. I utilized two to three times the number of bricks and there ended up being a total of 14 different colors in the final mosaic.

This model is one of the most difficult mosaics that I have ever made. The main reason that this mosaic was so difficult was that I used a lot of what is referred in the Adult Fan Community of LEGO as S.N.O.T. (Studs Not On Top). To be honest, I don't really like this term. I prefer to call what I do as "brick manipulation" or twisting and turning of the bricks. That is what makes my mosaics different from a lot of people's mosaic designs. Most of the time when someone does a mosaic they build the mosaic studs-up or studs-out, both are viable ways and I have seen fantastic models done in both styles. However, in a studs-up or studs-out mosaic you can never get the full details of the picture unless the image becomes fairly large in size or is relatively simple. By twisting and turning the bricks like I do, you can get a much better level of detail, even to the point that people think that it is a printed image, not thousands of LEGO pieces.

The basics of brick manipulation are fairly simple. The most important thing to remember is the 5 on 2 rule. Four plates and a tile stacked together and turned sideways (i.e. five plates) makes a perfect square that is the same width as two studs. Drawing the mosaic out on brick paper really helps in this department. To design this mosaic I first decided how big I wanted the finished model to be and then printed out the picture to that size. Once I had the picture, I used vellum (transparent) paper with the brick paper design printed on it and drew out the mosaic. By following the 5 on 2 rule as I drew the design, I was able to get a lot of the details. Mosaic design is half artistry and half engineering. When making a mosaic I see it as one big mathematic puzzle that needs solving. Although I drew out my design by hand, I did use Bob Kojima's Bricksaic program to figure out the color values. By uploading the image to his program, and then using the dithering technique, I was able to better see what the image would look like in LEGO. Because of the way I design however, there isn't a computer program out there that can duplicate what I do. At least, as far as I know. One trick of good mosaic making is to get as many of the details as you can, but remember that sometimes less is more. By looking at the Bricksaic version of the cover art, I was better able to determine where the shadows and highlights would end up being.

I actually ended up building this mosaic three times. First I built the prototype, and then I built the final model. After that I had to take the model apart in sections and travel with it from San Diego to New York. Once I arrived there, I had to rebuild the model at the Launch Party at the Natural History Museum. Even though I was only there for three days, I had to take two large suitcases for all the LEGO and tools that I needed to bring for the event.

The final model also had a little something extra. Even though I try to make as much of a mosaic out of LEGO as I can, sometimes a few essential details need to be made out of something else. When I worked at LEGOLAND

California, we often added vinyl stickers to complete a mosaic. I used the same technique here, all the bats flying behind the dynamic duo along with Batman and Robin's chest icons were vinyl stickers that my brother Michael Asanuma made for me — Mike is a Special Effects and Graphic Artist up in Los Angeles. His stickers made the entire mosaic come together.

The video game cover art took me about two and a half weeks to design and build. Although the mosaic ended up being about two feet tall and two feet wide, creating the intricate details was an exciting challenge. Designing Robin was especially difficult because of all the brick manipulation that I had to do in such a small area. Not only did I use every mosaic trick I know, I had to invent a few new ones so that it all would work out.

I really enjoyed being given the opportunity to build this model. I've always been a fan of Batman, but making an official mosaic for Warner Brothers Interactive and LEGO was truly an honor. 

You can see Mariann's work at:
http://www.flickr.com/photos/model_gal/

She also has a blog at:
<http://www.modelbuildingsecrets.com/>

Closeup of Batman.



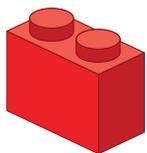
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HARD TRUCK *Contest*

Build, Race, Win!

*Article by Alexander Horoshilov
Photography by DoubleBrick*

This past January, the DoubleBrick community presented an all-new idea of entertainment for LEGO fans. It's very simple: we suggest that you build a copy of any real truck from LEGO bricks and to compete in races for fastest and most accurate cargo delivery. You can run small racing competitions at your local club meeting or schedule the contest as part of a large event – it's always fun and attention-getting, as highly detailed working truck models are good for display at any show. The basic idea is simple and straightforward. One has not to be a technic geek to build a truck. Still, there a lot of possibilities for experienced builders to show their skills.

Building

There are a few requirements which every model has to satisfy. The truck has to be powered with a single Power Functions XL motor geared with 3:5 ratio to wheels with outer diameter of 43.2 mm. The wheel size was selected to provide the widest selection of existing LEGO parts, both old (discontinued) and modern. It forces the scale of model to be approximately 1:22. In this scale, a typical truck with width of 2.5 meters has to be 14 studs wide. Everything else (length, number of wheels) is not limited and must fit the real reference. The truck must also steer using a Power Functions motor.

For an easy start we developed some basic chassis models and prepared instructions for them. It's a good way to involve people who never built any motorized technic cars.

They can select the appropriate chassis and build the cab and any other exterior details. It should be clear to everybody, however, that all these chassis are specially designed to be simple in building and require common parts only. To implement any advanced feature or get a great looking model a builder has to design his own solution.

Surprisingly, the design of a good chassis may take more time than everything else. It's not easy to build a reliable chassis in this scale and keep a high level of design and detail of the car. The XL motor is very powerful and breaks any construction not reinforced with technic parts on every connection. Wheel steering has its own caveats as well. It has to turn the wheels, but not break the car on final turn angles. A good idea is to test with some weight with the empty chassis (about 1 kg) to simulate bricks which will be used for building of the cab and everything else.

When a chassis is built which can run for 10-15 minutes without any breaks it's a good chance that the car will be reliable in racing. Reliability is very important. Often a car with a self-designed chassis just does not reach the finish line due to unrecoverable problems (repairs are allowed in the fixed points of racing circuit only).

The next challenge is modeling of the car with LEGO bricks. There is nothing special here, just make the model to look like a real car. Most likely SNOT and other advanced techniques will be needed to achieve the similarity with the truck selected. Good design is strongly encouraged - points scored in the "beauty contest" are added to results in races to select the absolute winners.

Installation

The racing circuit may be indoor or outdoor. The only requirement is really important - the circuit surface has to be flat and smooth. The maximum ground clearance of models is approximately the height of the single LEGO brick and the truck can be easily blocked with parts fallen off from his or other participants trucks. The minimal size of the circuit



Above: A race takes its toll on one of the trucks.

Below: Onlookers watch as the trucks go through their paces.





Top and Middle: Pretty trucks all in a row.

Above: Racing trucks go off-track.

is about 3x5 meters (10x16 feet). Add about 2 meters (7 feet) from each side for the crowd and one gets the requirement for the competing area.

Everything else can be created with stuff generally available. We recommend using paper-based painter's tape for circuit marking. It is easily applied and removed after competitions and leaves nothing on the floor. Borders can be made from paper sheets folded as triangle prisms and glued to the tape. They are cheap, make no damage to the cars and can also serve as advertising banners, just print something over them before folding. Critical areas like gates or turn points can be strengthened additionally with large plastic bottles filled with water.

Also you may prepare stickers with numbers for models and, badges for their drivers. Several tables are good to show the cars to the public before starts. They are not required, but help a lot to carry out the event in a smooth and clear manner.

Since our contest is about trucks, organizers have to build four trailers and some number of containers (we suggest 5 per trailers, 20 in total) to load on them. They are built from LEGO parts, of course. We developed instructions for typical truck and container as well. To distinguish them each trailer and container set had to be a single color. We suggested using red, yellow, blue and black. These colors are different enough, have a large part selection and leave light/ dark gray as a substitute when you do not have some parts in the color needed.

Racing

The racing competition is the most impressive and fun part

of the contest. Up to four participants (limited by the number of channels in standard Power Functions IR transmitter/receiver) are started in each round. The minimal round consists of 3 loops.

From the start the cars are run without trailers. After first loop the leader selects any trailer and goes for the second loop. The second participant selects any trailer from available and so on. After second loop each driver has to load their trailer with container of the same color and make one more loop. On finish they are scored for the speed and accuracy – every container and the trailer itself delivered to the finish adds additional points.

This scheme (1-1-1) can be easily extended for longer racing, just increase the number of loops at each stage. Do not increase total count of loops too much, usually a few loops are enough to determine the winners. A large number of loops just delays the round. Depending on participant count to schedule from 3 to 6 hours for the whole event.

Event Report

On January 4th, 2009 we had a Hard Truck Contest in Moscow. There were 10 participants here (4 other models registered early were missed for various reasons, unfortunately). A few dozens of spectators arrived as well. There were a lot of kids – they liked races a lot. The race where the leading in final round truck lost all of its front part as result of hard clash with another participant received the most enthusiastic cheering. Both trucks finished successfully, though.

We also invited two journalists from a car-centered magazine to judge the general model looks and accuracy with prototype. We think that it's good when independent people evaluate trucks in the "beauty contest". They know a lot about cars and trucks especially and are not familiar with LEGO, so they will not pay a lot of attention to use of rare parts or nonstandard techniques, just accuracy is evaluated – does the car model look like the real one or not.

We thank LEGO Community Development and the LEGO Russia Representative very much for supporting this event with prizes. 

Details

If you are interested in the Hard Truck Contest, you can get additional information, including detailed rules, building instructions, race circuit drawings, advice and hints, and more at our site:

<http://www.doublebrick.com/htc>

Please let us know any ideas, suggestions and other thoughts about HTC. In case of any questions, feel free to ask us (you'll find contact information there as well). Additional photos and videos can be also found at BrickJournal site:

<http://www.brickjournal.com>

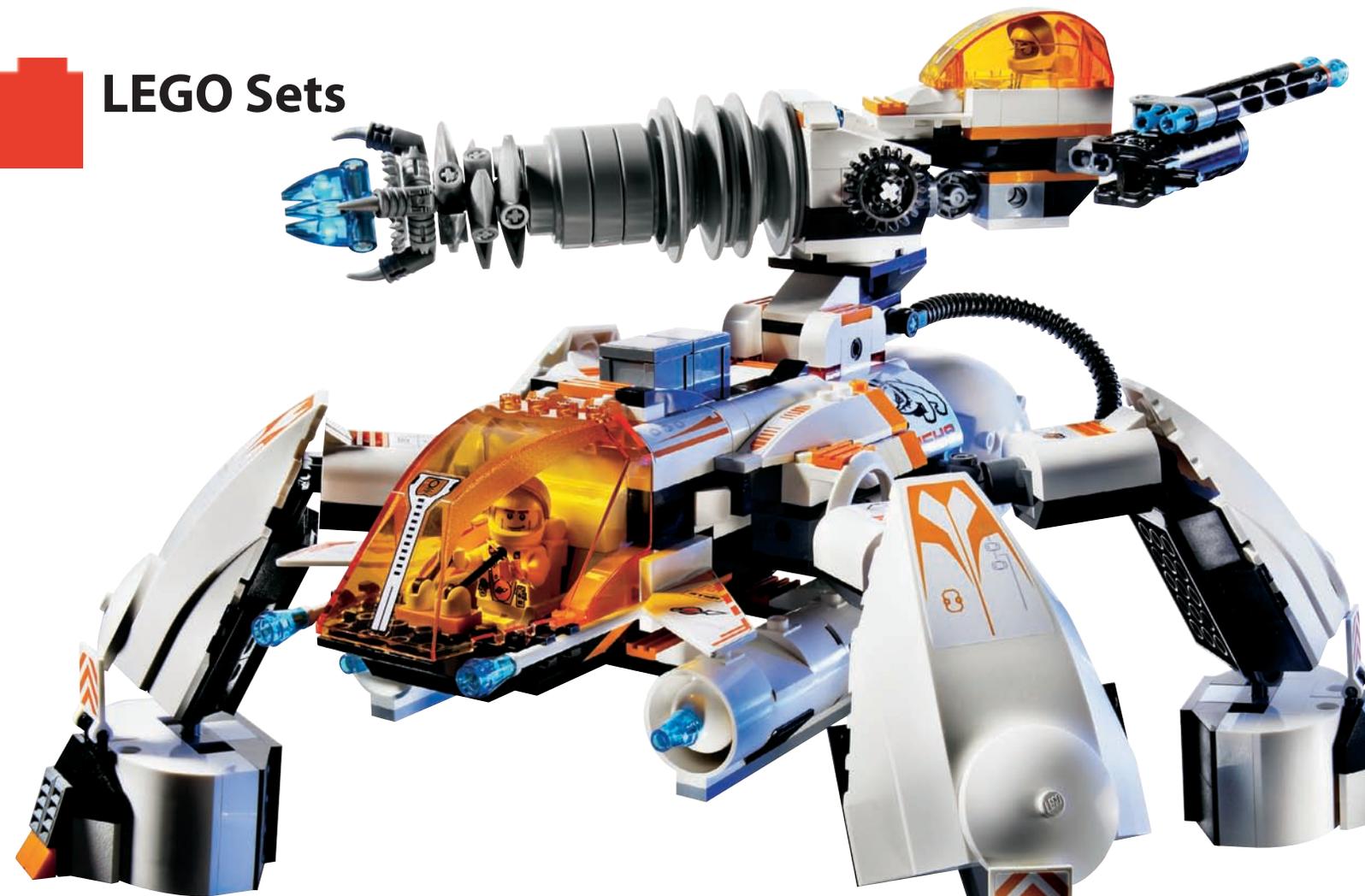


Top: Another race gets messy.

