

Brick Journal

Issue 7 • Spring 2007

people • building • community

LEGO Hobby Train Centerfold

THE LAUNCH ISSUE

**Inside:
How the
Café Corner
Was
Created**

**Behind the
Scenes of
the LEGO®
Hobby
Train**



**Also:
John and
Ross Neal
Arvo's Models
Instructions
AND MORE!**

Now
in its 4th
Printing!

Build A Firm Foundation for Your LEGO® Hobby!

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

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

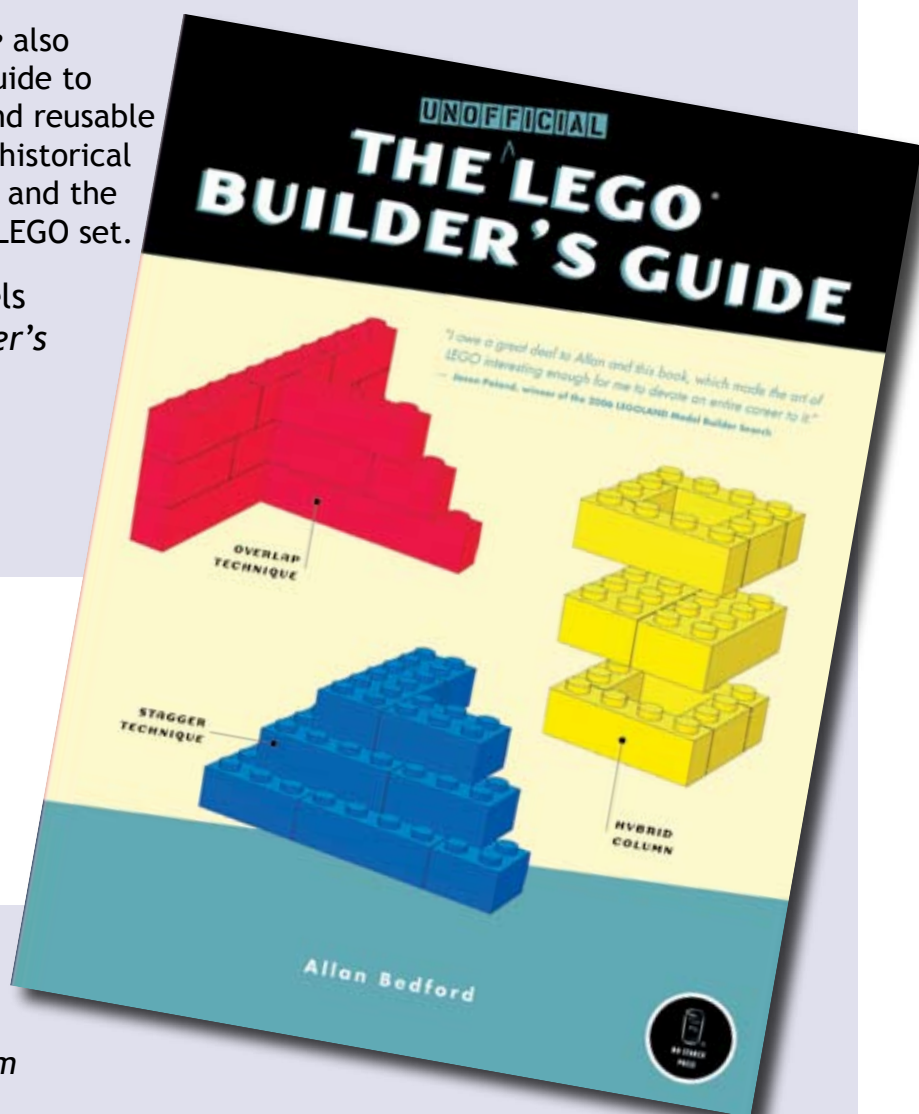
The Unofficial LEGO Builder's Guide also includes the Brickopedia, a visual guide to more than 300 of the most useful and reusable elements of the LEGO system, with historical notes, common uses, part numbers, and the year each piece first appeared in a LEGO set.

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

The Unofficial LEGO Builder's Guide

by Allan Bedford
No Starch Press
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AVAILABLE NOW

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The Café Corner! Photo by Joe Meno.

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From the Editor:

Well, that was fast. BrickJournal 7 came out about a month after Issue 6. Why?

Well, it's because of the cover stories. We have been working on the coverage of the Café Corner and the LEGO® Hobby Train for the past couple of months, and it's been a bit hectic.

Issue 6 was also pretty late, so energy was used to make two magazines for a few weeks, and it was a bit tiring.

Was it worth it? You better believe it!

We got some great articles not only about the new sets coming out, but also of the European clubs, from De Bouwsteen to LGEO - who's that? You'll find out!

There's also some instructions from one of the people who worked on the LEGO Hobby Train, Tim Gould. And you'll see why he was selected with the model he presents. There's also a set of instructions to make a stapler by Arvo, a European group that is simply astounding with their building!

But what is really astounding is how *BrickJournal* is still growing - there are more European articles (go Mel!) and now we are beginning to work with the LEGO Group to provide you coverage of the newest LEGO products coming out. And there's more coming!

So thank you all for writing, taking photos, and reading *BrickJournal* - and a personal thank you to the Austrian LEGO club for their article. They are a great example of the best of the community, as they all wrote and contributed pictures for their story, and gave credit to the club!

Joe Meno
Editor

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

P.P.S. Many thanks to the LEGO Group staff for helping us out on getting the launch articles together: Tormod Askildsen, Helene Venge, Jan Beyer, Steve Witt, and Emilie Bourdillon.

Event:
International Toy Fair 2007

LEGO Collectors' Party Photo Gallery at Toy Fair

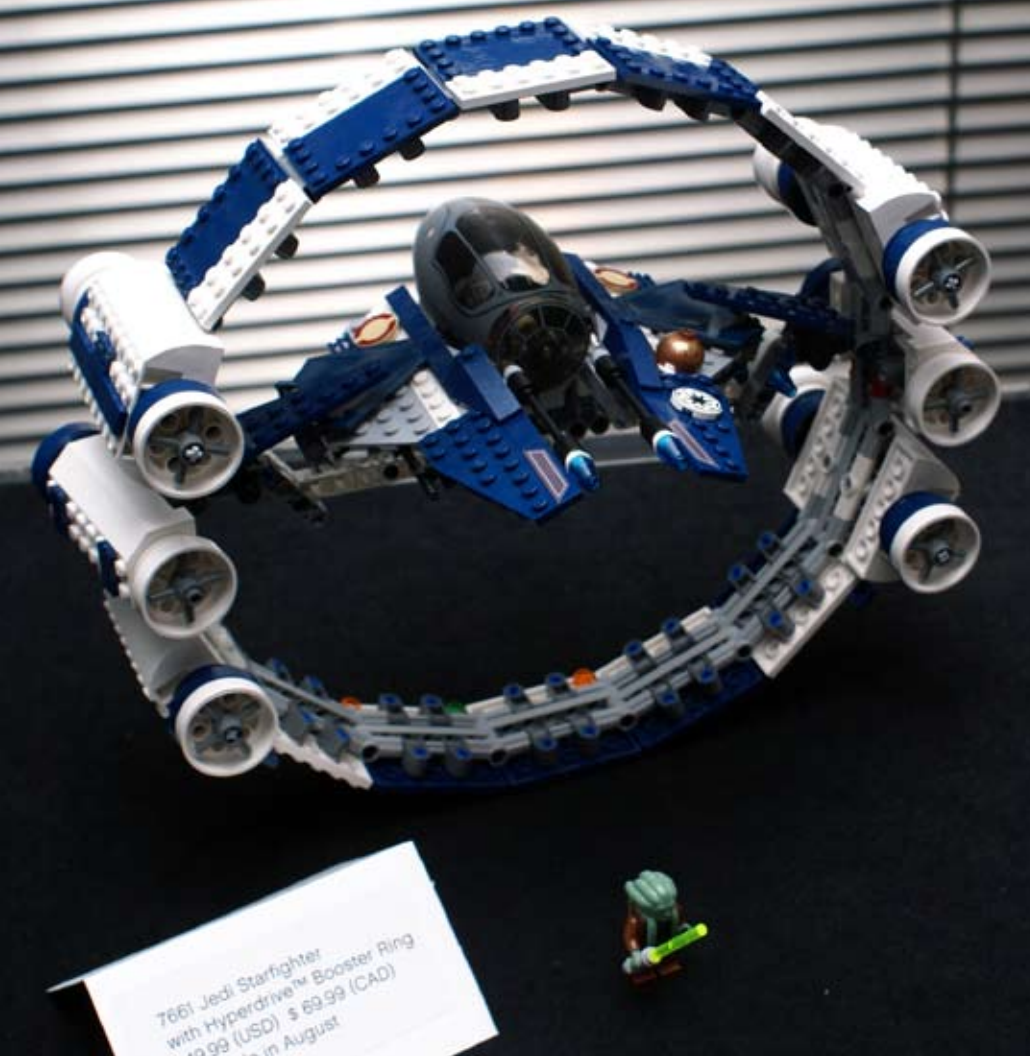
*Article and Photography
by Joe Meno*



February 10 was the date of the LEGO Collectors Party at the Westin Hotel in Manhattan, New York City. I was invited to attend to represent *BrickJournal*, and I arrived with staff from websites such as From Bricks to Bothans, BZPower and Action-figure.com. The event was to preview some of the sets for 2007, and unveil the Millennium Falcon (above). A guest (besides some storm-

troopers, Boba Fett, C-3PO, Anakin Skywalker, and Darth Vader) was Jens Kronvold Frederiksen, who designed the massive model. He's below showing off the Falcon and swooshing it to show off its durability.





Here are some of the new Star Wars sets that will be released - above you can see Kit Fisto's starfighter with hyperdrive ring, and a revised Naboo Starfighter set, with Naboo minifigure. Kit Fisto has a minifig too, but the painted version was at the Toy Fair site. In fact, this party did not present any Creator or Technic sets. Below you can see the revised Trade Federation MTT set.

The golden C-3PO minifigs are for a promotion that will be taking place during the summer. 10,000 chrome versions of the (right) droid will be randomly inserted in certain Star Wars sets beginning in June. There will be a random drawing for one of five 14-carat gold minifigs that will take place online at the LEGO Star Wars site.



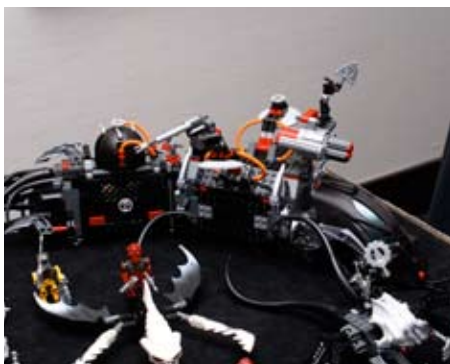


Exo-Force had an impressive showing with the summer sets that will be available in August. The mechs are getting more complex in their design, and looking more like the Japanese mecha they were inspired from.

The Mobile Devastator (top left) was initially an odd choice for a model, but once unfolded, showed some hidden robot minifigures and a couple of skeletons! With the Devastator is the Exo-Force Battle Machine Blazing Falcon (bottom left and right). Above, the Aero Blaster is a smaller Battle Machine with some big engines!

Below right is the Sentai Golden Fortress, which also comes with the Sonic Raven (middle left). This set also has a female minifig for the Exo-Force squad.






Bionicle is continuing its underwater theme, with many new beings, including Toa, Barraki, and Matorans. In the summer, there will be a new group of Toa that will have a different weapon from the squids - the weapon will be another shooter that can fire multiple shots like a Gatling gun, the Cordak blaster. There will be minifigure scale models coming out too, such as the Toa Terrain Crawler (above left), Barraki Deep Sea Patrol (bottom left), and Toa Undersea Attack (bottom right).





Batman and Spongebob Squarepants were each represented by two sets. Batman has the Batcopter (right and above) with Scarecrow and his biplane and the Bat Tank with Riddler and Bane (top left and right)

Spongebob has Mrs. Puff's Boating School (below left, with pullback boat) and the Chum Bucket (bottom right).

BrickJournal will be covering these and other 2007 sets in upcoming issues! 



Blest be the Brick That Binds

*Article and Photographs
by John Neal*



Ross, 9, working a transfer table built by journeyman GMLTC member Larry Pieniazek, at the 1999 NMRA National Convention in St. Paul, Minnesota

I'm John Neal, and this is the story of how my son and I have connected with each other through building together with LEGO bricks.

When I came out of my fourteen year-long dark age in my mid-twenties, I half-jokingly justified my LEGO purchases to my wife of three years, saying that I was building up a



A 4-6-2 Pacific steam locomotive Ross built at the age of 12

nice collection for our future kids. The truth was that the LEGO I was purchasing was for me. That was back in the 1980s, before I had ever heard of other adults who played with LEGO. And yet my growing collection did end up being the best toy I ever bought for my kids.

When my daughter Natalie was seven, she built the 8880 Super Car herself; all I did was collect the bricks for each step for her. She enjoyed playing with Belville and Scala sets, and all the while my five year old son, Ross, watched. He was obsessed with Thomas the Tank Engine, and so we spent a small fortune on Brio for him, along with the compatible wooden Thomas characters. Despite my lament, Natalie moved on from LEGO to other interests, but when Ross was eight years old, it was as if a light went on in his head, and he suddenly became interested in playing with LEGO. And so it began.

That was the year (1998) I got online and discovered the rec.toys.lego (rtl) Usenet group and then LUGNET.com. Through LUGNET I found a group of local adults who liked to build LEGO trains and show them at model train shows. That group subsequently called themselves the Greater Midwest LEGO Train Club (GMLTC). I joined that club, and in July of 1999, we became the first LEGO train club to show at an National Model Railroader Association (NMRA) National Convention, which was hosted in St. Paul, Minnesota that year. Ross came to that show, and after seeing the LEGO trains in action on the impressive GMLTC layout, he was hooked!

I remember the first locomotive Ross ever built-- a rather boxy Soo Line 44 tonner switcher, and I wish I had a picture of it, but sadly I never took one. His breakthrough year as a builder came when he was eleven; and what he built that year astounded me. I began documenting his work in a folder on my Brickshelf account that is arranged more or less chronologically arranged which features all of his work (<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=7051>). That year he caught the eye of The LEGO Group as well, and was



A 4-6-2 Pacific steam locomotive Ross built at the age of 12



Ross recently rebuilt this Hogwarts Express in dark red



The Great Northern SD45 #400 "Hustle Muscle," restored in St. Paul, MN

profiled on the LEGO.com web site in the LEGO trains section (the link still exists: <http://www.lego.com/eng/trains/legoengineers/profiles.asp?id=rn>).

In 2001, we decided to break away from the GMLTC and build our own LEGO train layout, and so we formed the Twin Cities LEGO Train Club (TCLTC). It was this effort that really got us building together and it has continued to be a focal point for our relationship. We have traveled thousands of miles across the country exhibiting our layout, and 2007 will end up being our most traveled year to date. The TCLTC has given us the pretext to hang out and spend quality time together that I don't think anything else could have done.

My role in Ross' creative process has always been as a source of encouragement and inspiration. I don't think he would be into LEGO as much as he is if I weren't into it as much as I am. It has always been my goal to try and provide Ross with whatever he needs to express his creativity as much as I can. Sometimes that means just building things which inspire him to join me or improve on




Ross' most recent MOC is a 4-8-2 Berkshire steam locomotive from the book The Polar Express



Above: Ross and me posing in the TCLTC layout at the 2nd annual ILTCO National Convention in Philadelphia, July 2006. Photo credit: Larry Pieniazek

my designs. Sometimes it means expensive visits to Bricklink.com! But the means to foster his creativity almost always revolves around LEGO bricks.

Ross is seventeen now and a junior in high school. I'm thinking that we have only a short time left before he goes off to college and enters some sort of Dark Age himself. So I will always be thankful for the hundreds of hours that we were able to spend together because of our mutual love for LEGO. Ross has a strong interest in both the fields of robotics and engineering, and I truly believe that the genesis of these interests stems from his experiences with LEGO. I will always be grateful to The LEGO Group for that.

And when he does leave for college and beyond, my interest in LEGO as a hobby will take a new direction, if for no other reason that I can't run the TCLTC layout without his knowledge and expertise! But we will always have that common love of the brick which one day I hope to share with his children as well. 



Above: A building I built using predominantly 1x2 dark red plates along with one of my large trees



Ross putting the finishing touches on a mosaic he built of his sister, Natalie

Below: A recent collaboration of Ross and me of a 12 wide version of the Mister Rogers Neighborhood Trolley



The AFFOL (Adult Female Fan of LEGO)

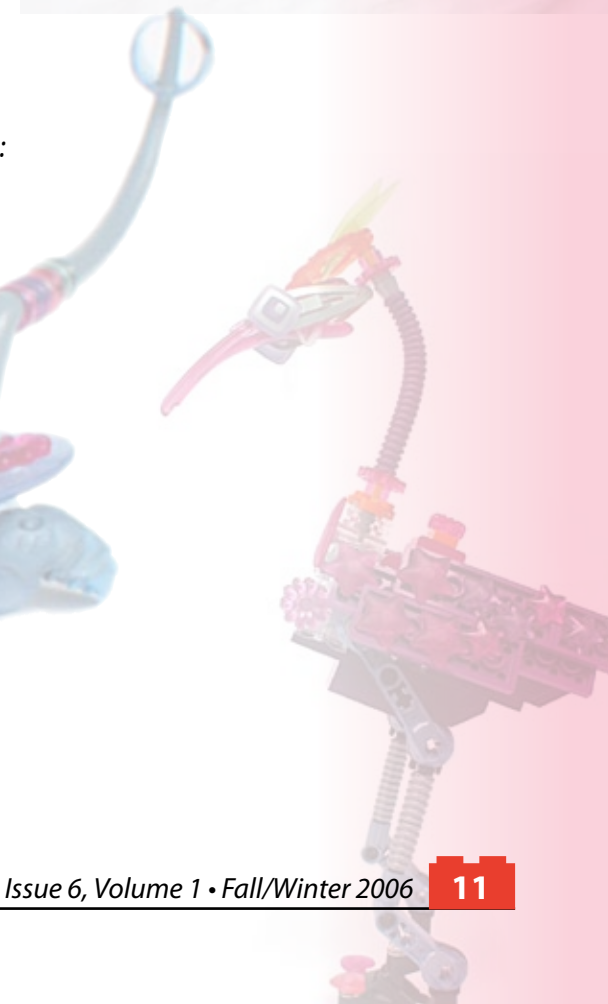
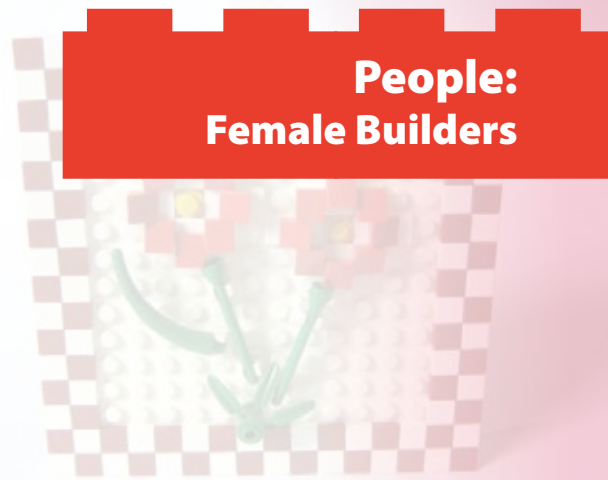
It is a world that seems somewhat dominated by the male fan and products that are more or less aimed at boys... Yet we are about to discover that the boys do not dominate entirely!

This is a section where female AFOLs unite! Over the next issues we will cover female builders from all over the world! Look at and read what they have to say, what they build, what they do and don't like, their opinions on the product and how they use it.

You will also notice that not all girls build just houses and cute things and that many are quite open-minded when it comes to what they like to create. These girls have talent and it is amazing and inspiring what some are building today as they let their imaginations go wild!

It is now time to once again lift that rock and see what is under it. Let's meet some of our female AFOLs and check out what they have been building!

If you are a female AFOL, have a website, brickshelf folder or pictures of your MOCS and would like to show your stuff off, please email me at: mel@brickjournal.com





Name: Megan Rothrock
Age: 33
Country: Denmark-originally from Northern California, USA
Hobbies: Building LEGO, 3D and 2D Computer Animation, Photography, Mountain Biking, Hiking, Rock Climbing

Brickshelf Folder:

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

When did you start building?

My 1st LEGO set that was all mine (and not my older brothers') was the Big Yellow Castle! It was my 6th birthday and combined Christmas gift and I loved it! I still have it and its box. I've always had LEGO around. I would go to my friends' houses on the weekend and we would build and play with LEGO. If I was at my friend Stuart's house I was building Space ships and Monsters. If I was at my friend Jenny's house we would build fences and barns for our Breyer Plastic Horses. Sometimes I would make an animal out of clay and make a house for it out of LEGO. As a little girl I was a total 'tomboy' I ran around with the boys — climbed trees, skinned knees, rode a BMX bike and skateboarded. I loved LEGO, Tonka Trucks, Hot Wheels and Matchbox. But then I also collected Breyer Plastic Horses, anything Scooby Doo, and tons of cuddly toys! I loved Castle and Space.

Why are you an AFOL?

I became an AFOL after participating in LEGOWORLD in Holland. The new pieces that LEGO makes today are fantastic! It's no longer just 'squares and rectangles' you can build anything! Only limit is your own imagination. The first set that really got me back into LEGO was the Designer Wild Collection set (4101). I stated building with that and haven't looked back. I enjoy meeting people from all over the world and boosting LEGO sales. The more sold the better for my hobby!

How many hours do you spend building with LEGO?

That's a tough one.... I build almost everyday — for at least a few hours. If there's an event or online contest to get ready for then I build up to 10hrs or more everyday when I can afford the time.

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

LEGO: Creator, Belville (for the colors) Technic, Klikits, Castle, Bionicle, Classic Space, UFO, Adventures, Aquanauts. Myself, I like to build creatures, using unusual parts like Klikits or Bionicle and I have a theme of my own that I call The Podagons, which are x-pod based dragons! Recently I've started to include more mini-figures in my building and I'm currently building a magical fantasy world of my own.

What do you like most about LEGO and their products?

It's so much more the just a 'toy.' You can build, rebuild, add on anything that your imagination desires. It never gets old or boring; it can be used for fun, and also for education. LEGO is timeless.

Megan



5 parts you would love LEGO to produce:

1x3 tiles

Double sided stud plate

Inverse 1x1 'cheese wedge' slope with a stud on (for the underside of bricks)

Inverse flat pieces with studs (for the underside of bricks)

A 'system style' riding Iguana (Like the horse, dragon or crocodile!)

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

It's great! When I first started to post my work online they didn't know I was a girl and when they found out they were thrilled, and still treated me the same. I'm treated with respect and welcomed by the rest of the AFOL world. I'm used to being the minority — it's the same in the Animation world as well.

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

Start including girls more in the mini figure set themes. A 'Totally Spies' or 'Power-Puff' like girl super hero theme would be cool.

Is LEGO doing enough to promote their products towards girls?

No. When I look at the shelf space there's nothing there for girls. Except 'dolls' houses and jewelry. Girls like to build with LEGO too. I'm constantly asked by girls and moms at shows if they can buy what I've made in the store. They tell me that they want stuff like what their brother has but with brighter colors and maybe a princess. I got the Designer Wild Collection set (4101) for my 8yr old niece and she loves it! She's learning about spiders in school and used it to build spiders to bring to show and tell...

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

Minifigs in girl's LEGO sets. More sets geared towards fantasy, cool cars, science-fiction, more sets that could be for boys OR girls.

Any other comments you would like to share?

LEGO is not just for boys. The LEGO Group is losing out on a HUGE market by limiting their sets to just 6 to 12 year old boys. Girls like LEGO too, and want to have their own minifigs and cool sets to play with. If just only a few of the themes could become a bit more cross gender I think everyone would win, and then maybe in the future a fully aimed-at-girls theme could be tried.

It's not all LEGO's fault though they need to hear that there is a demand out there from more than just us fans. So if we want to have Girls' LEGO we should go to our toy stores, and tell them we want LEGO for girls! It might take a while but LEGO does seem to be listening more these days! The toy stores will then get back to LEGO with what their customers are asking for and we can change the world!!! We all need to do our part to make it a reality!





Yvonne



Name: Yvonne Doyle
Age: 32
Country: Grew up in Ireland, living in England now.
Hobbies: LEGO building, collecting and attending LEGO events. I also enjoy reading, walking, swimming, cooking, drawing with pastels, collecting Sylvanians, watching science fiction and comedy films and T.V. Series.

When did you start building?:

I have had LEGO as long as I can remember - starting with Duplo train bases, arches and bricks. Then I got the homemaker hospital for Christmas one year. Another year I got a lovely minifig house. I also had a little Fabuland set and I bought the ambulance car 6629 with a voucher I won in a raffle in school. I loved to build the sets, alternative models and my own creations. I particularly liked town.

Why are you an AFOL?

When I was older and the internet began to develop I started looking for LEGO forums. I never lost my love for LEGO and that is why I've become an AFOL. I enjoy the AFOL scene - the LEGO events, the online resources. I was so happy to find other people who enjoy the same hobby.

How many hours do you spend building with LEGO?

I love to build LEGO each weekend with my fiancé, Pete, who is an amazing LEGO builder. LEGO is a huge part of our lives.

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

I enjoy building houses and mosaics myself. From the official set range I like Town, Clikits, classic Space, Castle, Explorer, Diver, Paradisa, Belville, X-pods, Creator, promotion sets such as airline promotions and trucks. I also love merchandise such as key chains, towels, mugs and t-shirts.

What do you like most about LEGO and their products?

I love the quality of LEGO, the range of sets and the variety of parts. The fabulous selection of PCBs (Pretty Coloured Bricks) is something that has fascinated me over recent years - I collect these and have a large 'colour-chart' with certain bricks in as many colours as I can lay my hands on.

5 parts you would love LEGO to produce:

I would love to see more light pink bricks available. Also ordinary bricks, tiles and plates in dk-tan. It would be great if 1x1 round plates were available in light pink, dk green, dk tan...actually - every colour! The new 1x3 curved slope would be super in tan and trans-clear. The 1x1 'cheese' slope should also be in many more colours - it is a super piece.

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

Luckily there are enough girls that there are nearly always some at each fest. Also, the guys built a whole range of themes so there are always some themes which interest me. Guys are more compulsive too - so they are quite good at keeping the momentum going in the AFOL world

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

LEGO could appeal to girls more with some more grown-up Clikits e.g. punk or 'Goth' Clikits - with skulls, spikes etc. in black, silver, purple and white. In a similar trendy to some of the more funky, rebellious Bratz dolls. Also pink X-pods and range of house sets which could be bought to gradually build up a house and contents e.g. rooms sets, furniture sets, minifig packs, cute animal packs etc. A range of shops would also appeal to girls.

Is LEGO doing enough to promote their products towards girls?

Well, they did advertise well with Clikits - but not really on other products. Another theme like Clikits, very specifically targeted and advertised to girls would be good.

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

More pink and other pretty colours. More serious colours like dark tan, dark blue, dark red etc. used in buildings to make it more 'grown up'. Maybe more female minifigs. More town stuff - e.g. post offices, shops and houses. Also, same as the above question...

Any other comments you would like to share?

It has been great to meet other female AFOLs and often the wives/ girlfriends of the male AFOLs come along to events - so we females aren't too outnumbered! I think it is quality, not quantity - the female AFOLs I have met are super.



W.W.Y.B

We're trying a new contest here in *BrickJournal*! Each issue we'll be taking a current LEGO set and we'll be asking you, "What would you build"? The first set will be set 7657 AT-ST. We're looking for who can build the best alternative model with only the pieces from this set. Your model can be any theme at all. The winner will have their model posted in the next issue of *BrickJournal* along with building instructions. They will also receive set 7657. Second and third place winners will have pictures of their models posted as well. Entries can be emailed to: steve@brickjournal.com. Submissions must be received by May 1, 2007. Good luck to everybody. Play well.



Brothers that Build

*The duo Arvo talks about
their start and building
style in their words and
pictures...*

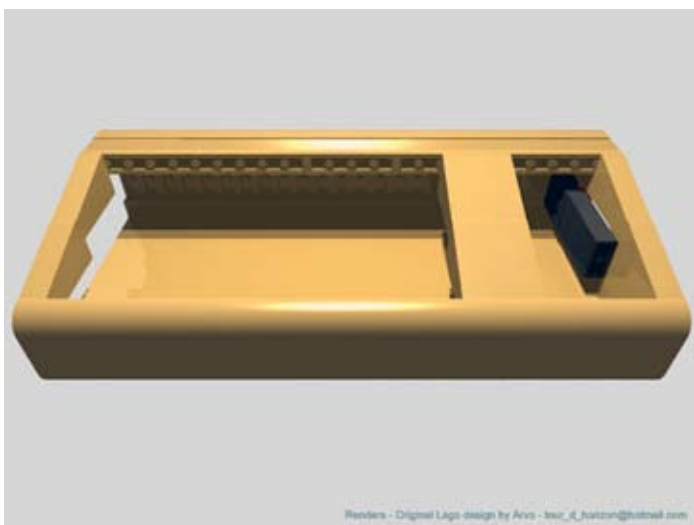


"It was the year 1980. The LEGO set 733 "Universal Building" was the start of it all. We were very little, but not too young to understand what that toy represented. With every single new set, our collection prospered with new pieces and colors, permitting us with time to improve the amazing form of our constructions and techniques. This first epoch was the authentic culture medium in which we developed our taste for constructing all kinds of objects and vehicles. As anecdote, I will comment that we never had one "shock absorber", in fact I doubt that we ever knew of its existence, so we used elements as wharves or rubber bands to create alternative systems.