Above: Two trucks on display.

Below: The winners and their prizes.





Behind the Design:

Continuing the Mars Mission

BrickJournal had a chat with Mark Stafford, LEGO Set Designer about his design work on the Mission Mars Ultra Drill Walker. Here he talks about what his inspirations were for the set, including his dog!

Interview by Megan Rothrock
Product photography courtesy the LEGO Group and © The LEGO Group
All other photography by Megan Rothrock

BrickJournal: How did you end up building the MM Ultra Drill Walker?

Mark Stafford: Around the time I was finishing up my work as part of the LEGO Agents team in summer of 07 I was asked if I'd be interested in working on a Mars Mission set, a store exclusive in the USA.

I leapt at the chance, I've always been a LEGO space fan (well, since I got my first space set in 1979 anyway) and I've wanted to work in a space theme since starting with LEGO.

But why build a mecha rather than a vehicle or ship?

The store exclusives tend to have a more formal design brief than our normal retail lines, we have to go through a slightly different approval process where the retailer agrees on the specific concept and content of the box.

I was given the following brief by William Thorogood, the Mars Mission Design Lead:

"A walking 'Tank' that transforms into a mining rig and space fighter with a small alien ship. Building complexity 8+. It is important both ship and base versions of the mining vehicle are stable and playable."

We knew at that stage that Exo-Force had run its course and that no new mecha would be coming from that line so to some extent we aimed to fill this gap in our portfolio.

Why four legs?

I have some experience with four legged mecha, the four legged 8115 Dark Panther in Exo-Force is a set I designed (my first one) and before, as a fan, I'd built a larger one for Iron Mecha!

Iron Mecha was a competition held by LEGO fans in early 2006, before I worked for LEGO. The contest was to build a four legged mecha based on an artwork sketch provided. I was lucky and actually won the competition, and I'm pretty amazed to have done so, all of the other entries were very strong and anyone who has the time should have a look at them online!

But the most basic reason for four legs is the required stability, it just doesn't fall over, a two legged mecha of this size would have had to be very over engineered just to stand!

How much did your Iron Mecha entry impact this model?

Well if you look at this early version of the Ultra Drill Walker you can see my first attempt at legs were obviously inspired by my Iron Mecha entry "the *Provost*", and the experience had taught me rubber stoppers had to be on the base of each foot to stop the spread eagling problems I encountered. The *Provost* also helped me figure out knee joints are a real structural problem with four legged mecha, in fact after winning the competition I had to replace all the knee joints in the *Provost* with fixed joints just so it could stand on display at fan events. This helped me to decide pretty early on I'd lock the knees on the Ultra Drill Walker, but then try to keep as much articulation elsewhere in the legs as possible.

Any other sources of inspiration?

Heh. Yeah, our dog, Bandit!

Megan (Rothrock – Brickshelf: Megs) and I have an English Bull-Terrier called Bandit. He's a softy, loves his food and sleeping and hates cold and rain, so the move to Denmark has been harsh for him. But he has four legs and he's squat and white and the stance of the Ultra Drill Walker seems to have been subconsciously influenced by him. So much so I wanted to name this set the "Bandit Driller", and in the end I did manage to get him immortalized on the sticker sheet!

So you wanted to call this the 'Bandit Driller'? How did it end up with this name?

Helping to name the sets/ characters is part of the job of a LEGO Designer! (Though not so much if you're working in a licensed theme.) It involves a lot of brainstorming, checking any good names on the internet for similar material we might clash with, and then sending them to our legal department so they can check to see if they can find any possible copyright issues. Even after this we have to ask our international marketing people if this is going to translate well or sound rude in their local languages. Unfortunately 'Bandit Driller'



Top: Mark's Iron Mecha entry, the *Provost*.
Above: Bandit!
Below: The first model prototype.





Above: Progressive design models.
Below right: Hover craft.

translates a bit too literally in some languages and came out more like “Thief/robbing Drilling machine” which was just confusing. So “Ultra Drill Walker” was finally left on the page.

What about Star Trek, a lot of people have noticed the Shuttle craft looks like homage to that franchise?

Yeah... but it's not. In fact the design started out around the new window canopy we were creating for Agents; (from Spy-Clop's helicopter) I really liked it and wanted to use it here. At the early design stage we were still trying to incorporate the transparent orange docking tubes from the air-pump device in the Mars Mission base and I placed two of these on either side of the shuttle, where the engines are now. As it evolved these dropped to just one of them inside the body (I wanted to hide this piece as it's quite ugly and too dominant), so the engines naturally had to move to the outside, replacing the two tubes. Later the last tube was dropped altogether and I replaced it with a small hover vehicle, but the engine 'nacelles' that have the Star Trek feel remained.

The hover vehicle was obviously inspired by a classic Space set though, right?

Okay, yeah you got me there. Classic Space set 6801 was one of my favourites as a kid (I still have my original instructions) and I used to build it in a new colour every time I got a new 4x4 radar dish. When the space cleared up in the centre of the shuttle for something else four studs wide I couldn't resist a homage. (Or blatant rip-off if you prefer!)



So will you be designing any more Mars Mission sets? I have done more work in LEGO Space but I can't confirm if it is for Mars Mission at this time because that would be giving you too much information about our 2009 line up! I'm aware of some rumours on the fan websites but all I can say is Space, like Castle, is a great classic LEGO theme, an 'evergreen' that should always be in our line up - and that it will be continuing for a while longer. 



The complete set, including Martian attack ship, shuttle, walker, drill and hover craft.



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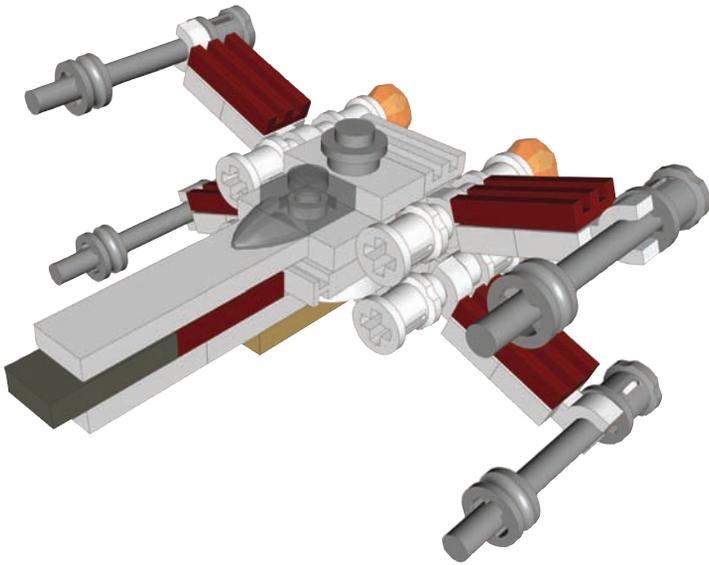
You Can Build It: X-Wing

Design and Instructions by Christopher Deck

Hello my friends, I'm glad I can join again for the newest issue of *BrickJournal*. Although I generally try to avoid overlappings with the official line, I decided to make a proper MINI X-Wing, because I really didn't like the official one from 2003 as many other official models, too. The model presented to you here looks similar to TLC's official version at a first glance, mainly for the wing construction, but after a close look you will see it's very different. The nose section is very smooth allowing for the use of a tooth plate as cockpit windscreen. The nose tip uses half plate lengths starting with a jumper plate right under the top tile. To get back to normal length, a door rail plate which only slides on a 2x3 plate with hole is used. The entire cockpit block is built on that plate, meaning it's not connected by any conventional method. Technic bushings from both sides, which resemble the engines, hold the cockpit block in place. Such "sliding connections" are a big improvement and sometimes the only possibility for "connection". For the engine glowing, minifig diamonds were used, a great alternative transparent piece if you have a hollow stud available for attachment, and a hopefully inspiring idea for fellow builders. With that I'm done for this time.

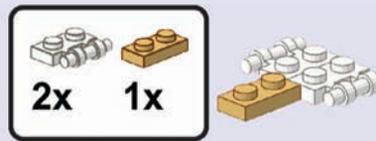
I wish you happy building, and see you next time! 🧱

Yours, Christopher

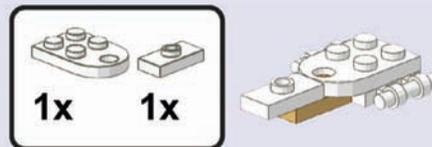


Num.	Color	Description
4	Light-Gray	Bar 4L Light Sabre Blade
1	Light-Gray	Plate 1 x 1 Round
8	White	Plate 1 x 1 with Clip Horizontal
1	Trans-Black	Plate 1 x 1 with Tooth
1	Tan	Plate 1 x 2
1	Dark-Gray	Plate 1 x 2 with 1 Stud
4	White	Plate 1 x 2 with 1 Stud
1	Dark Red	Plate 1 x 2 with 1 Stud
1	White	Plate 1 x 2 with Door Rail
4	White	Plate 1 x 2 with Handle
1	White	Plate 2 x 2
1	White	Plate 2 x 3 Rounded with Hole
4	Trans-Orange	Rock 1 x 1 Gem Facetted
4	Light-Gray	Technic Bushing
8	White	Technic Bushing
4	Light-Gray	Technic Bushing 1/2 Smooth
1	White	Tile 1 x 2 Grille with Groove
4	Dark Red	Tile 1 x 2 Grille with Groove
1	White	Tile 1 x 4

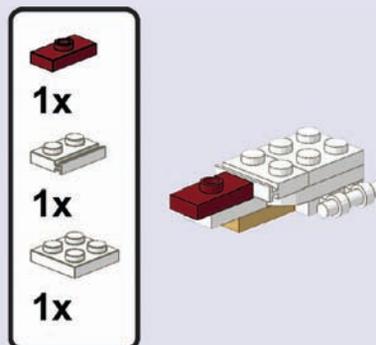
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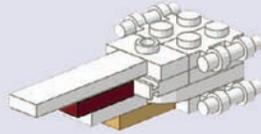
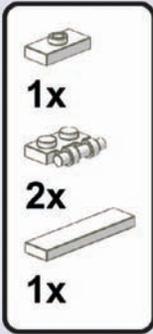


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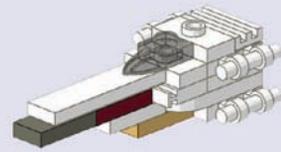
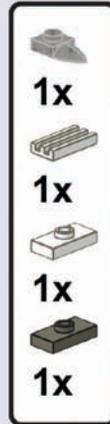


You can see more of Christopher's models at:
<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?m=Legostein>