So just as important as set #733 was discovering years later on the Internet a community of LEGO fans. We were not alone (people such as Kerouac, a builder on Brickshelf, were and continue being an inspiration for us) and after our "Dark Ages" (years of university and dedication to music) we recaptured the hobby. In that stage of rediscovering, "Arvo" was born."

"Arvo" is two brothers, Ramón and Amador, 28 and 33 years old respectively, born in Albacete, Spain, for which LEGO is not only a toy and a form of disconnection, but also a powerful tool of artistic expression. We had already started our first adult projects with the birth of HISPALUG and LADRILLITOS, two websites for Spanish fans, a "window" from where to learn and to be able to show our creations.

As for our MOCs, the themes are very different but always about our childhood and youth. The first aspect when we go to make a MOC is to choose some images / documentation from the Internet and the size or scale. We always begin the design with some representative part of the construction, sometimes using the program MLCad. These first steps serve to show us how the construction is going to go and give us an approximate idea of the final result.



All the MOCs are made together constantly exchanging new ideas among each other. Our technique of construction is based especially on the incorporation of the great variety of curved pieces available. Pieces such as bricks, arches, wedges, and curved slopes allow us to create forms that before had been unthinkable and also add great beauty to the constructions. If before the possibilities were infinite, what are they now? A good use of color and the new tones play a major role; we all know that a good model can turn into a wonderful model if attractive combinations of colors are chosen.



"We don't have a specific technique though there are some common ones in our creations. One of them, and probably the most noticeable, is that our MOC construction does not follow a specific stud direction; every part takes a direction which determines the orientation of the next piece, or series of pieces, with regard to the set. This gives our MOCs a certain modular character - which is very helpful when needing to make modifications. The use of brackets, modified bricks, hinges, technic bricks and modified plates, a technique called Studs Not on Top (SNOT) makes all the different directions possible."




Another often used building style is the skeleton or chassis that the whole outer shell attaches to. Always we try to make it as diaphanous as possible to facilitate the incorporation of new parts, but it is inevitable that the chassis goes through many modifications during the process by the great quantity of space that is needed for the rest of the pieces.

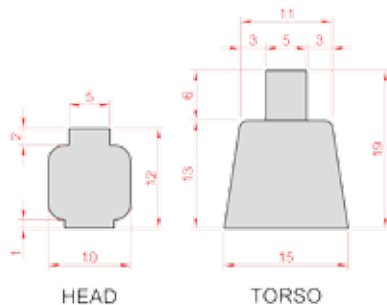


Our next project is very different from what we have done before, it is related to the movie "Alien" and it is our (more) most ambitious project yet. We expect to be able to show it soon in our Brickshelf gallery:

<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=127268>

We hope to continue enjoying this wonderful toy and to continue sharing our creations with all of you. 


Imperial Height	Model Scale	Metric Height
4'6"	1:33	1.37m
4'9"	1:35	1.45m
5'0"	1:37	1.50m
5'3"	1:39	1.60m
5'6"	1:41	1.68m
5'9"	1:43	1.75m
6'0"	1:45	1.83m
6'3"	1:47	1.90m
6'6"	1:49	1.98m

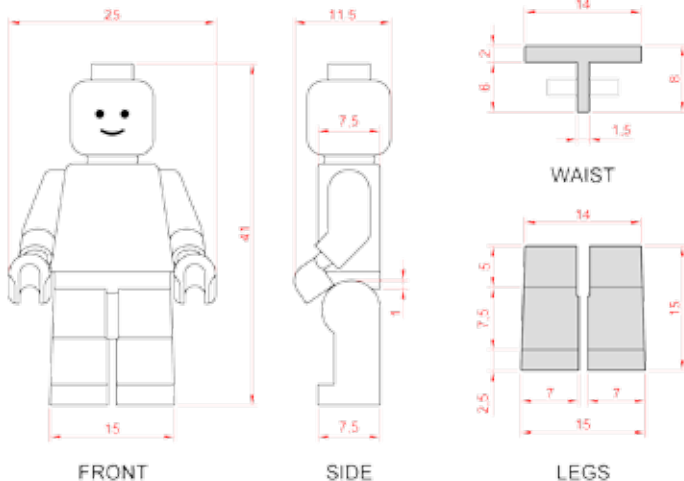


A Minifigure Data Sheet

By Steve Scott

If you ever wondered about the size of a minifig's legs or head, it has been measured and noted on the diagram to the left. Measurements are in millimeters and not in true scale here.

Also, the scale on the upper left corner determines a modelling scale based on the height decided for a minifig. For example, if you think your minifigure is 5'6", he would be in 1:41 scale (one foot equals 41 square feet) 



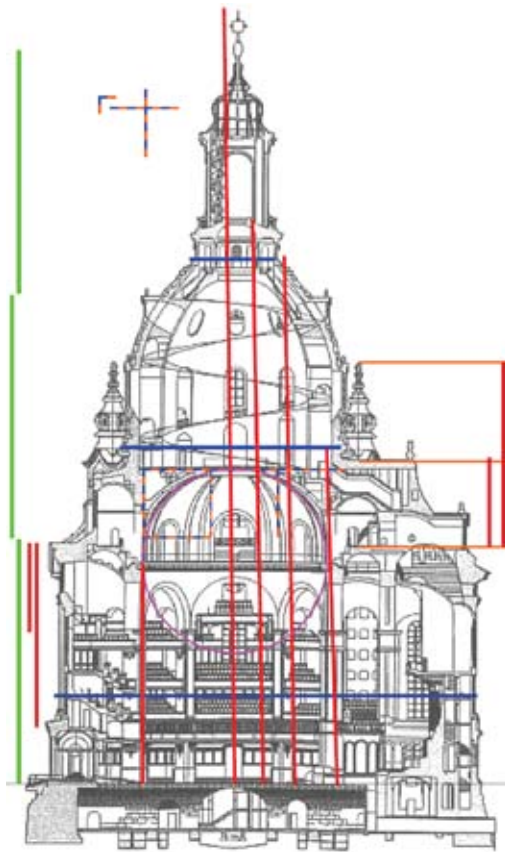
Building:
Frauenkirche Dresden

Frauenkirche Dresden

*A Rebuilt Monument
Built in LEGO Elements*

*Article and photographs
by Holger Matthes*





Above: Reference diagram for size determination.

Below: Reference photo of the church



Probably the youngest church in Europe is the Frauenkirche in Dresden, Germany. Originally built between 1726 and 1743 this Protestant church was destroyed by a fire caused by the bombing of Dresden in 1945 during World War II. During the period when Germany was divided into East and West Germany the ruins of the Frauenkirche in Dresden became a memorial for peace movement. After the Berlin wall came down both former enemies and civilian initiatives in Germany – so called Friends of Dresden – planned to rebuild this fantastic landmark. Money was raised throughout the world and in 1993 the reconstruction started. The goal was to use as many old stones from the ruin as possible and to rebuild the church as it was originally built – of course some modern equipment, like air-conditioning and elevators, was added. Finally, in autumn 2005 the Frauenkirche was re-opened and since then Dresden has had one of the biggest sandstone buildings back in its historic skyline.

The reconstruction was an ongoing issue in Germany's media. Eye-catching moments like the lifting of the golden cross to the top of the dome gained recognition all over the country. As a LEGO fan I followed up the reporting from a slightly different perspective. My interest was caught by the fact that old and new sandstones were used and the church looked like it was built with LEGO elements in dark grey and tan. This specific colour pattern was the initial point to think more about a LEGO model of the Frauenkirche. I already had some experience in building baroque architecture with LEGO. So I was searching for a new never-done-before challenge. Looking closer at the shape of the church I noted the octagonal shape of the ground plan and the bell towers and the round dome on top of it. There shouldn't be any problem rebuilding the church in smaller scale with LEGO elements. I had some respect for the areas where right-angled parts exchange into rounded shapes. I had no idea if I could duplicate this with bricks.

The final "go" for this project was a short visit in Dresden in March 2006 when I had the chance to visit the real Frauenkirche. I was really impressed by the nearly 100-meter high building. Even in real the façade looked like LEGO with the different colours and sizes of old and new stones. Inside I discovered even more details like the old bent cross which was found in the ruins and I was overwhelmed by the atmosphere inside the church. Looking over the altar, and the organ higher up, I saw the inner dome with its painting. Just having a few hours left I also decided to take the elevator upstairs to climb the dome and so I reached the observation deck on top of the dome. While seeing the city of Dresden from a bird's eye view I decided that this was going to be my next LEGO project!

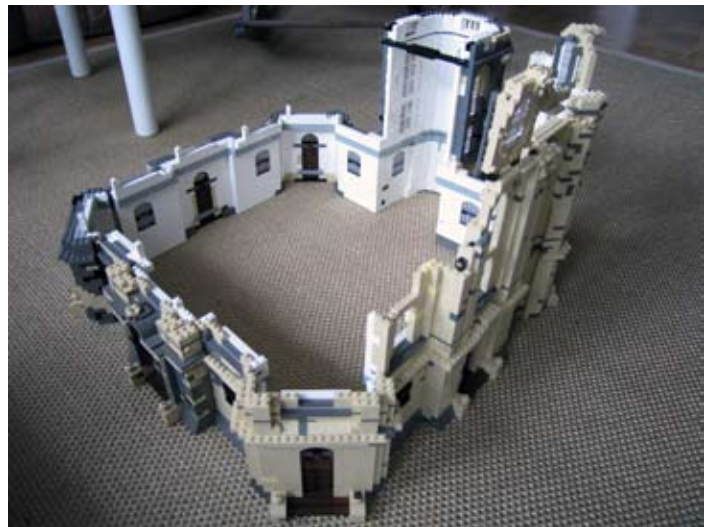
I took several pictures and also bought my first book about the Frauenkirche in a nearby bookstore. The next weekend I sorted all my tan and dark grey LEGO elements and started building. I am often asked how I started such a brick-eating project. I will let you know: The Frauenkirche has many different arches on top of the windows, doors and other typical parts of the building. So I started digging in my box of arched elements to get an overview of which shapes are available. From 1x3 mini-arches up to the 1x12x3 arch element LEGO offers not a huge but an adequate variety of arched elements. The main windows are framed with a double arch – this unique part of the façade was my starting point of the model. A prototype of just one window with the double arch was built first. This

window defined the scale for the rest of the building. The window itself is built with transparent clear 1x1 and 1x2 plates, on top of it I used a 1x6x2 arched brick for the inner arch and two 1x5x4 arched brick for the outer arch.

By this time I had already bought a second, even more detailed book, about the Frauenkirche. Some architectural drawings helped me a lot to build the right proportions into my model. After the window prototype was finished I started with the ground plan of the façade. That gave me a first impression of the building's size. 60x60 cm for the footprint didn't seem too much and my calculations showed that the total height of the model should be 145 cm. 145 cm was somewhere at the height of my breast. From that moment "at the height of my breast" became the indefinite point of the church's height. I thought I will never finish this model. Trying not to think about the final size I went back to the main façade. Knowing that a model like this is not easy to transport I included some predetermined breaking points to make some handy modules. Relatively fast I worked out the two main façade modules with the hinge bricks to get the octagonal shape, the module with the main entrance and the module with the apse. My detailed photos, the books and several pictures on the Internet were my "building instructions". While staring at the pictures on and on I realised the unique mixture of old and new stones on every part of the façade. It was an interesting building experience not only to put dark grey and tan bricks and plates together by coincidence but in a specific order to copy the real pattern. If you look carefully enough at the real façade and at the LEGO façade you will find many similarities. You will find them not only in the seven entrances with the letter 'A' to 'G' in the middle above the door but also in the new shiny sandstones and the old sandstones with patina and other damages.

Before I could go on with the outside structure of the building I needed some support inside. I could have done the inner structure with some Duplo bricks to raise height easily. My next thought was, "wouldn't be cool to have a model of the inside as well?" The interior consisted of the eight pillars, the galleries with the benches, the huge arches connecting the pillars and the inner dome ... I have never built such complicated and non right-angled interiors in any of my former models. I set up my façade modules and worked out the place for the pillars. But which profile should the pillars have? My first attempt was a 4x6 profile. I built two or three prototypes till I realised that this was too massive for the inside. Even if the pillars have to carry the whole weight of the massive sandstone dome they do look very elegant. I ended up with a 3x5 profile for the pillars.

But before I could start with the pillars and the galleries I had to know on which level the ground floor is situated. So the next challenge was born: underneath the main church is a cross-shaped crypt and a famous altar stone in the middle of the room. A stone cross hangs from the ceiling over this altar and floor uplighters illuminate the vaults. I put away the façade modules and the pillar prototypes and started building this crypt. I added so many details even knowing no one would see all this when the model was finished. Therefore, I rebuilt the crypt as a CAD model with LDRAW and with the help of Tim Gould I was able to get some great renderings from a minifigure's view from inside the crypt.



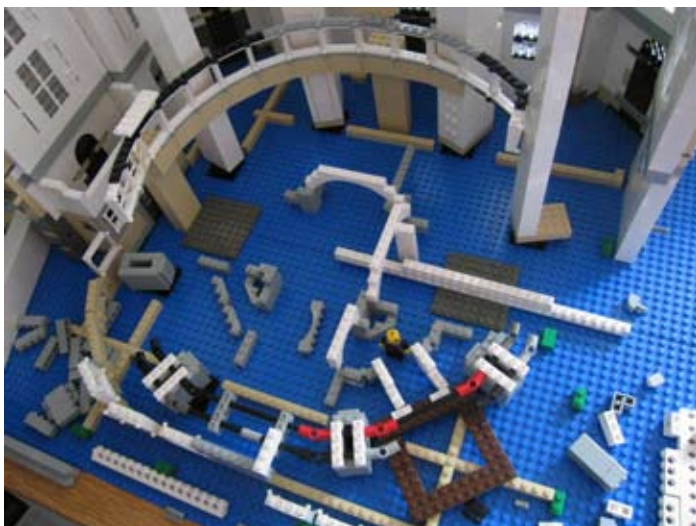
The walls begin to take form



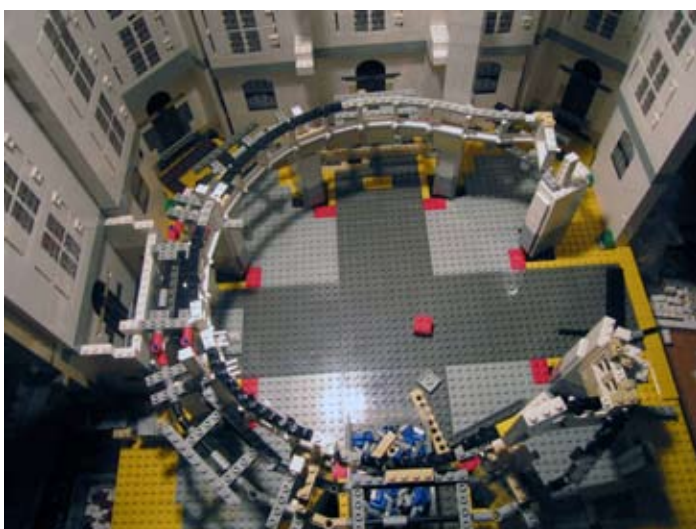
One of the doorways on the completed model



A computer rendering of the crypt



The interior in progress...



Now I had an idea of the ground level of the church and the work in the inside went on. It was very helpful to build parallel which means I built the left and right inside module at the same time. I worked out a specific area and immediately mirrored everything on the other side. This strategy saved lots of time. When you are finished with such a complex structure you easily forget how you built it. You don't know any more how elements are connected with each other somewhere inside where you can't see anything. And the filigree artwork inside of the church forced me to find new and unconventional methods of putting elements together. And I found usage for some rare light yellow bricks and 2x2 tiles from my collection. Reproducing the nice paintings from the original church was not possible. I decided to use only white elements with some light yellow accentuations. The design was the lead and I had to deal with various stability issues. Even the fact that the inside was also built modular added even more difficulties to the whole project. And if you look at the photos of the inside you will realise that there is hardly any LEGO element which is connected the "normal" way.

Since the beginning in March some weeks had passed to this stage in the building process. Due to the football FIFA World Cup, which was held in Germany in June 2006, my work got stuck a bit. Even a hardcore LEGO fan was infected by the peaceful and great atmosphere during the weeks of the matches either on television or at the public viewing area in the nearby city of Stuttgart. Summer temperatures also didn't encourage me to go on with my LEGO project. However, I had a special date and event in mind: August, Berlin with the 1000steine-Land. And I had promised to show the Frauenkirche at this event. Model making went on in August when, surprisingly, temperatures dropped. In only two weeks all the rest was assembled: the four bell towers, the critical part with the inner dome where the outside structure changes from a right-angled shape into a round shape, the major dome and the top of the church with the cross. During the last day before departure I was able to finish the whole model with the help of Sven Moritz Hein, a fellow builder. We had to build twelve boxes on 32x32 ground plates to cover the crypt. There was no time to build some details like stairs so we ended up with grey bricks and a dark grey cover.

But let's go back to the church. The time pressure was enormous and just three days before departure for the event I didn't know if I would be able to finish this project in time. Even if it was my holiday I got up early, sat at my desk and started "work". Somehow I had a good flow and nearly everything worked well. A sketch prototype of the bell tower was built and I compared the dimensions with the drawings in the book. This took me a whole eight-hour workday. The next day I copied the four bell towers from this sketch model and included the characteristic mixture of old and new stones for each tower. The clock on tower 'C' (according to the letters at the entrances) was made with the computer, printed and fixed with paper glue to a dish element with a Technic hole. This is the only sticker which is used in the whole model.

The next big challenge was the inner dome. You can hardly imagine the size and location of this half sphere but again my book was a big help. Using a little software tool, written by Andreas Dreier, to calculate spheres in LEGO bricks I first built a quarter of a positive sphere. This form was covered with tiles and so I could build the negative sphere for the inner dome.

Eight vents for the windows had to be added in this inner dome and I was happy to use the quarter cylinder panel four times 4x6 in tan for the three main windows at this part of the building.

Now I could leave the various angled structure behind and enter the round part: the dome. The church's most distinctive feature was its unconventional 314-foot-high dome, called "die Steinerne Glocke" or "Stone Bell". First of all, the belt was constructed out of thirty-two identical sub-assemblies. It took a while to get all the 1x1x1 headlight bricks, 1x1 round bricks and 1x3 bricks together. And it was the last time when I could play with the mixture of dark grey and tan. Due to the height, hardly any leftovers were found when the original stones fell down during the collapse of the church. And for safety reasons the architects decided to use only new sandstones for the dome. Some LEGO elements were really stressed when I began to close the ring. But as an AFOL I had the freedom of choosing how far I stress the elements.

Have you ever tried to build the shape of an American Football with windows on each side? Neither had I. But I had to build something like this if I wanted to go on with the church.

The time pressure was terrible, just one more week for the dome and the rest of the church. The real dome shows eight significant bands which are set off a bit from the round shape of the dome. I really wanted to include this feature in my model and I did some experimental builds with 1x2 plates in tan. These plates combined in four layers created a bendable construction to make the dome's arches. The tension on these bands is enormous and I was struggling to fix them properly. Between these bands I used normal tan bricks to build the eight segments with the window. To create the narrowing shape of the dome with LEGO bricks I used a building technology with offsets in two directions. Instead of using the classic offset element – a 1x2 plate with centred stud – I used the tubes on the bottom of a two-stud-wide brick to fix the studs of a plate. The gaps were covered with tiles and the result was a nice narrowing shape. And the gaps between two of these segments were covered nicely by the bended bands. One of the last challenges was the round windows. But I managed to build them in and add stability to the whole dome module.

Phew, just two more days to get the model finished. After the construction of the dome everything else seemed to be easy. And it was. The so called "lantern" on top of the dome was neither round nor octagonal, it was just square. For a last time I worked out the required dimensions of this module and I grabbed my leftover tan elements to build the lantern. And by this time the last Bricklink order arrived and I was able to finish the top cross with three yellow Technic elements (pin joiner plate single on bottom).

So after 300 hours of work I was proud standing next to 30,000-40,000 LEGO elements connected in the most complex way I've ever done it. 



The completed dome



The completed dome interior



Church and model comparison



Above and below: Comparison of model detail to church detail



Model Facts

Footprint (all structures):	102 x 102 cm
Footprint (church only):	60 x 60 cm
Diameter dome:	approx. 30 cm
Height (from street level):	135 cm
Height (total):	145 cm
Scale: approx.	1:74
Total number of elements:	30,000-40,000
Building period:	March - August 2006
Building time:	300 hours
Cost:	several thousand Euro were spent on Bricklink and at LEGOLAND Pick-a-Brick.

Resources

Web

LEGO model

[<http://www.holgermatthes.de/frauenkirche/en/index.htm>]

LEGO model at Brickshelf

[<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=201191>]

The real one at maj.com

[<http://www.maj.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=108559>]

Wikipedia:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dresden_Frauenkirche]

360° tours through the church

[<http://www.zdf.de/ZDFde/inhalt/14/0,1872,2005710,00.html>]

Books

Stiftung Frauenkirche Dresden (Herausgeber): Die Frauenkirche zu Dresden. Werden, Wirkung, Wiederaufbau. [http://www.amazon.de/Frauenkirche-Dresden-Werden-Wirkung-Wiederaufbau/dp/3937602275/sr=8-1/qid=1169914775/ref=sr_1_1/028-5327869-1623715?ie=UTF8&s=books]



A detail of the cross atop the church

exclusive

LEGO Set:
Café Corner



Behind the Bricks: Talking with a LEGO Set Designer



We are pleased to present an interview with the designer of the Café Corner Set, Jamie Berard. Before he became a LEGO set designer, Jamie was an AFOL – and one can tell with the models he has designed both in the company and outside for fun. Here he lets us behind the scenes of creating this set.

BrickJournal: What's your background as a LEGO Designer?

Jamie Berard: I've been with the LEGO Company for just over a year now. My big break came at BrickFest 2005 where I met with lots of LEGO representatives and ended up getting hired shortly thereafter. My background is a bit atypical for a LEGO Designer considering that I've been a carpenter, surveyor, video editor and monorail pilot. The one thing that has always been a constant is my passion for the Brick.

I am still a proud member of the New England LEGO Users group and have been a member of the LEGO Club since I was four. Fortunately, I never had to go through the Dark Ages that so many other adult fans have gone through. For me, LEGO has always been cool.

BJ: How did the concept for the Café Corner come about?

Jamie: Back in early 2006, my creative lead in CREATOR approached me to see if I'd be interested in building a model for LEGO Direct. Jan Beyer and Steve Witt had polled the AFOL community and determined that fans really wanted houses and buildings—and lots of them! Since I was the in-house adult fan who had just finished up working

on a bunch of buildings for the Millyard Project, the powers that be found me a perfect match for the project. Since I had only done a \$20 airplane up until that point (insert shameless plug for 4953 Fast Flyers), the idea of a \$100+ project really presented me with a fantastic challenge that I was eager to tackle.

My first idea for a modular building system came from my appreciation for the old castle system and more recently for the moon base module system. I am fascinated by the idea of snapping together different sections to create an ultimate castle or space station. To take that type of thinking and apply it to buildings seemed like a sure-fire way to begin a method of modeling that can be continued and built upon for many years to come. Plus, with just a few set standards, there's the potential of introducing the fan community to another way of coming together to display at the many fan events around the world.

To establish the basis of the system, I ran my ideas by 25-year veteran designer Steen Sig Andersen—who actually worked on many of the 1980s castle products. We sat down for a couple of hours and came up with the current simple connection points that will now be the basis for all buildings going forward.

BJ: You say “going forward.” Is this the beginning of a series of products?

Jamie: Hopefully. LEGO Direct views the modular building system as a line of products which they would like to continue investing in for more than this year. Of course, sales will ultimately determine how long the line will last. So, if you like it, please buy the Café Corner to show you want more products to go with it in the future.

I've already finished the sketch of the potential follow-up model. I'd love to see it make it to market.

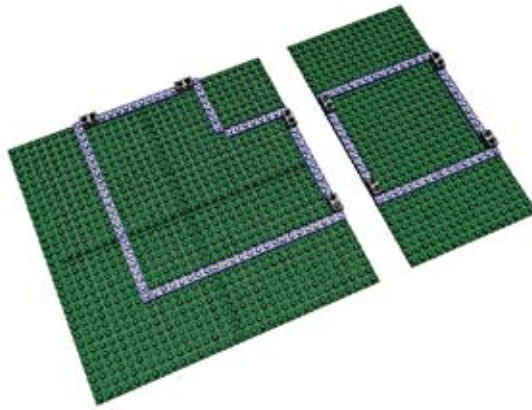
BJ: Any hints as to what that one will look like?

Jamie: It's a very cool building that I already want to buy four of.

BJ: Were there any challenges you faced in developing the Café Corner?

Jamie: Oh, you betcha.

Besides the initial issues I had with convincing others that this idea in my head was worth buying into, there were several more challenges which popped up during the development cycle.



Left: Connection points for the Modular Building System

Below and bottom. Original sketch model of the Café Corner under construction back in March of 2006





Finished first sketch. The model was not originally conceived as a café, but was intended to be a Corner Market. Also, it may be hard to see, but the right side of the second floor uses plain 1x2 bricks while the left side uses headlight bricks (Erlings) and tiles to explore adding more texture. Ultimately, it was the added texture that most attracted people



Working on a set this large and with over 2000 pieces, there always runs the risk of using elements that will be deleted or become unavailable. With the palette of bricks continually under review, in any given week the existence of several elements in a model can be challenged. When they told me the bike was not available because the machine that assembles it was broken, a tear rolled down my cheek. Fortunately for me, someone saw that tear and fixed the machine in order to bring a huge bright smile back to my face! Cake was called for that day.

While working for CREATOR, I always have to be conscious of the fact that my models need to be buildable by a child. Working for Direct, I have to think of the AFOL parents of that child. What would they want to buy? How much more rich and detailed a model can I create while still keeping it buildable and within LEGO standards.

The building instructions team worked very closely with me in developing this model. There are definitely some unorthodox techniques that I use which have not been tried before in official LEGO sets. But I think they are perfect for the adult fan who is looking to see elements used to their full 'legal' potential.

BJ: This was the first time I can remember in a LEGO set where the interior walls are different than the exterior. There's also a considerable amount of dark blue and medium blue in this set that you don't see on the front of the building. Why is that?


Jamie: The double walls are a practical solution I came up with for the current lack of complimentary windows in the LEGO assortment. In order to create the windows for the second floor, I decided to build them with wall elements. In doing this, the walls became two bricks deep. This actually worked out pretty well because it allowed me to sneak in lots of additional brick to make it look like the interiors were decorated. I like to describe the Café Corner as ready to move in. The only thing you need is furniture.

The addition of dark blue and medium blue was my own nod to the fans who have been begging the company for more bricks in dark and light colors. The variety of colors also adds to the possibilities for inspiration models.

BJ: Were there any other fans involved with the development process?

Jamie: Thankfully, yes. LEGO Direct and CREATOR initiated a new program last year called INVOLVE. We started it out by inviting Bruno Kurth from Germany in to give feedback on the Café Corner. Because of his comments, some much-needed improvements have been made to the model such as adding color to the roof and transparent elements to the hotel sign. Late last year, we invited in three additional fans to start working on ideas for the next building in the line-up. We then took their sketch models to a fan event in Germany (Frechen, of which there is an event report in this issue) where we gathered feedback from almost a hundred different participants. I definitely feel fan involvement greatly enhances our ability to deliver premium products and an exciting building experience back to the adult fan community.

BJ: Speaking of community, does the community of buildings you're creating fit into any particular time-frame or story-line?

Jamie: For me, I can't help but place them in the first half of the 20th century—maybe even the 1920s or 30s. I like the idea of keeping the story simple. Everyone is yellow and smiling. Some may say that's because there is a 2 to 1 ratio of female to male minifigs. Who knows, there may be some truth to that. When was the last time you saw a happy male figure in one of the Play Themes sets? 



Sketch and Sketch (Revised) Extended

Virtual exploration of expansion possibilities. The mid-floor had to be detailed but generic enough to allow for vertical growth



Two key players wanted for LEGO Factory: Interactive Web Designer and Content Editor

LEGO Factory is all about LEGO fans custom-designing, sharing, and buying their own LEGO sets online. We strive to continuously improve the experience end-to-end, so we are looking to fill two key roles.



Interactive Web Designer

A top-notch, UX-savvy Interactive Web Designer to develop LEGO Factory from a user interface and general design perspective.



Content Editor

A Content Editor with a creative pen and online experience to develop LEGO Factory from a content and communications perspective.



LEGO Factory is a unique service with many challenges and we have high ambitions for delivering the best experience possible. If you are interested in joining us, you can see the full job ads and get the address to submit your CV on LEGO.com:

<http://www.lego.com/eng/info/default.asp?page=vacancies>.

Learn more about LEGO Factory here: www.LEGOFactory.com.

We'd love to hear from you and no later than **March 31**.



FACTORY

Internet • Design • Technology • Content • Communities • Customization • Communication



Deluxe Café:

Exploration of higher price point options: Extra café activities, dark green interior walls, bike and 4 minifigures.

During the design of the set, there were options that were being considered based on cost. Here's a look at the sets that might have been.

Econo-Café:

Stripped-down version of the Café Corner to explore lower price point options: Lack of exterior walls, no stairs, no extra interior walls, no bike, and only two minifigures.