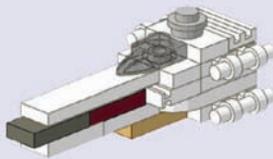
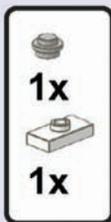
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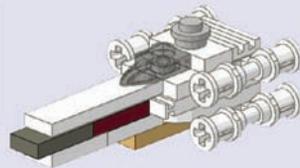
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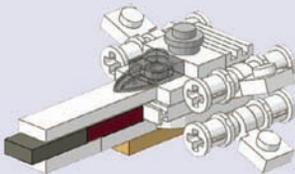
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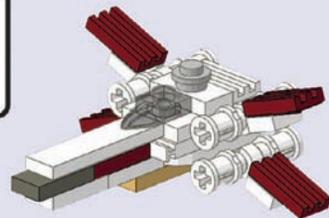
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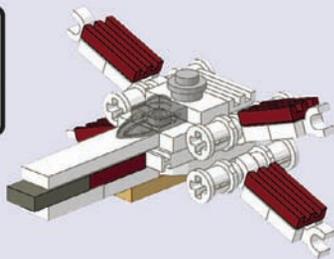
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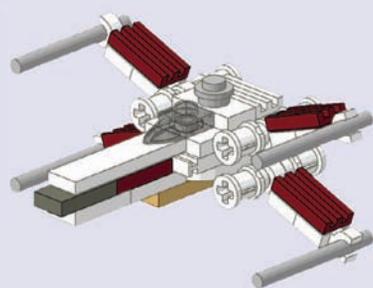
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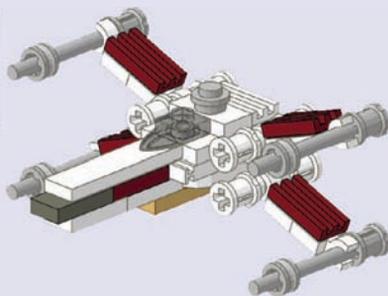
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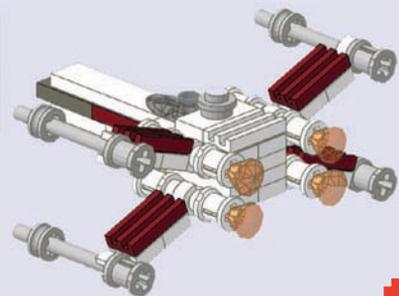
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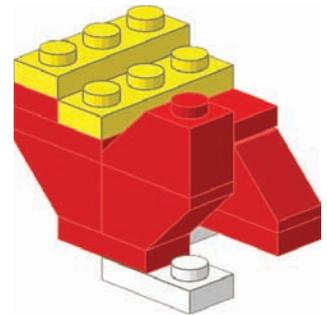
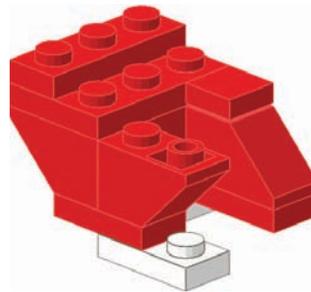
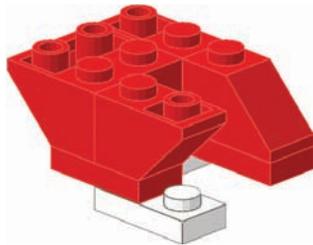
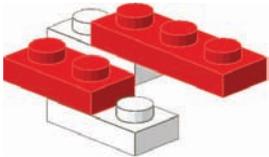
You Can Build It: MINILAND Figures

Building a Photographer

*Article, photo and art
by Didier Enjary*

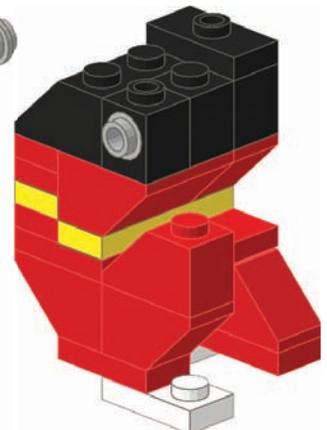
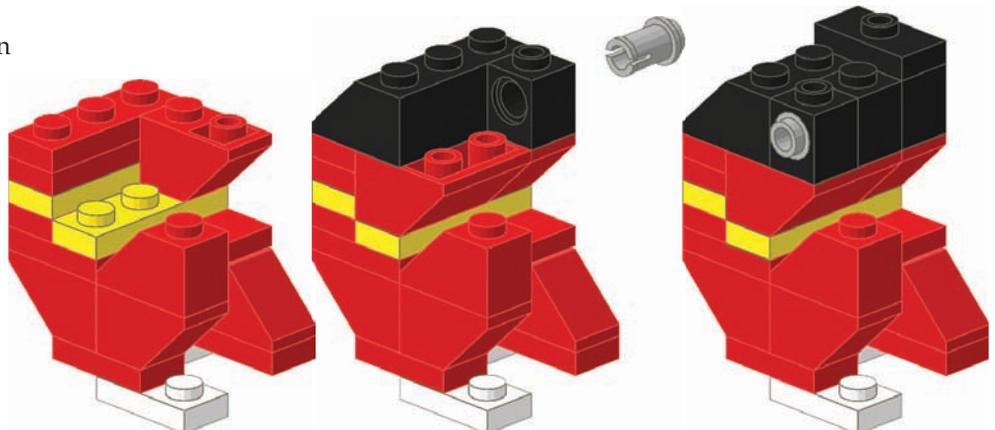
Miniland figures are all about representing real people's activities. The LEGOLAND designers get inspiration from what they experience on a daily basis. And what do LEGO-LAND visitors do while walking throughout the park? They take pictures. It has probably given many ideas to the designers.

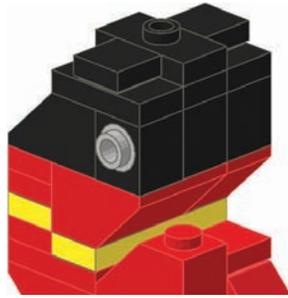
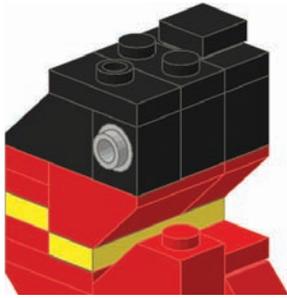
What makes this figure interesting is mostly its unusual squatting position. With help of just a handful of slope bricks, you can represent the left knee, almost touching the floor, and the right leg, folded up to assure stability.



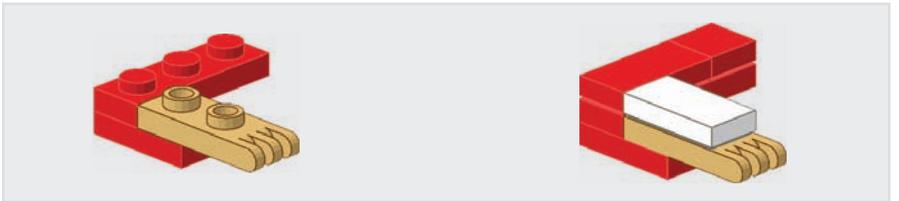
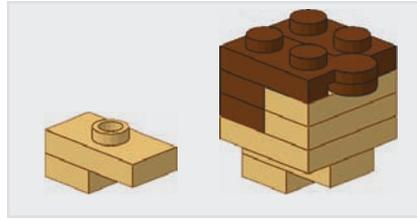
Two plates of a contrasting colour (in this case yellow versus red) highlight the waistline.

The shoulder consists of a half pin fitted into a Technic 1x1 brick. However, this way to attach arms is not strong enough to prevent them from rotating and from falling down. You will need to tighten the connection by inserting a small and thin piece of paper and by pushing it with the half pin into the hole. The model in the park is most probably glued, but you don't want to glue your LEGO parts, do you?

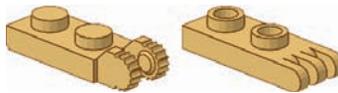




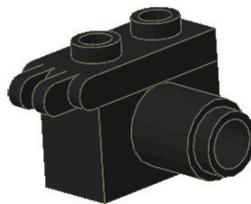
The use of the jumper plates and tiles make the transition between the shoulders and the neck smoother, also enabling a central position to attach the head. If you read *Brick-Journal* on a regular basis, you are already used to the Miniland head design.



The 1x2 hinge plate is used as a right hand - and, with its three fingers, it perfectly fits in this role.



However, in tan color, this part does not appear in any set and has been produced only for the Miniland designers' needs. You have two choices : either you use another colour (white or yellow for instance), either you use its modern counterpart (the locking version).



This hand holds the camera, which is cleverly made out of an unusual combination of a Technic 1x2 brick and a 1x1 round brick, connected stud to hole.

As you can see, the only difference between the alternate models is the colours. You can reproduce the yellow one but you will probably not have enough green tiles to achieve the other one. Anyway, it is time to build your own version of the photographer! Have fun! 

You can find Didier's photos at: <http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?m=dickydidier>



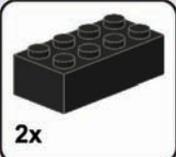
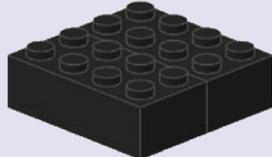
You Can Build It: BURN•E

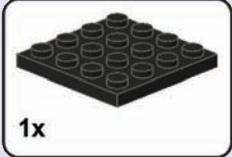
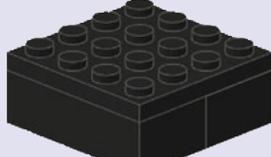
Design by Angus MacLane, Instructions by Joe Meno

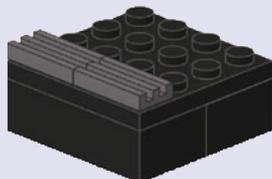
Angus' BURN•E model was seen in his interview, and was made as a gift to the crew behind the BURN•E movie he directed. Now, thanks to the help of Angus and Pixar, you can build BURN•E! Enjoy! 

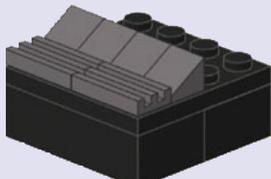


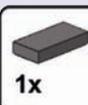
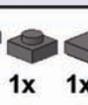
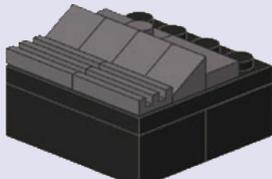
Photo ©Disney/Pixar

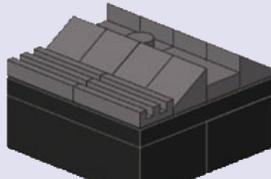
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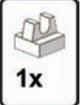
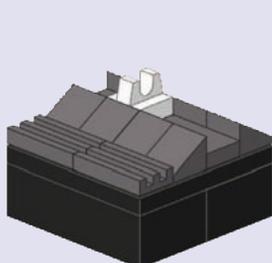
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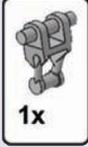
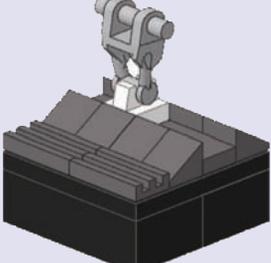
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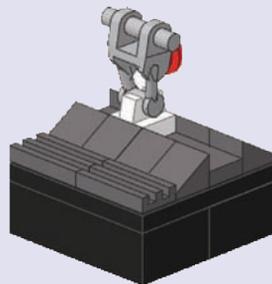
4  4x 

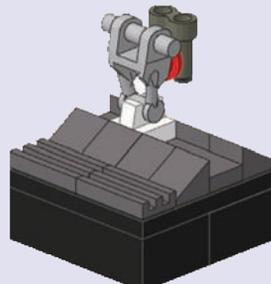
5  1x  1x  1x 

6  4x 

7  1x 

8  1x 

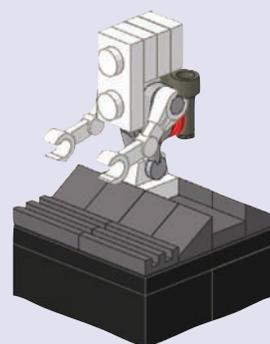
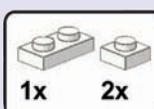
9  1x 