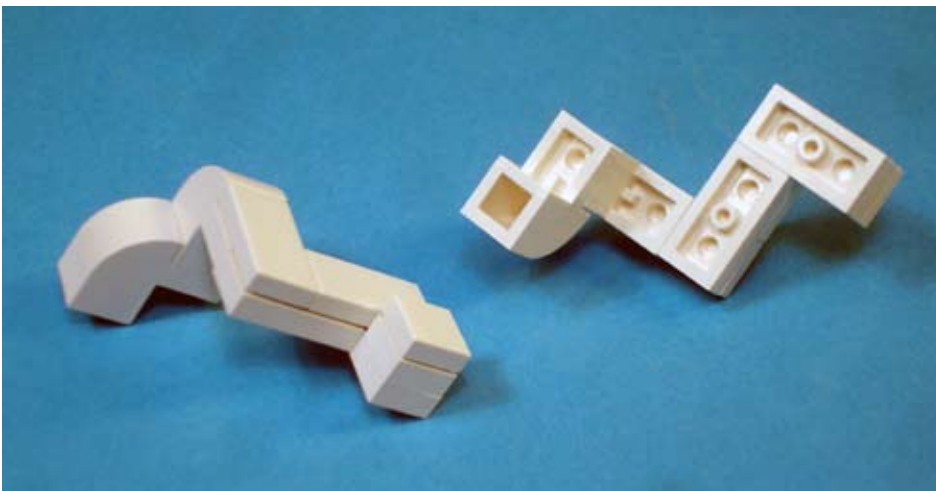


First two attempts at building inspiration models from the Café Corner volume of bricks. The smaller version using only a 16 x 32 baseplate was an exercise to show off the additional blue colors found in the inside walls of the café. The second model used both baseplates to try and show an even greater display of the blue, however, due to time constraints it was never finished. Both inspiration models are also modular and contain staircases.

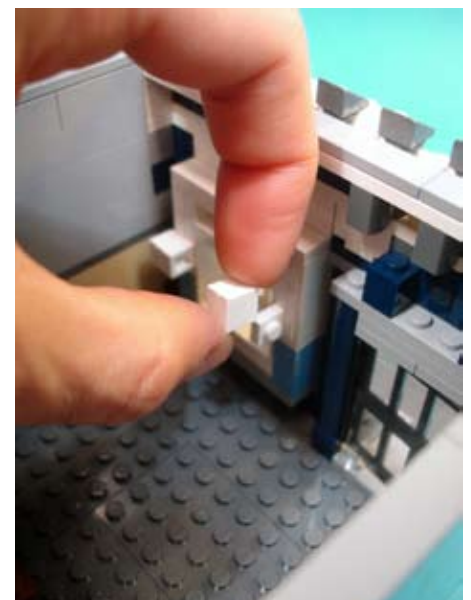
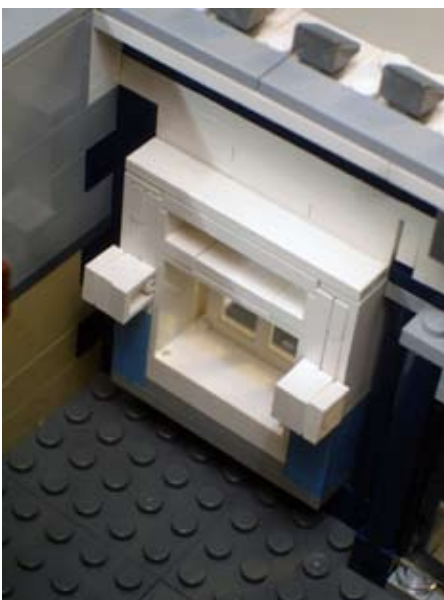




Revision of inspiration model window in order to make it fit better with the second floor window style.



How to make the inspiration model detail.



LEGO**16+****10182****2056****Set Reviews:
Café Corner**

Checking out the Corner

BrickJournal was able to review this set and has some surprising words!

Reviews by Melody Krütfeldt and Carin Proctor, with additional comments by Joe Meno

Photographs by Melody Krütfeldt and Joe Meno

A recent development with *BrickJournal* and the LEGO Group has been the availability of sets for review - because of our release schedule, we more often than not missed releases for sets as they came out. However, we were able to secure sets for review in advance for this set, so reviews were assigned to the European Bureau chief and *BrickJournal's* bookkeeper and proofreader. I expected an objective thorough look at the sets, as well as a review of the buildability of the model.

This is the first review:

Review by: Melody Krütfeldt

You asked for it and you got it! Around one year ago a poll was taken, aimed at the AFOL community. Adult fans were asked to share their ideas and opinions of what concept they would like to see for a future model from the LEGO Group. Some of the ideas submitted were: more town and everyday buildings, structures with more architectural detail, realistic buildings, minifig scale buildings, solid and enclosed buildings and more. These ideas were taken into consideration and an AFOL was actually involved with the design! This is the resulting product they came up with...

Set:	Café Corner
Set Number:	10182
Number of parts:	2056
Includes:	3 minifigs, 2 cherries and 1 bike (and much more)
Price:	\$140 USD



[Insert smile from ear to ear] - Oh this is huge! Here is something seriously cool. You may have seen the sketch of this particular set in pictures – posted on the Internet – taken at the event in Frechen (Germany) at the stand of the LEGO employees. And now, here it is! For real!

But how COOL is this? I can just hear it now, AFOLs around the world and their excitement on this 'great' new product! Yes, finally TLG is listening to some of their biggest fans, the AFOLs! It doesn't take long to go around and read about the buzz beforehand, this set is causing quite a stir. What is it? Is it real? How much will it cost? When will it be available? So many questions are being asked and finally, we have it. This is a truly beautiful and amazing set and really something all AFOLs must have. Every town needs a wonderful set like this! What town is complete without this magnificent set? Can I say much more than that? This is just a dream come true for so many. I can see not only AFOLs wanting this set but because the fantastic detail in this set is so high any fan of LEGO can be inspired by this set. So many great parts and colours too.

Let's see what's inside this truly awesome set. Café Corner - 2056 pieces! It even includes female minifigs. At last, a beautiful set with some female minifigs. And trust me, it won't be just the females who will be happy about that! There are loads of 'cheeses' (1 x 1 slopes), arches, tiles, 1 x 4 x 6 windows and lime cherries! Two 16 x 32 baseplates, a classic red bicycle and heaps more! There are plenty of parts here, even if you were to only build from this set alone, which gives you various options to build even more or even expand on your own buildings.

I have built the Café Corner so I can better analyze it. Actually getting your hands on this set gives you a better idea of the set, the parts and how it all fits together. Another great thing about building this set is that many people can learn various new building tricks and styles. All together it took around three hours to build. It's nice and solid, stable and easy to pick up, except on the front corner where the tiles are attached to the baseplate (pick it up from the back). The set has doors, enclosed walls/ roof and even staircases inside to take you to the next level. There are lots of lovely features such as: annexes, fanned ski shoes as decoration, a hotel sign using a SNOT technique, tower, angled corner, 3D façade, window/hinged door that opens, hotel entrance, enclosed roof (as mentioned above), tiled pavement, lights, seating areas and more! The average price per part is a very good value, you definitely get your money's worth here.

There are two instruction booklets, which seems to be how the larger sets come these days. This is a nice feature since two people can build this set, each working on a separate level. The instructions are well-planned and include most of the steps along the way also showing which parts are needed at each step. In this case it is easy to build and something various ages can build too (though younger children may need some help). Due to the dark colours used in this set, I advise you to read the instructions under decent lighting to avoid any confusion.

I love how the building comes away in three sections. That is really cool and a great way to take it apart and put it together - if you wanted to build your own interiors inside this is a really great idea. The whole modular concept is also a fantastic idea. You will note there are two Technic pins on the side of the building, which I guess can attach to another building, as mentioned earlier. Or, maybe TLG has plans to extend this great new line in the future by adding more building. It's truly a beautiful set realized in beautiful colours, did I mention that already? ;).

The box for this set is HUGE! It's a lot larger than I expected. On the back of the box you can see what the Café/Hotel would look like if you were to combine two, four or even six sets together to make an even more impressive looking building. On the top of the box is a picture that shows you all the parts included (this inventory is also included in the back of the instructions along with their element numbers). This is a neat idea and something I hope LEGO continues to do.

There are only a couple of things I really don't like about this set and yes addressing them probably would have added more to the cost. The first is the bottom floor, some 2 x 2 tiles inside, to give an even more realistic look, would have been great, instead of giving the impression of a faked grass look as flooring. Maybe on future buildings they can also build some interior (I am asking for too much here, aren't I? ;)). The other thing is (at least in this set) that the 'glass' in the windows has little round marks from where it has been filled by the mould. So I had to turn all of these ones up the same direction towards the top to make it less noticeable. But unfortunately it's still quite obvious. They are nicely sized windows though!

After building the entire model and taking it apart again, I decided to make my own buildings

using only the parts included. This proved to be a bit of a challenge, unless I wanted to build something fairly basic. I tried a few different constructions only to find I needed a few more parts. That's always the way I guess. Now, if I had two sets, I would be on a winner, but my goal was to build just using one set. In the end I built two stores that connect to each other using the Technic pins and bricks. I also decided to build interiors for them, although most of the good bricks were gone by then. I changed a few things I initially did not like about the building, but ended up with something that is OK, I think. Another problem was the windows. While they suit the Café Corner, they don't go so well with many alternative buildings (if building only from this set). All in all, it could be better, could be worse, but it was hard to come up with something equally as majestic as the Café Corner.

I personally would love to see more sets in this style and range. I feel this is a set that is going to be huge with many AFOLs and even those who are not so much an AFOL. It really is very nice and to be honest it looks much, much better in person than it does on the box! Hopefully this set will be so successful that we can hope to see more in the future, and the chances are fairly good if it does really well. Also bare in mind that this is one of the first times TLG has taken upon a project like this, so I think they did a fantastic job on one of their first buildings in this possibly new series of more to come (TLG! We are begging for MORE!).

What can you build with only the bricks from this set? Send us your pictures and we'll publish them in one of the next editions. So, what are you waiting for? Start saving for this fantastic set now! You won't be disappointed!

The review was surprising - how could the set be SO good? For me, the photos I got were pretty nice and all, but it sounded like the Café Corner was something really special. So I assigned another review:

Review by: Carin Proctor

Being a 'town' person at heart, I was excited to find I would be reviewing a Town set. And WHAT A SET! To me, it's an answer to a longtime dream that I didn't think would ever come true. I'm sure you've done it - while growing up (or even as an AFOL) you would say, "Boy, wouldn't it be great if LEGO would make a set like ____, or with ____ parts, or in ____ colors...". We've all done it.

There are a couple of really interesting things about this set that are worth pointing out. First, Café Corner has over 2000 pieces. That alone is impressive for a Town building. Typically, when I build a new set, I open the directions, open the bags and begin. With this set, I had to open the bags from only one section at a time (they're numbered), then due to the quantity of pieces, I had to sort them into piles by color to make finding them easier.

Tip: make sure you have a good sized area on which to build. This set needs room to spread out!

Second, the color choices are wonderful. The set consists mostly of dark red, tan and brown, with light and dark grey with medium blue accents, and quite a bit of dark blue on the inside. This is very nice and is more realistic than the bold primary colors (or white) always used previously in sets like Building Bonanza #4886.

Some of the building techniques used are really slick. There are a couple that I have never seen before. Such as on the roof: offsetting every other (or so) slope with a 1 x 2 plate underneath to give a really neat staggered effect; using 2 x 1 x 3 wall panels





to make the windows; and using 'skis' to make the arch design above the door.

Tip: Make sure you have all the skis before building the arch. I built it, had them all spaced nice and evenly, then found another ski. So I added it, re-spaced them all evenly, then found another ski!

The Café is built in three sectional stories. Each floor is solid and stable enough that you can lift off the roof or the roof and second story without worrying about them breaking anywhere. I also noted the use of Technic pins at the base of the model. It seems LEGO left open the opportunity to release *more* modules. That would be great. I can imagine a whole city block built this way.

Many architectural details were used which raises Café Corner way above any other Town-series set ever released. Spelling out c-a-f-é in 1 x 1 tiles on the sidewalk is a fun touch; having a forty-five-degree wall as the entrance is amazing, and maintaining that pattern on both the second story and roof is equally cool. The look and feel of the whole model reminds me of the American 1930s era architecture. Well done!


It took me approximately three hours to build, or about one hour per section. I thoroughly enjoyed the process and discovered new surprises as I went along. The instruction booklets (two of them) were very well done. There were several things to build at each step but they were made quite obvious and easy to follow. I highly recommend this set. I hope it is just the beginning of a new trend for Town.

Another incredibly positive review! I was surprised before, and I'm even MORE surprised now! So I didn't have a choice. I reviewed it myself.

Having seen the completed set, I was pretty impressed with the look and level of detail, but I had a few questions about how it was as a building experience. For me, I tend to rush to the finish of a set to view the final result. This set was the first set in a long time where I slowed down - this is a set to savor building.

It's an odd thing to say, true, but there are so many little details that are shown in the instructions that it was a bit of a learning experience to build. There were some things that I need to point out as small issues - the dark grey and black are sometimes hard to discern in the instructions, and some assemblies were a little delicate to work with (the arch for the side stairway). However, since this is a set for older builders, there is a little difficulty to be expected. For me, I enjoyed the complexity because the end result is gorgeous!

My alternate build was not going to be another building though. I wanted to test how the part assortment would work in another theme entirely, so I built a spaceship. That barely dented the parts inventory, so I built a landing strip, which took up most of the tiles...but there were still more parts left, so I built a control tower! Even then, I used only about two-thirds of the parts, which was really impressive.

After spending three hours building the set, then another afternoon building the alternate, I'll agree with the reviewers - this is a great set! It's a great addition or great start to any person's LEGO collection! 



exclusive

**LEGO Set:
LEGO Hobby Train**



FACTORY

BUILDING
YOUR WAY

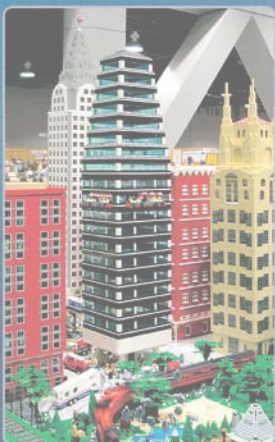


HOBBY TRAINS



FACTORY

BUILDING
YOUR WAY



LEGO Train Fans Join the Factory!

The LEGO Hobby Train community

The LEGO® Hobby Train community is a relative youngster in the more than 80-year-old hobby of model railroads, often called "the world's greatest hobby." The LEGO Hobby Train community has gained broad recognition throughout the model train community for its elaborate train displays, which integrate buildings, environment, minifigures and a large variety of model trains built out of LEGO bricks and elements. This community believes LEGO elements offer the most creative hobby train system in the world.

Due to its passionate community of hobbyists and the Internet to connect and share ideas, LEGO trains have become the fastest growing segment in model railroads. Nearly every weekend, LEGO train clubs from all over the world display their creations at shows and events. Most 30 of these clubs are organized within ILTCO, International LEGO Train Club Organization. Visit their website, www.ilctco.org, to learn more about the LEGO Hobby Train community and to find a club or show near you. Visit www.LEGOFactory.com to learn more about LEGO trains and how you can build your own.