10  1x 

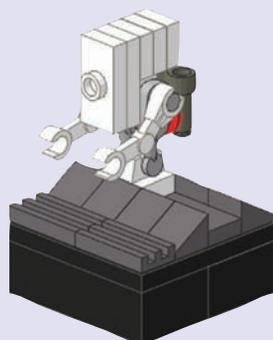
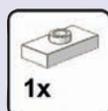
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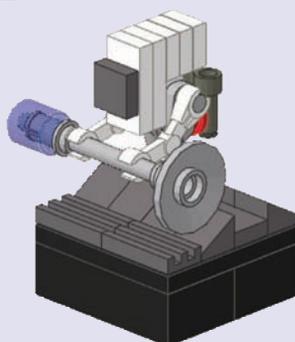
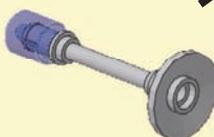
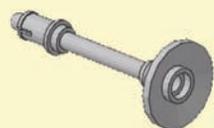
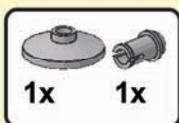
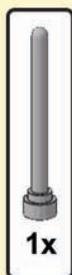
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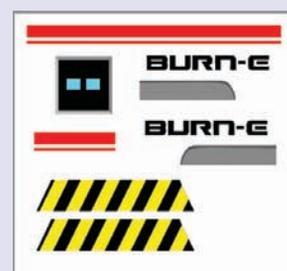
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Parts List

Qty	Description	Color
1	Tile 1 x 1 with Clip	White
2	Minifig Mechanical Arm	White
1	1 x 1 with Clip Horizontal	White
1	Plate 1 x 1	Dark Stone Gray (New Dark Gray)
2	Plate 1 x 1	White
1	Brick 1 x 1 Round with Hollow Stud	Trans Blue (or trans dark blue)
1	Antenna 4H	Stone Gray (New Gray)
8	Slope Brick 31 1 x 1 x 2/3	Dark Stone Gray (New Dark Gray)
2	Tile 1 x 2 Grille with Groove	Dark Stone Gray (New Dark Gray)
1	Plate 4 x 4	Black
2	Brick 2 x 4	Black
1	Plate 1 x 2 with 1 Stud	White
1	Plate 1 x 2	White
1	Plate 1 x 1 Round	Red
1	Minifig Tool Binoculars Town	Dark Gray
2	Tile 1 x 1 with Groove	Dark Stone Gray (New Dark Gray)
1	Technic Pin 1/2	Stone Gray (New Gray)
1	Tile 1 x 2 with Groove	Dark Stone Gray (New Dark Gray)
1	Minifig Mechanical Torso	Stone Gray (New Gray)
1	Dish 2 x 2 Inverted	Stone Gray (New Gray)

Decals



Decal placement can be seen in the photos in Angus MacLane's interview. Send a note to admin@brickjournal.com for the file or a decal sheet!

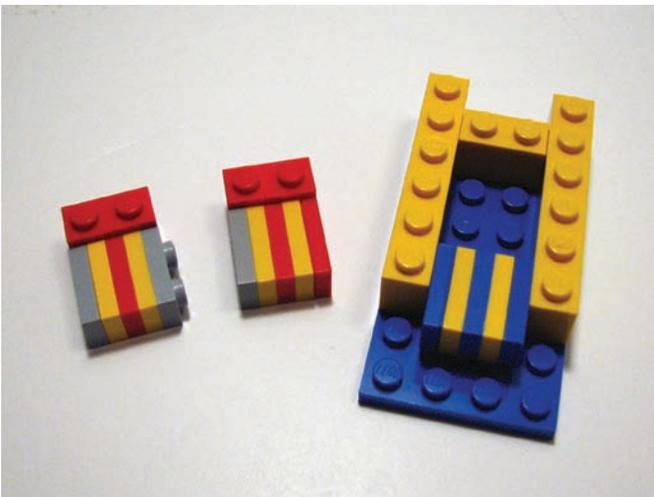
You Can Build It: Building Techniques by Scott Lyttle

Got SNOT?

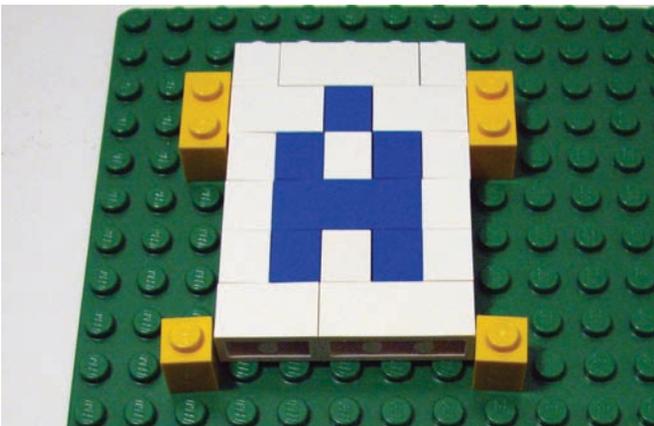
Part 1 of an ongoing series, where a LEGO builder discusses building techniques



Figure 1: Three basic LEGO elements (L-R): Bricks, Plates, Tiles.



Five plates and 1 tile turned sideways is the same dimension as a 2 studs wide brick. This is what makes SNOT possible.



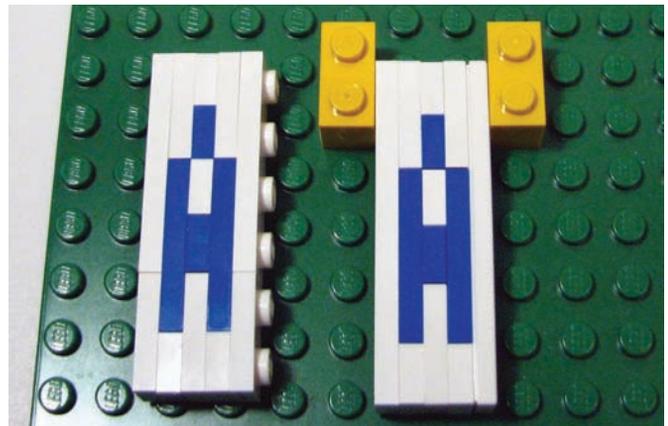
The Letter "A", shown in regular "studs up", with a SNOT "A" at the right. Note that the SNOT "A" takes up much less space. Small, detailed signs can be made using this technique.

Looking at advanced LEGO creations, you may see details embedded in walls, or signage, or maybe an angled roof line. How are these details achieved? The answer is SNOT! SNOT means "Studs Not On Top" — a way of [using LEGO elements in an exciting way. To build using SNOT techniques, you need a few simple rules and the three basic LEGO elements: bricks, plates, and tiles.

The Foundation of SNOT – "The 2:5 Rule"

Stack up five plates, turn them sideways, and compare them to a 2-bump wide brick. Notice the stack (except for the "bumps," actually called studs, on the fifth plate and the brick are the same width. Replace the top plate with a tile, and the new stack of 4 plates and 1 tile matches the two-stud width perfectly. This "2 (studs wide) to 5 (plates sideways)" is the core of SNOT construction, known as the "2:5 Rule". Very interesting—but how is this used?

A great use of SNOT is making letters and signs. A studs-up "A" needs 5 studs, but with SNOT, the "A" needs only 2 studs—a savings of 3 studs!



As long as you keep using the 2:5 Rule, you can multiply your SNOT construction with little issue. Multiplying by 2, a construction of 10 plates sideways equals four studs wide. Doing a little math, 10 plates is 3 bricks with one tile, so SNOT doesn't always use a lot of plates!

A great application of SNOT is roads. Why not make a smooth road for your LEGO cars? Most LEGO roads are 16 studs wide. That is, $16/2 \times 5$ plates = 40 plates, or 33 bricks + 1 plate. You can add details like lane dividers and medians, simply by using plates. You could also make streams and creeks using blue bricks, or even trails using brown bricks. Almost anything is possible as long as you keep to the 2-stud wide spacing interval, to let you "sandwich" the SNOT construction. Try making your own signs and roads. Feel free to explore what the 2:5 rule does. See the picture below to see how SNOT roads can be worked into a layout. Doing SNOT the first few times can get you confused and frustrated. If you don't get it at first, KEEP TRYING!

In the next article installment, I'll show you how to integrate SNOT into more traditional LEGO applications, and how to take the 2:5 rule into further detail. 

You can find photos of Scott's work at:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/datafx7/>

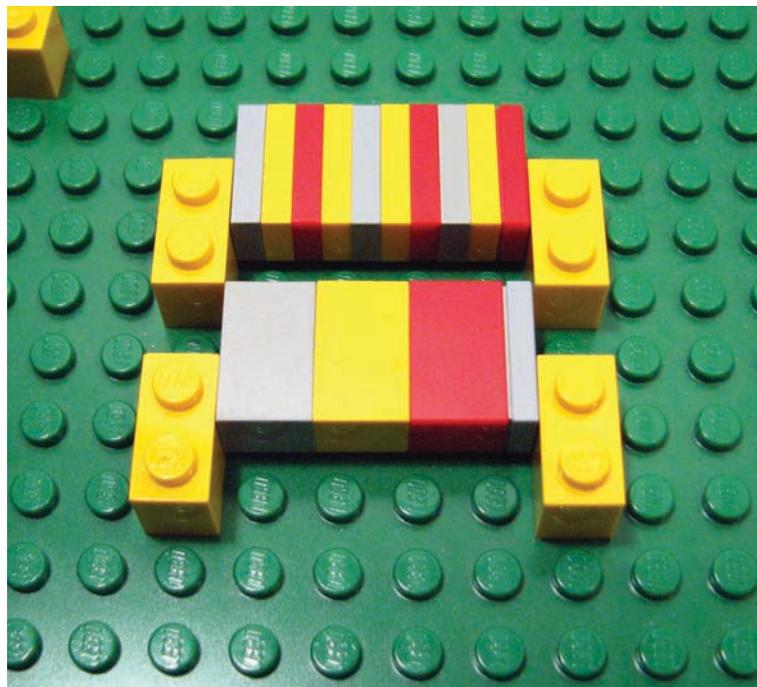


Figure 4: The 2:5 rule, doubled to show "4:10", and how bricks can be used in place of plates as part of core SNOT construction.



A little advanced SNOT, showing a bike trail and a smooth road. The bike trail is 2 studs wide, and the road is 16 studs wide.

Presenting Custom Figures with Digital Backgrounds: Photoshop Effect

*Article and photos by Jamie Spencer
Foreword by Jared K. Burks*

Foreword:

The Minifig Customization article series has covered the basic topics required to design and create a custom Minifig and some accessory items. The series will now expand on the presentation side of custom figures. Basic digital photography was covered in an earlier article, but today's article will take digital presentation several steps forward. Jamie "Morgan19" Spencer is a master at creating digital backgrounds for his custom figures. These backgrounds place his figures in their design element. These digital effects present his custom figures in a very unique way. Several examples of his work can be seen by looking at his prolific contest entries in the Fine Clonier Forum Contests (Flickr gallery: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/morgan19/collections/72157610665012481/>). Jamie's backdrops compliment and contextually frame his figures further taking the viewer into his creation. Therefore, I asked him to share some of his secrets behind how he creates these digital backdrops.

So you've got created some great minifigures to show the world, but want to jazz up their presentation for that extra bit of visual punch? This guide lays out the basic steps of pairing your minifigs with a digital background using Adobe's Photoshop software.

Step 1: Photography

Getting a good photograph of your minifig on a solid-colored, clutter-free background (preferably white) is an important factor in creating this type of graphic: if the source photo is poor quality, no amount of post-processing in Photoshop is going to change that. There is a great tutorial on the Digital Photography School's website about building your own inexpensive lightbox that works wonderfully as a basic photographing setup: just do a Google search for "dps inexpensive light tent".

Step 2: "Photoshopping" your photo

Even with a good camera and lightbox setup, your photos can still look better with a few quick touch ups in Photoshop. Cleaning up a photo is a fairly simple process thanks to the three "Auto" commands: Auto Levels, Auto Contrast, and Auto Color. The first two generally play nicely with most photos but Auto Color can be hit-or-miss at times, so additional manual editing with the Hue/Saturation and Brightness/Contrast sliders may be necessary to achieve proper color balance.



This is a comparison shot of a photo pulled straight from the camera vs. one that's been touched up in Photoshop with the Auto commands.

Step 3: Remove the photo's background

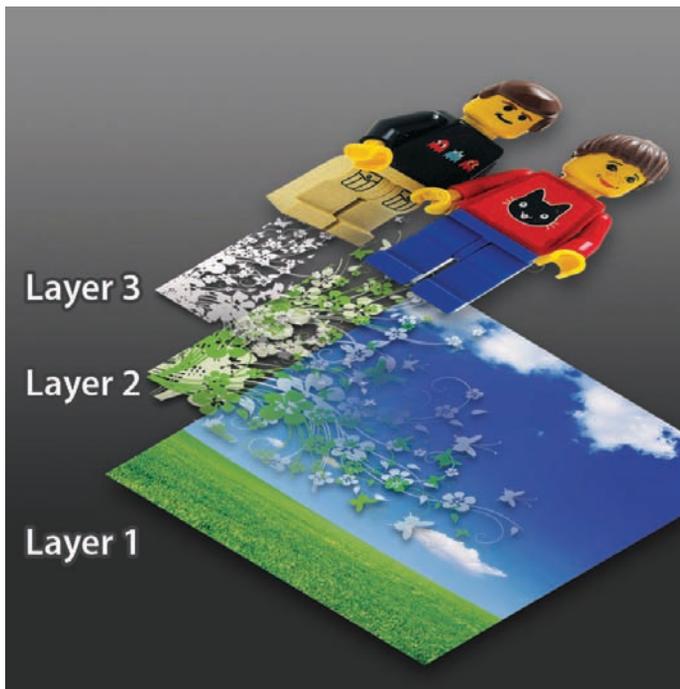
Removing the photo's opaque background is an important step in ensuring you will have an easy to work with image of your figures. Use the Magic Wand tool to select broad areas of the background at first, then zoom in to select missed areas as well as refine any rough areas as needed with the Lasso tool. Once you are happy with the selected area, delete it from the layer: you should end up with your figures floating over a transparent background like the image shown here. By removing the background, you can now easily transfer your figures over other images and place any image behind them as well.



Step 4: Create the new background

Gathering up the images that will eventually form your digital background can be tricky, but can also be made easier by some simple planning. Before you start throwing graphics together in a jumbled mess, stop and think about what *feel* you would like your final image to have. Light and happy? Dark and foreboding? Worn and faded? It's important to choose the right types of background images to compliment your figures: you want the two elements to feel natural, not forced, when paired together. Google Images, StockXchng, iStockphoto, and Shutterstock are all excellent image resources.

Once you have a few images to work with, start with a base of one simple background before adding any embellishments: a texture, color, or in this case, a photo of a green meadow and blue sky. After the base background is placed, continue by adding in design accents such as slightly transparent textures, color variations, or illustrative elements over the main background. This part is largely trial-and-error: see what looks "right". Play around with Photoshop's transparency settings, blending modes, and filters on each new layer to see what effects you can achieve—setting layers to the Overlay blending mode in particular can give some interesting, coherent effects.



Remember that your background does not need to be overly complicated to be effective. The goal is to create a pleasing background image that compliments your figures without overloading the viewer with tons of visual stimulation. The sample meadow background is only made from three layers: the meadow background, a floral illustration set to Overlay blending mode, and a smaller version of the illustration in solid white to add visual weight.



Step 5: Final touches

As you can probably tell from Step 4's image, simply placing your figures on a background doesn't look quite *right*. The final step in creating your image is adding extra elements to blend the figures and backgrounds together such as shadows and lighting: these two elements can really help make the figures look like they belong in the background instead of simply floating over it. The overall rule to keep in mind with light and shadow is to always work with your original light source. Make sure any additional glows and darkness are placed realistically in relation to your original light source. You don't want to have shadows coming off the brightly lit side of a figure, for example.

There are plenty of additional Photoshop tricks beyond the scope of this guide that you can use to make your digital backgrounds look great. But following the basic philosophy outlined here of "good photography, complimentary backgrounds, and realistic lighting" is the foundation for further developing your own style of background-enhanced minifigs. **b**

Next Time:

Minifig Customization 101 – Casting Custom Elements with Resin Plastics using Silicon Rubber Molds

You can find out more about minifig customizing at Jared's site:
<http://www.fineclonier.com/>



This year's LEGO World was fantastic!

LEGO World started in 2001 in Zwolle, The Netherlands (Holland), when it attracted 22,000 visitors and has been held every October since. It is the largest public LEGO event in the world and has had national television coverage in The Netherlands the entire time. This year over 70,000 visitors came to experience a great LEGO day out over the six-day event!

Most of the fans arrived on Wednesday, the 15th of October to set up their displays. The event opened the next morning and continued every day until 5pm on October 21st!

The public experience began in the queue outside the Isselhallen (the Dutch conference centre that hosts the event), where they were entertained by actors and jugglers or brass bands as they waited impatiently for 10am and the opening of the doors. Once through the entrance, visitors found themselves entering the over 4000 square meter 'De Bouwsteen' Hall (named for the Dutch LEGO Fan group). Here they found the creations of the AFOLs from across Europe and the rest of the world.

This year's impressive displays included BeLug (the Belgian LEGO Users Group), Leo's new large castle model, The Great Ball Contraption, a massive pirate-themed roller coaster, a history of LEGO trains in a large layout, hundreds of meters of LEGO train track, a FABULAND collection (including some sweet MOCs), space, castle, Bionicle creations, Vikings and much, much more!

Intermixed with the fan displays were around a dozen secondhand LEGO resellers with large stock of classic LEGO sets and parts, as well as some fast-food vendors.

Also in this hall were the LEGO Designers from Billund.

Event Report

LEGO WORLD 2008: The Biggest Gets Bigger!

Zwolle, Holland

*Article and Photography
by Megan Rothrock*



Around thirty staff members from the PMD design team (LEGO set designers) were present and the following themes had displays: *CASTLE, AGENTS, INDIANA JONES, RACERS, TECHNIC, CREATOR, BIONICLE, STAR WARS* and *CITY*. All of the designers were happy to engage in conversation and seemed to be having a great time. The new Medieval Village set was on display too (nice cows!) as well as a sneak peek at some of the new sets for next year.

The Intertoys store was also in this hall. Intertoys is the largest Dutch toy store chain and seemed to move an amazing amount of LEGO boxes over the six days. It's great for the kids to get so excited and then be able to not only get classic sets from the second-hand stalls but brand new sets from this store at a discount.

The next hall contained stands selling more candy than you'd find in a candy store. Nestled amongst the sugar was the LEGO Shop from Germany with a full Shop at Home stock including the Taj Mahal and the VW Beetle, and LEGO Customer Service from the UK. Also here was the 'Museum' display, this year the cases contained every non-Clikits LEGO set ever launched with girls as the target group. Paul Wolters, the Chairman of de Bouwsteen found that many people said to him "The LEGO Group has never made anything for girls" and so he decided that this year's LEGO Museum would be dedicated to the girl's LEGO product lines. This would allow people to see that the company has actually done a lot for girls in the past, and hopefully will return to this in the future.

The Duplo hall came next, there kids could build all day long with Duplo bricks and circus performers and local kids



*Top: The main hall of the event.
Middle: Mos Eisley Cantina players perform.
Left: Looking at all the LEGO models.*

performing groups were live all day. There was also several Belville building tables, containing many pink bricks! Also, the kids could have their pictures taken with the Belville Princess.

The next room was the STAR WARS hall running parallel to the public restaurant. It was kept quite dark, giving a nice STAR WARS feel. Hein-Jan Kemperman had his huge diorama of the Hoth ice planet, with giant AT-ATs and custom-wired LEDs that flashed on the ground and from some of the weapons. There was a Clone Trooper Contest: whoever built the most Clone Troopers in 30 seconds won! There were replica props from the movie including R2-D2. Unfortunately there was no signage to indicate where these models came from, so they may have been originals!?. They also had a cabinet containing a fun brick-built Mos Eisley Cantina, with lights and music when you pushed buttons. The kids really enjoyed it.

The next large hall had a huge jungle in the middle of it, complete with a running stream, and pond and several tens of tons of sand. In the jungle were brick-built animals (like you'd see in LEGOLAND) and at the end of the walk was Indiana Jones himself (brick built) standing next to a jeep on a hill.

There was a huge building area, with more than a dozen tables piled high with random bricks and very large building 'pits' so the kids could build either on the floor or on the tables. The parts were incredibly varied and a brief search revealed Stormtroopers, Classic Spacemen, Forestmen, Blacktron and very old firemen and all the related bricks from their themes mixed into the piles. The Building Competition on these tables had been popular with the kids and parents every year since LEGO World began and this year was the largest one yet. When I was there, the corner and sides of the area were filled with hundred of models, all from just that day! But let's face it, if you think about having the chance to build all day with endless LEGO bricks, you would take it.

At the end of this large hall was a very big Mindstorms display, all built by the Dutch MINDSTORMS club. A very impressive black Ferris wheel (visible from the other end of the hall) slowly turned with a large ball-sized Great Ball Contraption. It carried a big ball in a basket on the wheel, and dropped it at the other side. A MINDSTORMS-built

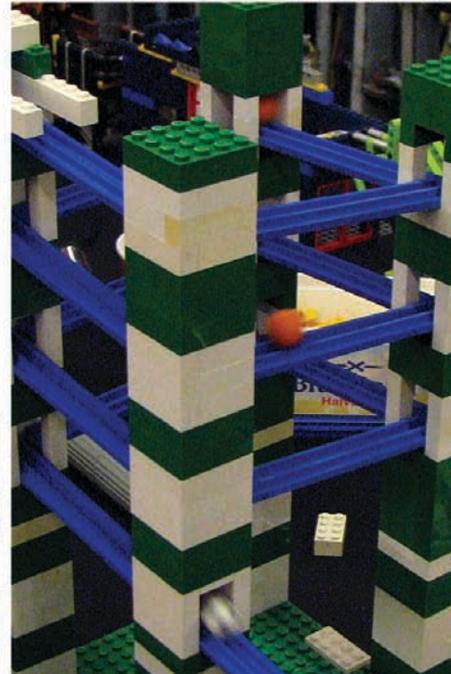
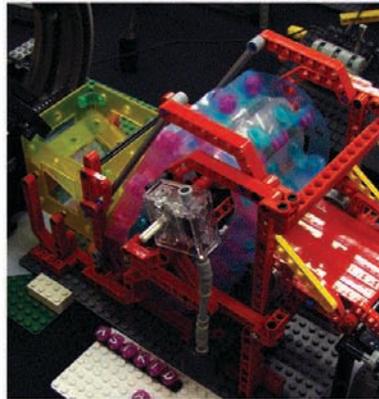
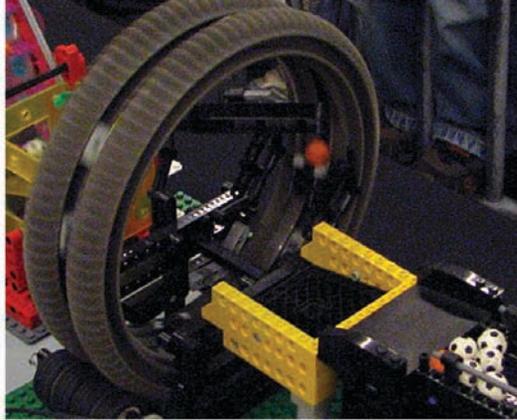


Top: One of the building tables being used by young LEGO fans.

Middle: Children look on as the Great Ball Contraption goes through its paces.

Above: The underwater MINDSTORMS excavator.

Right: The LEGO Museum display at LEGO World Zwolle.



WALL•E built by Mark-Andre Bazergul was also there all the way from Montreal, Canada. Next to him was a large aquarium filled with water containing an underwater excavator (yes, underwater)! My mind twitched as I saw its arm move in the water. All I could think was 'how long will its Power Functions motor hold out?'" (Apparently this varies from three hours to three weeks!)