The development process of the H



LEGO Factory preliminary models, March 13th - 26th.

LEGO Factory building trains.

Designed by
LEGO® Fans

Ben Fleskes USA
Christopher Masl USA
Hans-Joachim Matthes Germany
James M. Masl USA
Jeremy Masl USA
Michael Masl USA
Pete Masl USA
Rob Masl USA

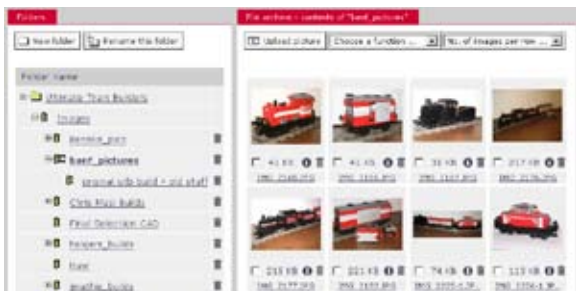
Boost your Hobby Train box with tracks,
9V motor and other exciting stuff
from www.LEGOshop.com



One of the biggest developments that has been taking place within the LEGO Group has been recruiting the adult fan community to consult and design sets. In an exclusive to BrickJournal, members of the Hobby Train team, including LEGO staff, discuss how they worked on creating this new set.

Special Report by Joe Meno, with contributions from Ben Fleskes, Christopher Masi, Holger Matthes, Jeremy Spurgeon, Mike Walsh, Helene Venge, and Tormod Askildsen

Art and Photography courtesy of the LEGO Group and others as noted



Above: Online, the discussion took place on a discussion group like this, using message threads and photo galleries. Screen capture by Holger Matthes

Below and following pages: Initial models submitted by the team builders after the parts palette was finalized

Ben Fleskes



"I want to invite you to participate in a special program that will involve a bit of your daring and expertise if you're interested. I can't let you in just yet as to what this program will entail, but I think you'll be very interested."

That is how the LEGO Hobby Train project started. In Spring 2006, under the leadership of Paal Smith-Meyer, plans were initiated on what he called "the most creative hobby train system in the world," using LEGO Factory as its platform. As Tormod Askildsen of LEGO Community Development (now CED Business Development) explains, "Thousands of LEGO fans would use LEGO Digital Designer (LDD) [software] to build trains and everything else you need for your LEGO Train layout and share in the LEGO Factory. This led us to the idea of asking some of the best LEGO Train builders to make a large variety of designs which could be built from one set. So we asked ILTGO, represented by Steve Barile, to suggest a group of the best LEGO Train designers in the world. Steve came up with a list of people that he had experience with and that represented an international group; Ben Beneke, Holger Matthes, Ben Fleskes, Chris Masi, James Mathis, Jeremy Spurgeon, Mike Walsh, Pierre Normandin and Tim Gould. LEGO also wanted Steve to participate. The group assembled certainly represents some of the best LEGO Train designers but they see themselves as being among a much larger group of great LEGO Train builders.

For those unfamiliar with the LEGO Train building community, the people selected are a who's who of LEGO Train builders – and they are from not only the United States, but England, Germany, Canada and Australia, making the Hobby Train project international in scope. Some members of this group have served as advisors to the LEGO Group (TLG) on a smaller scale, but this was the first time a collaboration of this size was going to be tried for a project of this scope which meant that there were going to be challenges.

The first challenge was that the project was coordinated online. The members of the team were from North America and Europe, and the team leader was in Billund, Denmark. Over the year that the Hobby Train was in process, there were over 2100 e-mails sent by the group members and from TLG – photos and files were shared online at a collaboration site, and the group participated online in the project decisions.

The next challenge happened right at the beginning, when the parts were sent to the builders. Ben Fleskes comments: "Early on, the project was a little rough as we were given the initial box of parts, seemingly picked with little sense. But it was enough to get us started. The initial selection of pieces included dark red, dark green, yellow, red, dark gray, light gray, white and black."

Chris Masi relates his initial thoughts: "On March 13th, 2006 I got my box! Yee haw Oh, so many awesome parts. One after another, we announced excitedly that we received our parts. More timidly, one after another, we started verbalizing our concerns. The parts – selected based on suggestions from an informal group of LEGO Train builders formed by TLG to provide feedback – were great, but well...there just didn't seem to be enough of a given brick in a given color."

Mike Walsh reflects: "I eagerly anticipated the arrival of the LEGO bricks we were to use to build models for what was being referred to as the "Ultimate Train Builder" (or UTB) set. I was thrilled to have been invited to participate in the project but upon receiving the elements, I was worried: I didn't believe I could build anything I

would be proud to put my name on from the initial brick selection. It almost felt like the scene from "Apollo 13" where a group of engineers was given a box of components and told to build an air filter.

Sure I could build something out of the elements but would it be something other people would want? I was relieved when builders such as James Mathis, Ben Beneke, and Holger Matthes echoed similar concerns. Fortunately LEGO listened to us and very quickly the scope of the project changed significantly."

Jeremy Spurgeon gives his first impression: "When the team received our initial parts pack of about 800 pieces, we each tried our best to come up with interesting models. We knew from the onset that the community would be expecting great things from this project, so we made every effort to please not only us, but the [LEGO] Train fan base as well. We soon realized that the pallet of parts was too limited and had too much color variety."

And Tormod concurred: "I would say the first challenge we faced was when the group decided that the palette of elements to build from suggested by LEGO was no good. We asked the group to get together and come up with a revised proposal." What was originally set as a project to create models based on an established palette suddenly grew in scope to creating a set from scratch!

To complicate matters, the abbreviated schedule of the Hobby Train imposed restrictions on the parts that were available. Jeremy explains the problem: "Many fans will ask, 'Why not some rare color, or why not put some rare train pieces in the set?' The answer is simply availability of parts. This either comes down to TLG having to run a new production of an element (instead of using their stockpile), which is very costly to them, or for a stockpiled element to be 'bottlenecked,' meaning that the number of sets being released next year or the year after are requiring too many of that element already...Each set that you see in the stores takes years to develop and this lead time is needed to ensure parts availability."

The parts were decided by the group, as Chris tells: "Picking the parts was hard. Were we designing a set to build passenger trains or freight trains? What colors did we want? What kinds of bricks were available in the colors we wanted? Ten people had to come to some agreement, and LEGO had to weigh in with what parts were available." Tormod continues: "Amazingly, the group figured a way to collaboratively come up with an alternative palette. It was checked towards element availability, tweaked a bit and agreed to."

Parts that were left off? According to Ben, "Out went the dark green plates – what use were they without a good amount of other dark green pieces?

Some parts we wanted, like the 1 x 3 curved slope (a relatively new element), weren't available in quantity at the time we made the final palette selection. Likewise, we wanted more dark red, but it wasn't available at the time."

With only a few weeks to build models, initially TLG was going to select only five or six models to include in the box. However, the group created 76 models, which created another challenge – which models would be selected. Almost immediately TLG realized they underestimated the Hobby

Chris Masi



Holger Matthes



James Mathis



Jeremy Spurgeon



Mike Walsh



Pierre Normandin



Train group, and after some thought decided to select the best 30 models, with 15 of them being the “A” set that would be put on the box art. Selection was done by each group member voting for 15 “A” models and 15 “B” models – Jeremy notes: “We made every attempt to get at least two models included from every builder, and the decision was very difficult because there were so many great models!”

Holger Matthes describes the online experience during this time: “The design phase was relatively short and we had to come up with some cool models for the box design. Rather than working together in a big room, we started uploading our pictures of our creations. Other group members were encouraged seeing models others had built, so they started over again and came up with their ideas. It was an exciting time logging in regularly to check what was new and what else was possible to build with these 1080 elements!”

This excitement was met with another challenge, and again the group rose to the occasion. Paal had spotted the renderings of Tim Gould and James Mathis and wanted the 30 models to be rendered in the same style. Up until this point many of the models were not modeled in any program, and some of the group members were inexperienced in using programs such as LDraw to build LEGO models. As Chris recounts: “Some of us weren’t particularly up to speed when it came to creating LDraw-based models and most of us were complete novices when it came to using POV-Ray (a rendering program). So Tim [Gould] led the charge with the LEGO graphic designers to come up with settings that we all could use. We started building and rendering models. If one builder had too many models to build, well the rest of the group jumped to get it done.”

This camaraderie was also noticed by Holger: “I have met most of the group members at least once in real life and I know whom I am dealing with. In addition to this we were a very focused group and we neither had absolute silent times where nothing happened nor we had an overwhelming part of off-topic debates. And a main rule for all online communication wasn’t broken: we handled everybody very respectfully and encouraged each other. An example shows this working together: After building the models we had to get the renderings done for the box pictures. Not everyone in the group was good and fast in building in ML-CAD (a building program) or doing the renderings. So not one, but a few others said, ‘Hey, pass it over to me. I will do it for you.’ That is a level of friendship which isn’t found often in project work.”

Mike Walsh observes: “It has been very interesting to see how the work had been divided up by the UTB team. At various phases team members have been involved in model design, logistics, element selection, marketing, sales, legal, graphic design, and other tasks. Different UTB team members stepped up and took the lead on a number of these different areas, it didn’t all fall on to one person. In total, the actual set design phase was probably less than 20% of the time I spent working on the UTB project.

In a matter of weeks, all the art was prepared for the graphic designers. But what about the instructions? It had already been decided that there would be one set of instructions printed in the box, and this would be of Holger Matthes’ Crocodile model. However, that left 29 other models that needed instructions that could be downloaded from the LEGO Factory website, so the call was made: “Who would be able to work on recreating the models in LEGO Digital Designer (LEGO Factory’s building program) 2.0?” And this was the final challenge, as LDD 2.0 had yet to be released, so the models were recreated on beta programs.

LDD also is a much different program to work with building compared to ML-CAD or LDraw, which are the building programs

primarily used by the group. As Tormod describes, "In LDraw, you can slide elements into almost any position, move them, and even separate preassembled elements – in LDD, you have connectivity and there are building rules applied for each element according to LEGO Group determined "intended" and "not intended" use of each element. This led to deep frustrations and long and heated discussions between the fans and the LDD team at TLG. Several of the building techniques and use of elements were not "allowed" in LDD..."

Mike was initially challenged: "Working with LDD 2.0 was an interesting experience. The usage model is very different than that of ML-CAD and it took me a little while to get comfortable with it. However, once I did, I was able to capture and refine my models very quickly. LDD 2.0 is a significant improvement over the current LDD 1.6 release.

Chris shares his experience with LDD 2.0: "Initially, we had a hard time building but that's to be expected when using new (LDD versus LDraw-based tools) beta software. Nevertheless, we got it done, and along the way, we figured out how to take advantage of LDD's particular idiom for virtual LEGO brick construction. It's definitely different than LDraw-based software, but I found (metaphorically at least) that virtual building in LDD was closer to the way I build for real. I'm glad that we were able to road-test LDD before it was released to the public, and boy, we did things to LDD, that well, let's leave it at ...we tested LDD like no QA department would have the time, energy, or inclination to test."

The end result is the LEGO Hobby Train set 10183. With 1080 elements, it's an impressive set – but not as impressive as the dedication and creativity of the group that created it. Here are some remarks from the members of the Hobby Train Group:

"The LEGO Hobby Train set is a celebration of LEGO Fan design and also a "play starter" which hopefully will encourage consumers interested in LEGO Trains to use www.LEGOFactory.com to publish their own creations for LEGO Hobby Train layouts. What we would love to see in the LEGO Factory gallery is lots of train related designs from buildings and tunnels under cornfields and trees to train cars and locomotives" – Helene Venge, Marketing Manager for LEGO Factory

"Set 10183 is a tribute to the LEGO system. With just 1080 parts, the number of varied train models that are significantly different is impressive. If you are new to LEGO Trains or have been building for a while, I highly recommend this set. For when you see and build these models, you will learn a great variety of advanced train building techniques from some of the best LEGO Train builders in the world. Many thanks to the LEGO Group and my fellow UTB (Ultimate Train Builder – LEGO Hobby Train's initial name) collaborators for making this set possible and making one of my dreams come true."
- Ben Fleskes

Ben Beneke



Steve Barile



Timothy Gould





"I'm sure there will be many questions to answer about the set and I hope that we, the train builders team, answer them satisfactorily. This is our attempt to extend the Hobby Train and the 9V line, and I hope our efforts prove fruitful." – Jeremy Spurgeon

"Did we do it all? Well, not even close. Even considering the amazing amount of work that we put into this project, the graphic designers at LEGO laid out the box design and tweaked our renderings. The LEGO supply chain found and put together our bill of materials (and I can't imagine what else went into production of the actual set). Paal and more recently Tormod directed us skillfully (I can't believe what they got us to agree to do!). Steen, a master LEGO designer, built all of our models to check them one more time. Right now (okay, maybe not right now) the graphic designers at LEGO are using our LDD 2.0 files to create instructions for some of the models featured on the box. Now we wait. We wait hoping that the advanced LEGO hobbyists will find inspiration in our set, and that people like our set. Mostly we wait hoping that LEGO invites us back to do a crazy amount of work just for the fun of it." – Chris Masi

"We all spent many hours on the computers. And the pure designing and building phase holding bricks in your fingers was only a very short phase in the full year of the project. Realizing that a project team spread all over the world can work efficiently together and is willing to deal with all new challenges till our 'baby' is born is probably the deepest impression I as a group member have experienced over the last months." – Holger Matthes

"I am amazed at what the UTB team was able to accomplish without ever meeting in person in a very short period of time. The UTB team created 80 designs in about a two week period. I can't wait to see what other designs come to light over the next few months as more and more people get this set in their hands." – Mike Walsh

"We regarded the LEGO Hobby group with respect – they were outstanding! There will be other sets like this in other themes – we are announcing one more in the near future, and we have just kicked off the third LEGO Factory Exclusive. All LEGO Factory Exclusive sets will be designed by fans." – Tormod Askildsen

Above: The initial Ultimate Train Builder poster, created by Paal Smith-Meyer and later seen in the CEO's office!

Below: The final selections for the Hobby Train

A models



B models

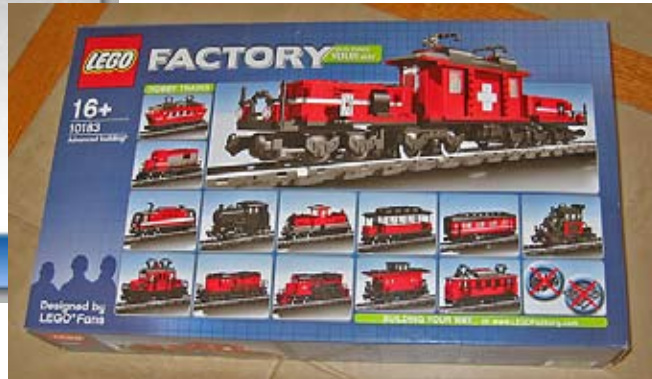


The New Hobby Train

**Review:
Hobby Train**



“When fans and the LEGO Group unite, some great things come out of it”



Review and Photos by Geoff Gray

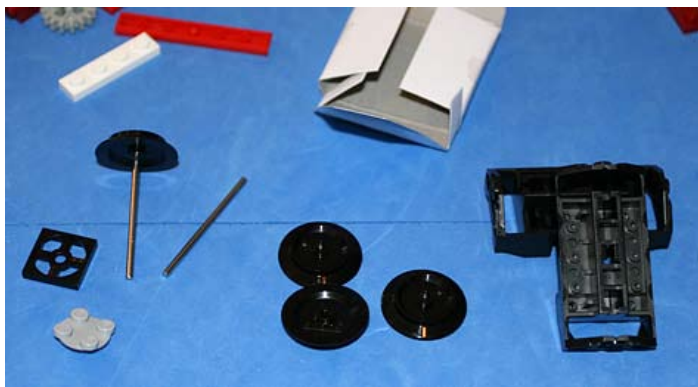
When I got asked to review the new LEGO Train set (10183), known as the Hobby Train, I was thrilled. The LEGO Group (TLG) had started getting fans involved with sets in 2002 with the release of the Blacksmith Shop (3739) designed by Daniel Siskind. Later TLG released a series of train cars (10025 and 10022) designed by TLG and James Mathis. The company has also had AFOLs (Adult Fans of LEGO) helping to beta test and design many other things (the first version of Lego Factory, 5524, 5525 and 5526 Factory sets, The Mindstorms NXT Robotics set, and more). Now TLG is set to release its latest fan collaboration project, the 10183 Hobby Train set. Once again this set shows that when fans and the LEGO Company unite, some great things come out of it.

The set consists of enough elements to create a few different train cars at the same time, and comes with instructions for building the main model pictured on the box (the Crocodile). At the time I received my set, the instructions were not yet printed so I have not seen them, but I have to assume they will be the standard high quality and easy to follow instructions LEGO sets are famous for. The set also comes with the ability to use a new version of LEGO Digital Designer (LDD), and online instructions for a total of 30 models. The toughest part of starting for me was deciding which model to build.

The main model (the Crocodile Loco) is a gorgeous engine and is worthy of grabbing top billing on the box. This model was designed by Holger Matthes. The other models all represent a wide variety of different styles and model



A view of the box and of the contents. Notice the reclosable flaps on the box - a very nice touch.



Here you can see a couple of the elements that normally come pre-assembled. In the case of the turntable, I think some people who may not have known in the past that the turntable can come apart will find new uses for the pieces. After all, AFOLs have been doing this for years.

types. I was fortunate enough last summer to see several of the 80+ designs that the team started out with and can honestly say that it must have been tough narrowing it down to 30. OK, enough talk. Let's rip into the set.

The first thing I noticed, even before opening the box, was that TLG is now packaging some sets with reclosable boxes. The end flaps of this box fold back together like a cereal box. That is great news for people who want to have a convenient place to store the pieces not currently in use. The box also has good crisp pictures of some of the models you can build. (When you look at pictures of my box in this article, you'll notice that there's no piece count. I was given a European box to review, and only the North American boxes contain piece counts on them). The cardboard used to make the box is a good thick corrugated material and should stand up to a fair amount of daily abuse.

When I dumped out the contents, I came across a poster that displays all 30 models on one side, and a great deal

"I noticed that they rotate much more smoothly and with less friction than the wheels I have gotten in other kits. This is a huge benefit since making trains be able to roll smoothly is of paramount importance in this hobby."

of information about the LEGO train hobby and its organizations on the other. This is a great way to inspire new people to seek out a local train club and get involved. (Side Note – One of the pictures on the poster is from the 2005 NMRA NTS in Cincinnati Ohio and I noticed that a building I had created was in the picture. It's not a main focus of the picture, but nonetheless, I am claiming that I have one of my creations printed in an official LEGO document <bg>)

Diving into the parts themselves, the first thing I noticed was that some of the elements that are normally pre-assembled were not. The 2x2 turntable and the train wheels all required assembly. At first I was a little puzzled by it, but then I realized that it is not uncommon for AFOLs to take the 2x2 turntables apart to use the base for decorations, so that made sense to me. The train wheels made sense as soon as I assembled them. I do not know what TLG has done differently in the manufacture of the pieces for making the train wheels, but once I assembled a few pairs of them, I noticed that they rotate much more smoothly and with less friction than the wheels I have gotten in other kits. This is a huge benefit since making trains able to roll smoothly is of paramount importance in this hobby.

Looking through all of the elements that came with the kit, I was impressed with the ability of the kit to provide a wide variety of parts without throwing in a bunch of useless and specialty parts. This set contains a good selection and hobbyists should be able to come up with some nice designs of their own. The color mixture is pretty good as

(continued on page 49)



It is always handy to have a cat review your work when you are building a new model. My cat, Bartok, took great delight in checking out each step as I worked.

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This is the first model I built from the kit


well, as long as you like red. I think red is an appropriate color scheme for the trains shown, but I'd love to see TLG offer the set for sale the same way they did with the "My Own Train" kit where you can buy the set as a red scheme, a green scheme, a blue scheme, and etc.

After looking through all of the parts, it was time to build. I chose a model, loaded the instructions into LDD and proceeded to build. (NOTE: I was testing this with a beta copy of LDD. The final copy should ship at the same time as the set.) I was very impressed with some of the building techniques I learned while playing with this model and others I built. The guys who designed these sets did a fabulous job of pushing building techniques to the max given the limited piece count. As I continued to build, I kept filing away ideas to use myself in future builds. All I can say to the designers is "Great job all of you. These are some fantastic models."

The one part of the build process I was not thrilled about was the flow of building instructions presented by LDD 2.0. I have to admit that I have never been a fan of following electronic building instructions, but LDD has always seemed particularly weak in this area. I think the reason for this is because LDD has to generate the instructions on the fly. It does not play back the instructions in the same order you enter a model. It has to "guess" at what makes a good "next step." The biggest shortcoming of this technique is that sometimes the next step places items "underneath" the previous step. In order to figure out exactly where the items go, you need to rotate the model in the view panel. Luckily, LDD makes this part easy.

After finishing with the first model, I ran it around some track and was very impressed with how smooth it was. Like I said earlier, TLG has really gotten the wheels right this time. I built a few other models and was equally impressed with them. I did try building multiple models at the same time and found that there are only so many combinations of models that can be built simultaneously. It would be nice to have a feature in LDD that allowed you to input the inventory of the set and then have LDD tell you what secondary models could be built when you build a given primary model.

Digging in a little further, the release of this set coincides with the release of LEGO Digital Designer 2.0. There are some nice improvements in the new LDD, not the least of which is the ability to filter your palettes based on kits you can buy. For instance, I can turn on the 10183 filter and the only elements I get are the ones included in that set. There was not quite as clean a way of doing that in previous versions. I did not spend a great deal of time testing new features of LDD 2.0 since I wanted to concentrate on the train kit, but BrickJournal should have more information about it in future issues.

At the end of the day, this set is one of the better sets the LEGO Group has offered in recent times and is a must buy for anyone who likes to build and play with LEGO trains. But be careful... You might get sucked into a hobby that continues to grow on you over the years. Of course, I wouldn't know anything about that <g>. 



The LDD 2.0 Interface with the Crocodile Loco loaded



The Squidmen: The Story So Far

Article and Photography by Timothy Ainley

Deep in the bowels of Billund, a professor carefully makes the final twist and turn on the machine in his laboratory.....click...click.....precisely noting every measurement and ensuring every detail. This is not just a routine experiment, but one of quite epic proportions; one which has never been attempted, and one that few will witness.

He connects the tubes from the De-Squidulator to the incubators as the clock approaches four p.m., a time when no one is around and when tumbleweeds can tumble.....unchallenged.....tick...tock. He flicks switches and cuts wires, sips his tea and looks toward the clock in anticipationtick...tock...tick...tock....a drip of sweat falls from his brow.....the clock strikes four and the bells ring.....DING DONG DING DONG....

The professor quickly leans across and pushes the button on the De-Squidulator.....there is a rumble from the machine and suddenly sparks begin to fly and lights start to flash.....bzzzzzzzzzz.....**BOOM.**

He slowly awakens and finds himself on the laboratory floor surrounded by smoke and silence. As the smoke clears he looks across the room, and much to his amazement are four perfectly formed minifig Squidmen.

The experiment appears to be a complete success, so the professor, in great excitement, reports back to his boss, who goes by the name of JV. Knowing this to be a breakthrough in toy design, JV instructs him to document all his work in the laboratory.

Returning to his lab with great joy the professor begins to videotape his achievements just as his boss had asked. But his movie career is brought to an unlikely end when, much to his amazement, he finds two of the Squidmen missing. "(Expletive deleted)!?" he shrieks "Where have they gone?"and in that same moment there is a loud thud and the door swings open....."Oh my God they've escaped! Ahhhhhh!!!"
.."Blarlulaabluuuublaaa"

(This frightful video can be seen along with the others at <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-6669443874477942776&q=squidmen&hl=en> or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvYe4Wj40qo>)



Squidman in real-life (left) and in LEGO form (right)



Squidman in Squidmobile

Yes reader, that's right. What you have just witnessed was the very first Squidman experiment, which took place in the Summer of 2006. The aim of this experiment was to establish a connection with a parallel universe and bring Squidmen from another dimension into the real world. "But why would LEGO do this?" I hear you yell. Well it's simple really, the Squidman head is a thing of extraordinary beauty and huge complexity. Some say no part designer alive could make such a thing in the modern world!

So instead, LEGO employed a notorious professor to bring Squidmen into this world and shrink them into minifigure scale. LEGO's intention was to release them in sets and hope kids would never even notice. You might have to wait for some more video footage to discover the conclusion to the story. Watch this space!

So you're probably wondering "What the heck is a Squidman?" The photo at right shows a rare moment when one of these horrific creatures was caught on camera, and next to him, the LEGO equivalent. You're probably also wondering who I am and how this story originated.

Well, my name is Tim Ainley and I'm from Manchester, England. I am a designer for LEGO in Billund, working in Play Themes. The whole Squidman saga originated from my interview with LEGO just over a year ago and came to life when I teamed up with a crazy Irish intern last summer. This is when the story of Dr. Squid and his minions began to take form and ideas started to fly around the studio whilst we were working.

After graduating with a degree in Product Design in July 2005, I was intensely seeking work in my field. It was a typical day up in the north of England, when I received the call from Concept Lab in London, from someone I had never even met before. He informed me LEGO was looking to hire two new designers in Denmark and, "would I like to attend an interview?" Of course, as soon as he mentioned LEGO, my mind went into excitement mode! "Wow LEGO, cool", I thought. That was the first time it had crossed my mind since the 1980s!


It seems however, that much to my surprise, I did actually talk to someone from LEGO at an event called New Designers, in London a few weeks previous. But this person didn't tell me where they were from, so I was none-the-wiser. New Designers is a large exhibition for recently graduated students within many design disciplines, from across the UK. This and other degree shows is where LEGO looked for new young designers.

There were eight people to be interviewed and there were two jobs available. So I thought a 1-in-4 chance was pretty good odds and hoped my short experience in board game design would also help me. So after swatting up a little on my LEGO knowledge before the interview, we sat and listened in amazement as all these incredible facts about LEGO were revealed to us. I never knew LEGO was the biggest tyre manufacturer in the world and I was astonished by some of the products that were designed back in the 1930s.

After looking through our portfolios it was time to see what we could do with our hands. So working in a group of four we had to design and build new concepts for an underwater theme; to take Captain Smith and his team deep beneath the ocean. Then they revealed a gigantic stash of LEGO in the corner of the room and it was about this time that we all quietly shouted, "WOW!" and our pupils dilated! We hadn't seen this much LEGO since.....well...EVER! And we didn't even know you guys (the fans) existed at this stage!

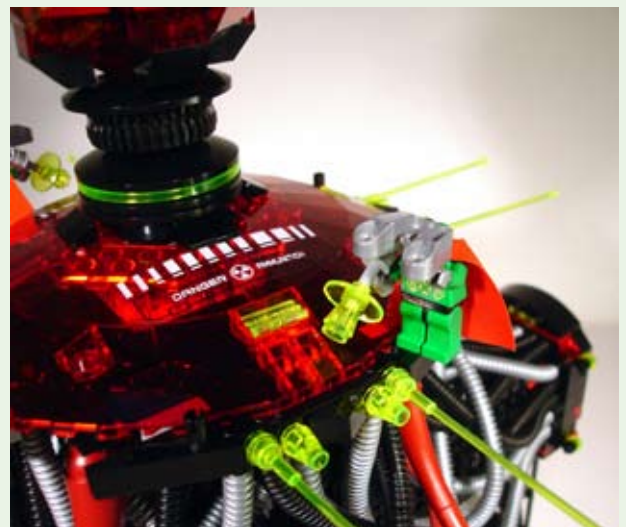
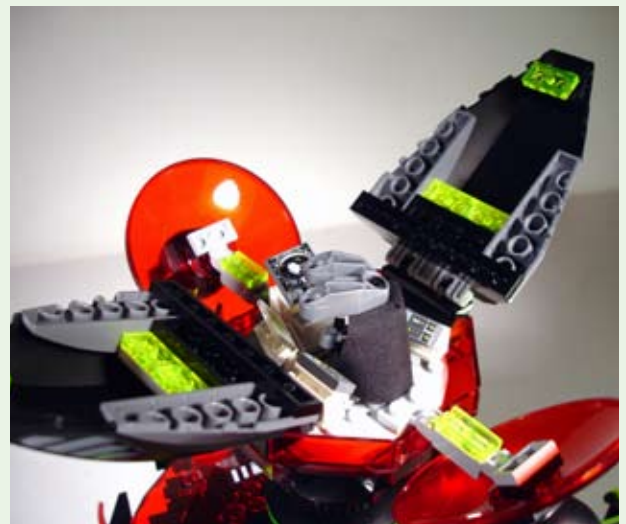
So I happily built a small underwater vehicle for the divers to whiz around on and then it suddenly dawned on me that we needed an enemy to create a conflict within the theme. This was the moment when a caped Harry Potter body and that random Technic piece came together to create..... yep you guessed it, A SQUIDMAN!

Following the interview I was offered an internship and eventually a full-time job. I would like to think the Squidman had a small part to play in it but don't tell them I said that! Since then I have been enjoying the job and working on various projects including Exo-Force '07 and mostly the new Space sets. It has also been great meeting kids and the fans. Seeing kids' faces light up when a model is revealed, to them, and hearing fans talk with great exuberance is extremely inspiring. It makes you realise what a special product LEGO really is. Having attended BrickFest 2006 I got to meet some great fans and some scary ones too! It was a lot of fun building the Squid Moon base for the event and it was especially nice to see it go to the museum in Ohio along with the others.