Last but not least was the Jetix Hall with a large stage, bleachers, and filled with thousands of kids. It was dark and the lights were bright. Dutch pop music rang out through the room. The audience clapped, and danced

Above: The Great Ball Contraption, where large balls traveled from one section to another through various means.

Below Left: A table covered with creations built by visitors.

Below Right: Part of the Fabuland display, built by Sybrand Bonsma.

along, and the adults and trapped fans cringed and tried to ignore the noise!

There was also a large Bionicle play area off to the side, for kids to play with some Bionicle, the music seemed to not bother them too much.

All and all it was a very busy, fun, crazy, silly, great LEGO time, See you there next year! 



Building for Speed at LEGO World

Imagine a long building table with 80-plus bags of loose LEGO bricks (mostly gray), a large spiral-bound instruction book that's thicker than some phone books, six charged-up builders and a running clock! This was the scene for the speed build for the LEGO Death Star, and after a frenzy of gray bricks flying and a flurry of yellow garbed builders, but in the end the World Record was successfully broken! 2 hours, 34 minutes and 26 seconds became the new speed build record for the Death Star!

There was another speed build at LEGO World this year, this one was for the Taj Mahal set. Unfortunately the record for this model still stands but they will surely try again next year. The final time was 1 hour, 53 minutes and 24 seconds.



Hans de Vlieger (Belgium), Bruno Kurth (Germany), Maico Arts (Netherlands), Bas (one of the LEGO Designers of the Death Star), Tom Klimek (Germany), Eugene Gerner (Netherlands), Dirk Plug (Netherlands)



Model

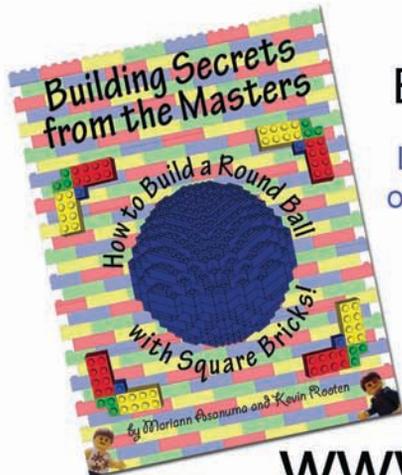
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Ever wanted to build like the Pros?

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www.modelbuildingsecrets.com





BrickCon: Seattle's LEGO Fan Event

Article and Photography by Joe Meno

Seattle, Washington is a center of LEGO fandom on the first weekend of October. Last year was no different, as BrickCon (formerly called Northwest BrickCon) took place. Over 235 attendees from throughout the US and beyond gathered to talk, meet and show off their work to fellow builders and the public.

Activity on the event started months before, and the result was a bigger display and turnout than ever before. The number of attendees was the highest to date, and the public turnout in just the first day surpassed the *total* public turnout to the previous year. Total public attendees numbered just under 7000 for the entire weekend.

Attendees this year included LEGO staff members from both the US and home office in Denmark. A Creative Director, Matthew Ashton, was the speaker for one of the attendee-only night presentations. What began as a review of his resume and history at the LEGO Group became a look at how sets are designed and created in the company, with a little help from a set designer, Nicholas Groves.

With the presentation were slides showing sketches and preliminary models of some sets, making this a fascinating look at the work that goes behind the scenes behind the themes. To wrap up the night was a quick 'fashion show'...

After some female volunteers were selected, each one of them was given a female minifigure to present down the catwalk (actually, the stage) while Matthew was the emcee. He

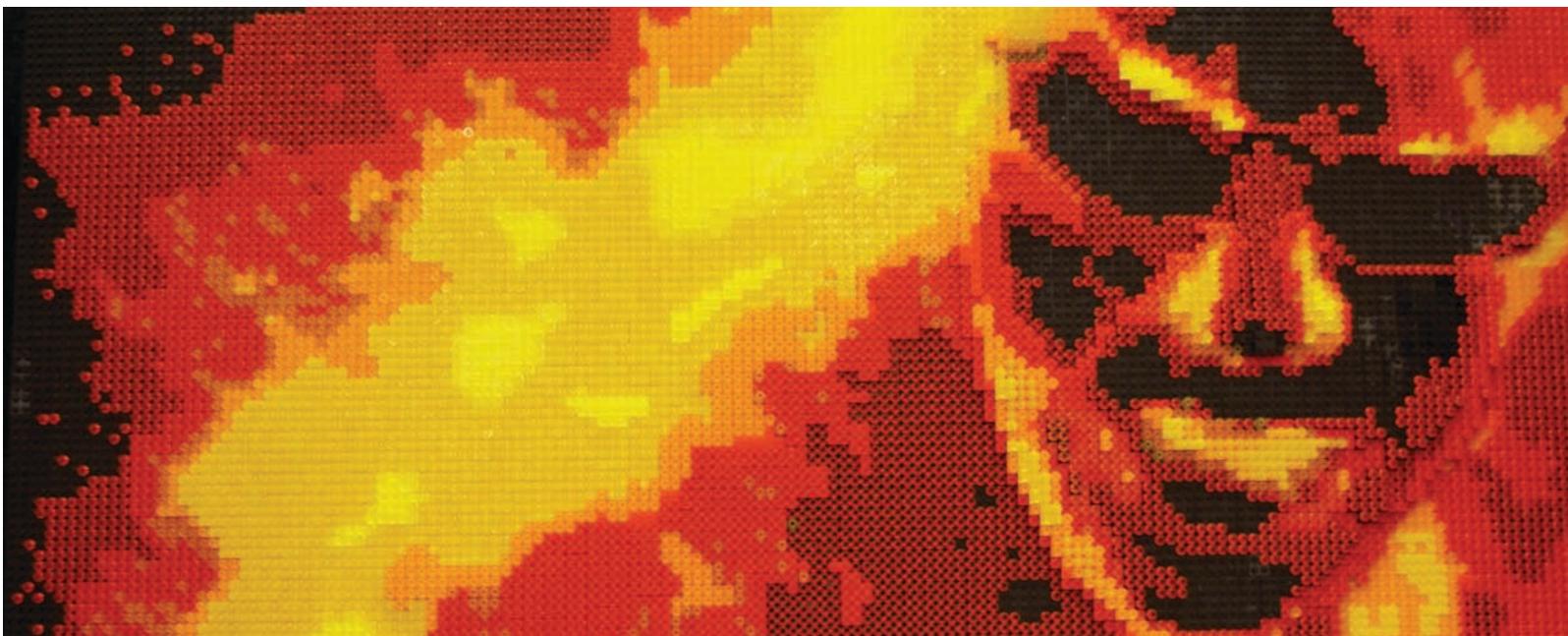
described each minifig and projected slides of each one as they took their moment in the limelight. At the end, the best minifig was voted on by applause. Who won? Well, you had to be there to know...since some of the minifigures had not been released at that time. There also was an unveiling of a new set, the Medieval Town!

There were other things for the attendees, such as speed builds of sets (how fast can a helicopter set be built?) and also more social activities, such as Dirty Brickster, which is a gift-giving game that is a LEGO-based variant of the "white elephant" party game. Participants brought in wrapped gifts of a set value, and each had a chance to select a gift from the pool or steal an unwrapped gift from another person. There was also an after-hours sales event at the local LEGO store, where attendees could get parts and sets at an event-only discount.

The atmosphere for all of this was one of familiarity, much like a meeting of old friends. This has been one of the great things behind BrickCon: it's always a friendly event. This is one of the many things that BrickCon Event Coordinator Wayne Hussey is happy with:

"What I'm most proud about is that people who come to our Con can play and have fun! We have always kept the formality aspect small - it's about the people."

It's also about the displays. Returning for this year was a detailed 22 foot-long model of the passenger ship *Titanic* built





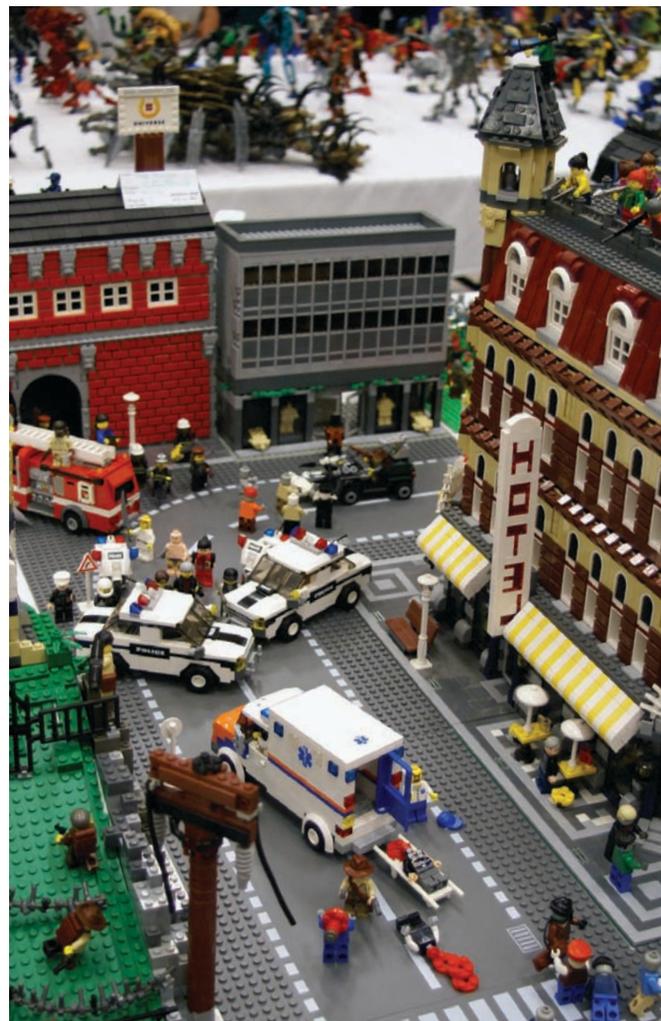
by Scott Fowler. However, the model was now finished, and the decks were lined with minifigures waving to passersby. Other large-scale models included a Seattle Space Needle (with motorized elevators) and a layout of Disneyland's Main Street Town Square, built by Steven Walker.

There were other displays too. Trains wound through cities with stores and offices, with landmarks like a bowling alley and another Space Needle model. Another layout was themed to castles, so knights and peasants, as well as trolls and dragons (and even amazons) were seen.

The layout that got the most attention though, was the LEGO Zombie Apocafest, which asked the simple question: How would a city and its citizens deal with a zombie invasion? Judging from the layout, it wasn't pretty. Another layout for the sci-fi crowd was the Battlestar Galactica Viper Fly-in, where a hanger was built and builders were invited to build and bring in a Viper starfighter. More vipers showed up than were expected, so what began as a bay became a gallery of Galactica models.

Other outstanding models included busts by Shawn Snyder, including a motorized Terminator head), the cars built by Lino Martins, mosaics by Brandon Griffith, and the BIONICLE creations by Breanna Sledge. Over the two public days, visitors were shocked and awed by the many creations, and many of the younger guests stopped and built at the building area. The crowds were thick, and the smiles were plenty.





And that is the best things about BrickCon – each year there are more with the attendees and with the public. This year, BrickCon will have its eighth event, and no doubt there will be more of the same things that make the event special: people, models, and smiles. 



Building Models and Conventions: A Chat with Wayne Hussey



Wayne Hussey is the Event Coordinator to BrickCon and was able to speak with me about the event. He also built the model that won Best Technic this year, a motorized creation that demonstrated Probability, which was also its name.

How long has BrickCon been running, and how long have you been running it?

2008 was the 7th BrickCon/NWBrickCon. I've been running it for 3-1/2 years (co-coordinator for 2005, full coordinator since). We are entering our 8th year.

What brought BrickCon about?

NWBrickCon was started by Mark Neumann in 2002. The first Con was a pure display free to the public without any of the "formal con" stuff. We did initiate the "friendly get together" aspect from the start. (Fortunately for me, it was held shortly after I became unemployed, which allowed me to complete and present my Issaquah Class Ferry Boat model (seven feet long and can be seen here: <http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=25801>.)

What are the challenges you faced in the beginning and now?

For me (2005 on), the challenge has always been to balance the desires of the attendees ("More Con, less public") with the reality that the public pays for the show ("More public, less Con"). Since I have been the director, the Con has grown from 85 attendees and 2500 public to 235 attendees and 6900 public. I believe that I have been able to manage the balance. My constant goal is to improve the experience for both the attendee and the public.

What's the hardest part of the convention? The easiest? Hardest - Getting EVERYTHING together in the last couple days before setting up - the details are myriad. There is so much physical STUFF to make sure gets to the Con that I'm surprised it all fits in one (large) truck - and that I can remember most of it.

Easiest - Bragging about all the great experiences people get at "my" Con.

What are you most proud of about BrickCon?

What I'm most proud about is that people who come to our Con can play and have fun! We have always kept the formality aspect small - it's about the people. Also, I'm very proud to say that our Con has grown in size and reputation during my time as head honcho.

You can see the awards listing and other information about BrickCon at its website: www.brickcon.org. BrickCon 2009 is in October, so if you are interested in attending this event, register at the website!

If you want to see much more photography, you can go online to Flickr:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/brickjournal/sets/72157607830555487/>



Event Report

Some of you may already know that the last weekend in September has become a special time for LEGO fans. The weekend marks the annual Skærbæk LEGO fan meeting, AFOL Weekend. It is an international event, which is open to all LEGO fans around the world and the general public.

The event is held at the Skærbæk Fritidscenter (<http://www.kursus-fritidscenter.dk/>), a community center that includes tidy, accommodating cabins and many sports amenities. Skærbæk is a small town located in the southwest of Jutland, Denmark, which is about an hour's drive from the LEGO headquarters in the town of Billund. Billund is also home to the original LEGOLAND theme park.

This year, people from fifteen different countries attended the event, including participants from Brazil and the USA. Most of the participants stayed in the cabins. Throughout the weekend some of the fans got together and created their own mode of celebrating. There were BBQs, and after parties. The Fritidscenter has a large party cabin, which was perfectly suitable for all of the festivities.

Skærbæk was officially opened by Lisbeth Valther Pallesen, the Executive Vice President of LEGO. Pallesen made some warm, welcoming remarks. This year, LEGO CEO Jørgen Vig Knudstorp and his family stopped by to join in the fun.

There were some great models on display. Of particular note were the French-built Bugatti Car that was near to actual and the German-built Empire State building.

Activities on Saturday featured a speed building competition.

AFOL Weekend 2008: Playing and Displaying Together in Denmark

Skærbæk, Denmark

Written by:

*Caspar J. Bennedsen, Megan Rothrock
and Nina Chatelain*

The Taj Mahal and the Death Star playset were built by teams of five to seven people. Saturday also featured a special Danish dinner and further building challenges. The first challenge was called 'weird building', where each person attending the dinner was given fifteen LEGO parts that had been carefully chosen by LEGO Designer Pierre Normandin. The challenge was to build a model out of the parts in ten minutes. The pieces included two 1 x 6 right-side reverse slopes, and half of a round click hinge. I can say from personal experience that it was not easy, but it was definitely a lot of fun!

The next building challenge was a group effort. Each group consisted of six people who were given the challenge to build a MOC in ten minutes out of a basic 200-300 brick set.

The final event of the evening was an auction of old sets and parts, including some rare Japanese LEGO stickers. The proceeds from the auction went towards covering the costs of the event.

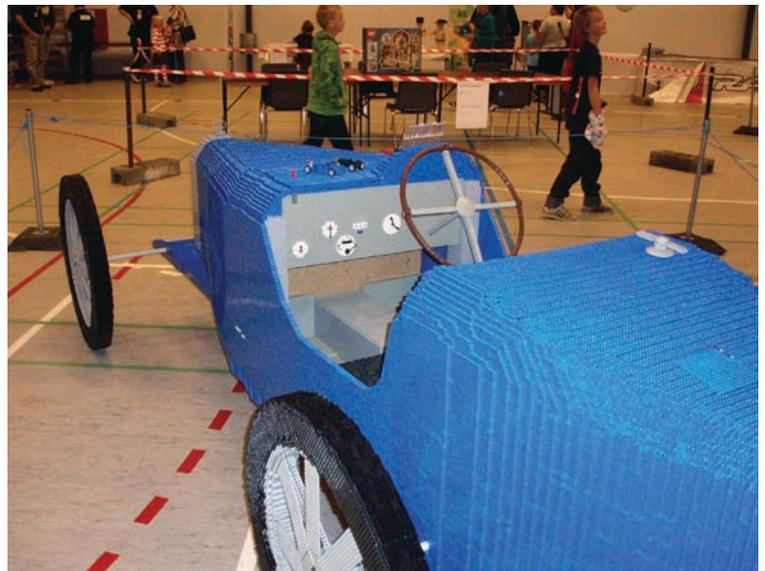
On Monday after the event was over, Jan Beyer of Lego Community Team invited all of the participants to visit the LEGO Idea House in Billund. Fifteen of the participants who had never before had the opportunity to visit the LEGO Factory were given a guided tour through the production department. Some of the AFOLs who attended Skærbæk extended their visit a day longer to visit LEGOLAND. Even though it rained a little that day, everyone had a great time.

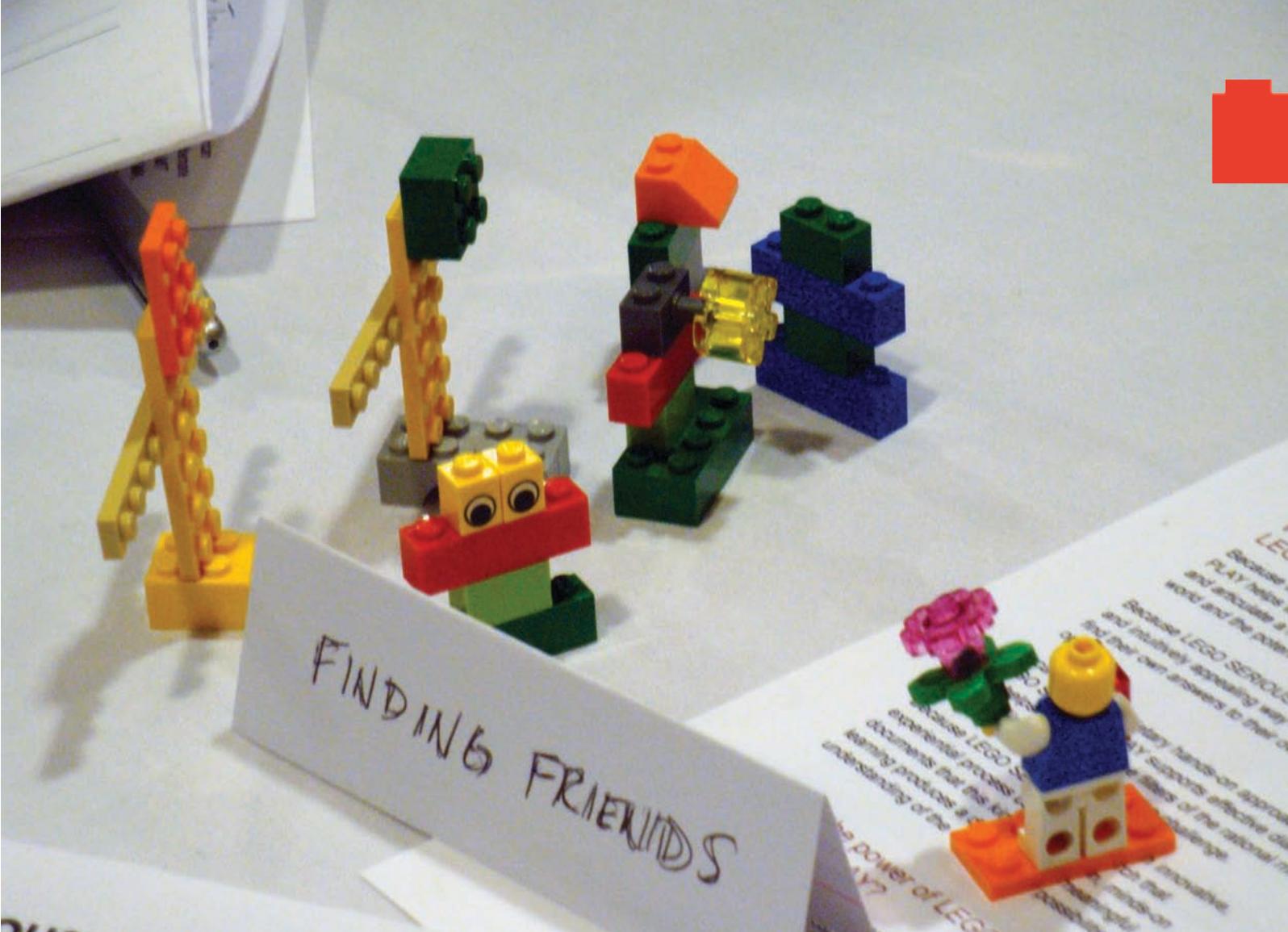
Skærbæk is a very fun, relaxing event, and one that allows time to socialize with other fans. 

For further information, and more photos, including next year's event dates visit: <http://www.afol-weekend.net/>



Some of the many creations that were displayed at AFOL Weekend.





The technology industry as a whole is much like a LEGO fan convention, it's very male-dominated. During the dot-com boom of 2000-2001, 28% of undergraduate degrees in computer science went to women. However today, according to the New York Times, those numbers have shrunk back down to fewer than 10 percent. Proponents of diversity in the workplace speak of the need for more women in technology, citing the value of women's unique skills, perspectives, and thought processes to the industry.

Insert WomenBuild, Microsoft's brand-new initiative they are coupling with the Microsoft Developer Network's Developer Conferences being held nationwide. The brainchild of Asli Bilgin, a Developer Evangelist for Microsoft based in New York City, WomenBuild is using LEGO SERIOUS PLAY to get the creative juices of career technologists flowing. Conference attendees participate in the problem solving session, expressing and discussing their thoughts through the LEGO bricks they are given and with the help of facilitators.

WomenBuild's goals as a Microsoft program are three-fold: to drive awareness that diversity is important in the field of technology, to build a community that attracts, retains, and empowers women in the field, and to formulate solutions for improving diversity and empowering women in technology.

WomenBuild: Using LEGO SERIOUS PLAY® to Attract More Women to Technology Careers

Article and Photography by Tim Courtney



From left to right: Alisa Swann (Microsoft), Charmaine Sullivan (Win-ovation Works), Asli Bilgin (Microsoft), Beth Humphreys (Microsoft) Renee Shull (Integrated Play), Tim Courtney.



“Get females started early in grade school. Develop video games that are female-centric. Communicate that there are variable careers besides straight coding.”

—WomenBuild Attendee

WomenBuild Launches

The idea behind WomenBuild was triggered in late October 2007, as Lynn Langit and Asli Bilgin gave an interview for Microsoft’s Channel 9 on “Becoming an Evangelist.” Lynn and Asli, both women in a male dominated industry, represented Microsoft’s technical evangelism model from the West and East Coasts respectively. In the interview, Asli discussed the natural analogy between LEGO architecture and software architecture. “Whether building with LEGO or building using code,” she says, “both require structure and creativity; combining both the left and right brain. It’s the yin and the yang, the man and the woman sort of thing.” After the interview, the pair headed out to dinner and brainstormed the concept for WomenBuild on a cocktail napkin, “where all of the best ideas come from,” she says.

Living in New York City, Bilgin’s responsibilities include building relationships with developers inside large financial services institutions including JPMC, Citi, and Goldman Sachs. As such, she is immersed on a daily basis within the two very male dominated fields of software and finance. “When I see the women leaders emerge in these fields,” she continues, “I’m duly impressed not just with the caliber of their intelligence, but the tenacity to charge through the biases in their paths.”

WomenBuild also works toward countering the stereotypical image that IT workers have to fit the nerd stereotype. “I don’t ever wear khakis, blue shirts and glasses,” says Bilgin, “and I’m definitely not a man.”

At the time of conception, Microsoft’s Developer and Platform Evangelism organization was led by Sheila Gulati, a charismatic technical female leader. Gulati championed all programs surrounding Women in Technology and actively sought out creative ideas to both attract more females into the industry and empower them through the use and mastery of software.

WomenBuild officially launched at the Professional Developer Conference in October 2008, thanks to Karen Wilkens-Mickey and Ali Parker. Mark Hindsbo, Microsoft’s General Manager for US Developer & Platform Evangelism and a native of Denmark, saw the program and immediately grasped the natural metaphor between LEGO and software. He immediately pushed for last-minute approval for WomenBuild’s current eleven city tour through the MSDN Developer Conferences. “WomenBuild, like many brilliant ideas, instinctively resonates once you hear about it,” said Hindsbo. “Combining the creativity of LEGO, with the need for more women in IT and the driving passion of Asli, Lynn and others is naturally compelling and now taking on a life of its own”.

WomenBuild’s 55-member-strong team hopes to reach 750 attendees over the course of the eleven city U. S. tour. As of this writing, WomenBuild sessions have already been held in Houston, Orlando, Atlanta, Chicago, and Minneapolis. The tour is now continuing through Washington DC, New York City, Boston, Detroit, Dallas, and San Francisco.



Some of the models built during the event.

Outcomes of WomenBuild

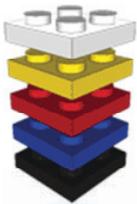
WomenBuild facilitators diligently collect feedback during each session by noting participants' comments as well as by having participants fill out written response forms about their models and insights learned from the build.

Participants can continue the discussions started at WomenBuild on the group's Facebook page. Facilitators have been uploading photos of the sessions and of proud builders with their models, and participants have started discussion thread in the group. Bilgin hopes to use the Facebook group to eventually serve as a organic mentorship tool for group members to mentor one another and as a two-way mechanism between Microsoft employees and the community.

Ultimate Goal for WomenBuild?

WomenBuild set out to tackle a BIG challenge, bringing more women into a male-dominated field. From the outset, the concept was intended to span beyond Microsoft. "WomenBuild by itself isn't enough to tackle this issue alone," said Bilgin, "...but by raising awareness, building community, and formulating solutions, Microsoft can lead the way in realizing a demographic shift over the next five to ten years." 

To see more about WomenBuild, check out the Channel 10 video by Laura Foy, or visit the Facebook Group at <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=47027341816>. Tim Courtney is a long-time contributor to and participant in the LEGO fan community and is now a technology evangelist living in the Chicago area. He can be reached via email at tim@timcourtney.net.



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In the years 2000 and 2001, the LEGO Group launched 10 sets themed to Disney's Mickey Mouse for ages 4 – 9 and three sets in the LEGO Baby series. This was, however, not the first time the LEGO Group made a license agreement with Walt Disney Productions.

As early as 1956, the LEGO Group made an agreement with Mickey Mouse Corporation in Copenhagen using Walt Disney's world-famous characters as decorations on inflatable bathing ring. The first was *Lady* from *Lady and the Tramp* (the film opened in 1955). In total, five different swim rings with Disney characters were put to market in May 1956.

Later that year, the wooden toy department presented "the wonderful Walt Disney character Pluto, who for sure will win everyone's heart – chic and yet robust construction and beautiful and long-lasting colors – true LEGO quality". Pluto had item number 427 and cost DKK (Danish kroner) 9,85 (about \$1.71 USD). LEGO A/S produced wooden toys until 1960 primarily for the Danish market, but Pluto did not last that long; in 1958 he was no longer part of the wooden toy assortment.

From the LEGO Archives: Pluto, Lady and Davy Crockett



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— børnene vil blive vildt begejstrede for de nye LEGO-badekar, der vil fjerne savnet af en nærliggende badestrand.

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Og så er LEGO-manden gået i forbånd med Mikkel Mus, Anders And, Pluto og alle deres venner for i fællesskab at gøre LEGO-badeartiklerne endnu festligere og morsommere, og vi præsenterer de første resultater:

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Mickey Mouse Corporation, København



Some of the bathing rings that were sold by the LEGO Group, including one of *Lady* (top), a collection of Disney characters (above), and Mickey Mouse (above center)! An ad for the swim toys can be seen on the left.

Photography by Edel Schwarz Andersen
and Joe Meno

All Disney characters and art © Disney Enterprises

LEGO
Kundeinformation

Hermed har vi fornøjelsen at præsentere nogle af firmaafdelingens efterårsnyheder

Den herlige Walt Disney figur PLUTO er sikker på at vinde alles hjerter, — fliks og dog robust konstruktion og smukke og holdbare farver, — rigtig LEGO-kvalitet. Nr. 427, kr. 9,85

Børn elsker at slå med hammer, og med den nye LEGO AMBOLT kan de afreagere på en god og ufarlig måde. — Man putter en træprop i foroven, slår, og så kommer der en prop ud foroven. Nr. 516, kr. 7,50

BLOKHUS nr. 310 leveres sammenlimet, men med løst tag og palissader med port, som kan puttes ned i huset, når det ikke bruges. — Et „stort“ stykke legetøj til en populær pris: kr. 9,85.

...og endelig kom så LEGO's nybyggergevær MUSKEDONNER nr. 441, — alle drenges ønskedrøm — til en rimelig pris. Ligesom MUSKETER pistolen, nr. 442, kan det skyde samtidig med knaldhætter og ufarlige gummi-kugler.

Ovennævnte ting er allerede på lager, men derudover kommer der endnu nogle nyheder, hvoraf vi kan nævne FYRTÅRN nr. 101 og GARDER nr. 105, ringfigurer til den fine pris kr. 4,85. Disse vil være på lager i løbet af oktober.

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 Godthåbshave 10, Kbhvn. Ø
 Telefon FA 58 380

Nord og Midtjylland: M. Johansen
 Foragervej 4, Åbyhøj
 Telefon AA 85 756

København: Oscar Jensen
 Emdrup Banke 21, Kbhvn. Ø
 Telefon RY 54 905

In 1956 the Davy Crockett™ books and cartoons were very popular in Denmark and a lot of boys relived the stories again and again. A Disney film based on the Davy Crockett adventures was released in Danish cinemas in 1956 and the LEGO office quickly followed the trend and launched a rifle, a musket and a wooden cabin - again in a license agreement between LEGO A/S and Mickey Mouse Corporation.

The cabin house was made in Sweden by Lundby Doll Houses for LEGO A/S. Godtfred Kirk Christiansen and Axel Thomsen, who owned Lundby Doll Houses, had worked together since 1954. Axel Thomsen became manager of LEGO GmbH in Hohenwestedt in Germany in 1956 and handed over the management of his firm when he joined the LEGO Group.

LEGO A/S worked as licensees with Mickey Mouse Corporation for only two years, but managed to create some very special and funny wooden toys and swim rings – now very hard to find! 

Jette Orduna, Director of the LEGO Idea House.
 - for Joe Meno



Wow, I would have never thought I would have a problem with *BrickJournal* but after one year of print, it's apparent that I do.

I need more pages. 80 pages quarterly is not enough, and the proof for me are the leftover articles I have had for the past couple of issues. Every issue, I choose what goes in and inevitably have to send notes to the writers of the articles that get put aside. I say put aside because *BrickJournal* uses most every article submitted. Every once in a while, though, it takes a little time.

So how do I get more pages? Advertising could pay for more pages, but it's been a challenge getting advertisers in the mag. The only other option is having more issues done a year...hmm.....

On another note, I wanted to highlight a community effort that started this year in Illinois. Building in Lawndale (BiLD) is part education, part play, part character development and all fun! Created by AFOLs Karl Paulson, Beth Weis, Mark Larson, and Shaun Reeves Gary, this is one of a few programs that are using LEGO bricks and building to benefit the greater good. Targeted to elementary school students, BiLD allows kids to grow and learn through free play, group activities, and individual projects.

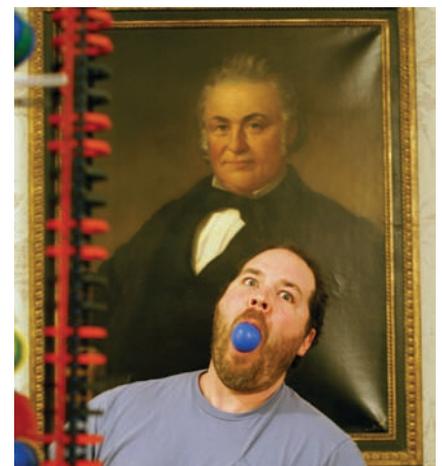
The LEGO Group doesn't actively involve itself in these endeavours - LEGO Education has class materials and plans, but for an informal session for after school there are little available. The largest example of educational outreach for children using LEGO products is FIRST LEGO League, using MINDSTORMS systems to teach teamwork, creativity, and robotics. LEGO robotics builders are involved with FLL, but BiLD is noteworthy because it uses the LEGO brick we know and love to do more than build models.

For me, it's exciting to see our builders, our creators and our community reach out to teach others what can be done with the LEGO brick. With BiLD, I see a growing movement in the LEGO community to give to the common good. And with BiLD, I see the best in our community.

Next issue will have an article on BiLD's first class, as well as more building and instructions! See you then! 

Joe Meno
Editor

Last Word



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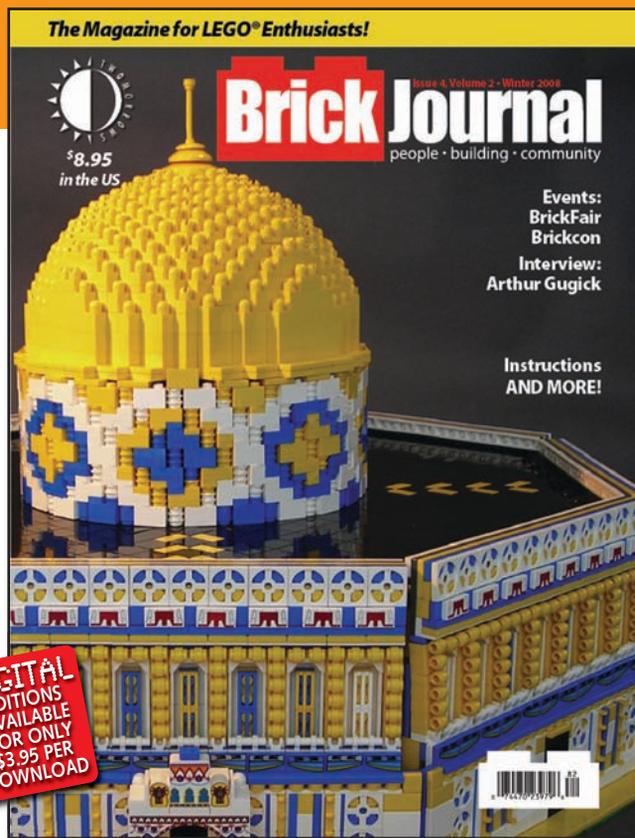
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Our third FULL-COLOR print issue has LEGO Event reports from BRICKWORLD (Chicago), FIRST LEGO LEAGUE WORLD FESTIVAL (Atlanta) and PIECE OF PEACE (Japan). There's also a spotlight on the creation of our amazing cover model, built by BRYCE McGLONE, as well as interviews with ARTHUR GUGICK and STEVEN CANVIN of LEGO MINDSTORMS, to see where LEGO robotics is going! Plus step-by-step building instructions, techniques, and more!

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FULL-COLOR issue #6 goes into space, with a look at old LEGO CLASSIC SPACE SETS and a look toward the new with set designers! BRANDON GRIFFITH beams in with a look at his STAR TREK MODELS, and you'll take a tour of the DUTCH MOONBASE courtesy of MIKE VAN LEEUWEN and MARCO BAAS. There's also coverage of BRICKFEST 2009 and FIRST LEGO LEAGUE'S WORLD FESTIVAL as well as photos from TOY FAIR NEW YORK!

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