This brings me to the end of my story and, as always, a story should end with a moral. The Squidman tale is a prime example of how just two parts coming together can create and inspire a whole world of play and storylines. LEGO is one of the few products in today's world that can inspire both children and adults alike, to create things beyond their wildest imagination. In my eyes this is the best feature and one which a lot of toy companies fail to achieve over an extensive period. So if just two parts can create the Squidman saga then...just imagine! 

The Squidmen's Moonbase Module

Here's Tim's model of the lair of the Squidmen, which was displayed at BrickFest 2006. On the top right is the Dr. Squid's laboratory, located at the top of the module. Bottom right is a Squidman on patrol.



Review: Creator House 4956

Home building, LEGO style

BrickJournal reviews the new
House set!

Review and photography
by Melody Krützfeldt



Set Number:	4956
Set Name:	House
Year Released:	2007
Theme:	CREATOR/Designer
Piece Count:	731
Instructions:	2 booklets
Stickers (Y/N):	No
Price:	\$49.99

Once again LEGO has released another Creator house. There's nothing wrong with that — but a colour change would have been good. Yes, it's another white, red, black and light grey house. While the fence, windows and doors are different from the Building Bonanza set, the style of the house looks like it could be in the same neighbourhood as that previous set. It is though, still quite a nice and charming set.

An interesting thing about this set is the fact that it has two different covers. The US version has a different picture on the front of the box than the European one. I am assuming that is due to marketing with the idea to market the two sets to better suit the style of housing from either continent. The US version has the more 'American' style house and the European set has the more 'European' looking house on their respective covers. Instructions are included to build both houses as well as an additional alternative. The house I am mainly referring to within this review is the European style one since that is the version I have built.

It's a cute house, fenced, with a garden, path way, chimney, outside lamps, a tree and a garage, oh and the roof comes off so your minifigs can play inside. I like this idea and hope they continue to include this style of building in the future. It increases playability of the set as the interior of the house is more accessible. However, I personally do not like the look of the garage door that much (the beauty of it being built from LEGO pieces, you can alter that yourself), but I do like the fact that it actually opens. That is a nice touch!

There are 731 parts that are included in this set, mainly consisting of roof slopes, 1 - x and 2 - x bricks, plates, tiles, windows and doors etc... While there are many useful pieces, I just wish there were a few more, some smaller-sized plates would have been great or maybe a few extra small - sized roof slopes.

For building the actual set, I find it useful that the instructions are split into two booklets rather than one jumbo, clumsy set of instructions. The box, like many other sets that are coming out, includes an inventory of what parts are included in the set (this can be found on the top side of the box).

The alternative models you can build are also quite cute. Model two includes; two smaller houses on one baseplate. One house has two stories with a letter box and vines growing up the side wall and the other house with a garden bench, a tree and a dog house!

Model three is also double storied and has a cute wrap-around porch/veranda around the left front and side (this is the main model for the US packaged version). The garage on this model also opens up.


I have decided not only to build the actual set, but also to come up with something else I can build using only the parts that comes with the set. As you can easily make many basic houses, I wanted to have something with a little style, like the actual set and its alternatives. There are a few challenges as I found out on the way, maybe next time I will take notice of the amount of actual parts in

the set before I dig in and start building.

I built two alternatives from this set as I mentioned using only the parts from the same set. Therefore, my models do look somewhat similar to the other models, but that is to be expected due to the parts that are shared. While my own houses are also not perfect, like the garage, for example, that is too tiny, it was still fun to build with restrictions. My first house has a front veranda, an upstairs and a little garden, the front is also fenced in. My second house is a little more different, it has three stories, a garage underneath, stairs at the front, and a little shed out the back.

One problem when it comes to building your own house out of this set is the lack of windows! While there are two doors included with the set, there are only four windows! Personally, I like to have windows on all sides of a house rather than only a minimal amount. I understand it may have made the set cost more, but I think it would have been worth paying a little extra.

While it is a cute set, it is restricted in the number of parts and the type of parts. You would need to depend on parts from your own collection to really expand to to build larger alternate models. If TLG brings out more houses in this line (in the future), I am hoping for a few more different styles and a different colour scheme next time – tan, dark green (not the dark green as TLG calls it) and dark red would be nice!

So you are all set! All you need are the keys and you can move right in! – I am inspired! I am off to build another alternative! 



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Building: CheeseBots

Say “CheeseBots”

Article and Photography by Nelson Yrizarry


What is a CheeseBot? Well, to answer that question, one must delve into a world of yellow LEGO parts.

The idea for this theme came about after an online discussion I had with fellow LEGO Ambassador, Ben Ellermann. We were chatting about various parts and joked about how the yellow 1x1x2/3 LEGO slope looked like a wedge of cheese. That idea stuck with me as I began building that night, and a few hours later, the first CheeseBot was built.

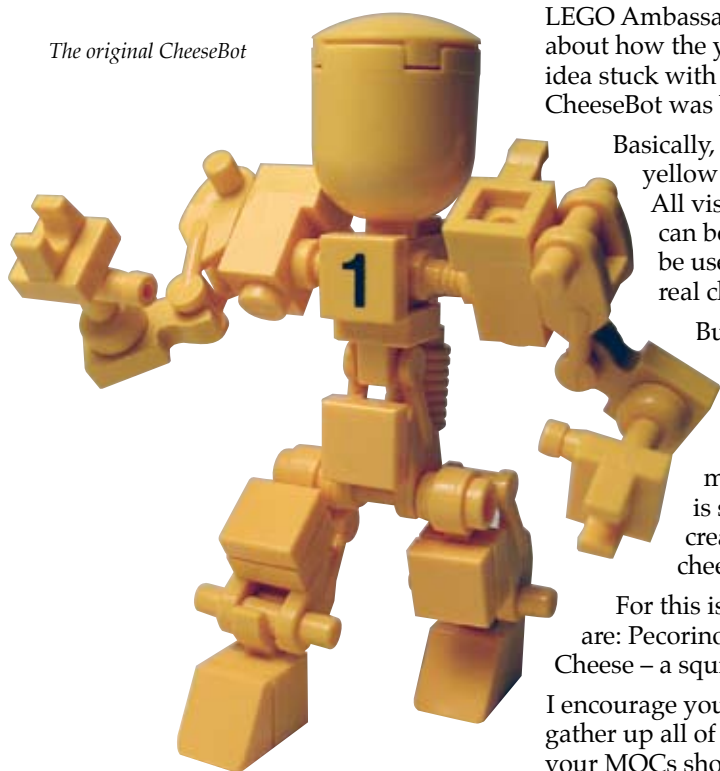
Basically, a CheeseBot is a robot or mecha MOC that contains at least one yellow ‘cheese slope’ piece, and is made primarily of yellow LEGO parts. All visible areas of the bot should be yellow, although other-colored parts can be used for internal construction purposes. Secondary colors can also be used in the visible areas of the MOC, especially colors associated with real cheeses (e.g. red, sand green, and shades of blue).

Building a CheeseBot can be quite a challenge, since you are working with a limited selection of yellow pieces that also look ‘mechanical’. This does, however, inspire creativity and allows you to develop new building techniques. I try to include unusual parts in my bots, such as yellow life jackets and scimitars, since it makes it more challenging. Coming up with a name for a CheeseBot is sometimes more difficult than designing one. I have given my creations the names of different cheeses or words associated with cheese - it’s all part of the fun!

For this issue of *BrickJournal*, I have created five brand-new CheeseBots. They are: Pecorino – a large fiddler crab; Asiago – a hawk; Goat Cheese – a ram; String Cheese – a squid; and the amazing Cheeseball.

I encourage you to test your creativity, and try building your own CheeseBot. Just gather up all of your yellow LEGO parts and start building. Like some real cheeses, your MOCs should improve with age. 

The original CheeseBot



What’s small, yellow, and can’t be found in the dairy section of your local supermarket? A CheeseBot, of course! The creator of these delightful little (and not-so-little) models talks about his inspiration and technique for BrickJournal!

Nacho



Gorgonzola





Pecorino



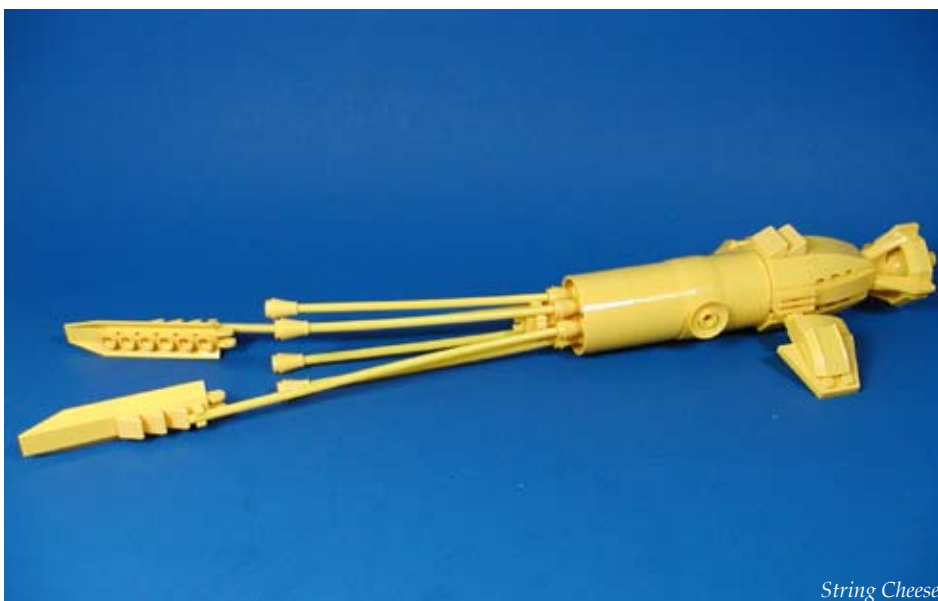
Cheeseball



Asiago



Open Cheeseball



String Cheese



Goat Cheese

You can see more of these creations at:
<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=228990>

Douglas Tugmaster

Article and Instructions by Timothy Gould

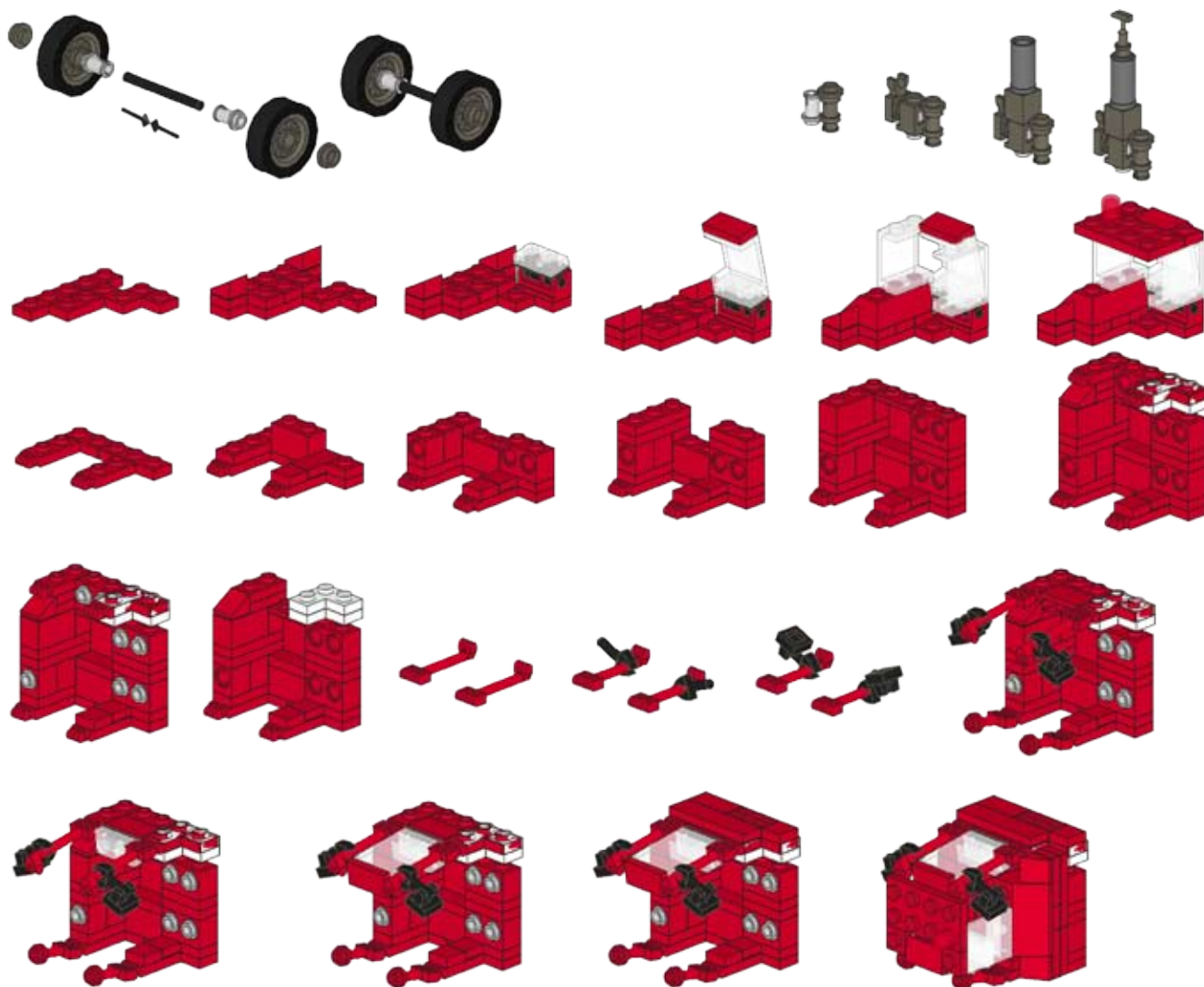


As you can guess by the fact that you're reading this, I'm responsible for a "You Can Build It" model this month which is my version of a Douglas Tugmaster. For those who don't know me I am a CAD-addicted LEGO builder from Australia but living in England. I used to have a theme (trains) but lately I seem to have diversified into most areas of System (except pirates and Star Wars). In addition to designing models I also work for the LDraw SteerCo and as a webmaster for the LDraw.org website.

The model is a Douglas Tugmaster which is basically a switcher/shunter for road rather than rail. I discovered it by doing a search in Google Images for switchers and it was love at first sight. I'm afraid I don't really know too much about the Tugmaster other than it is cute, colourful, asymmetric and all around nifty. It appears that in addition to the Douglas model there is also a Renault one which seems to have the cab switched to the opposite side presumably for wrong-side-of-the-road drivers.


The model was great fun to make. Due to various design constraints it ended up being built with studs pointing in literally every direction of the face of a cube (and a couple of non-orthogonal directions too). As you will see from the instructions this makes for some interesting design issues. In the current model the wheels can't move but I'm sure a mod could be made to allow movement without sacrificing too much of the look. For those of you who like to play with your models I do apologise but I do tend to sacrifice the function for the form.

Thanks for looking and I hope you enjoy the Tugmaster. — Tim Gould 



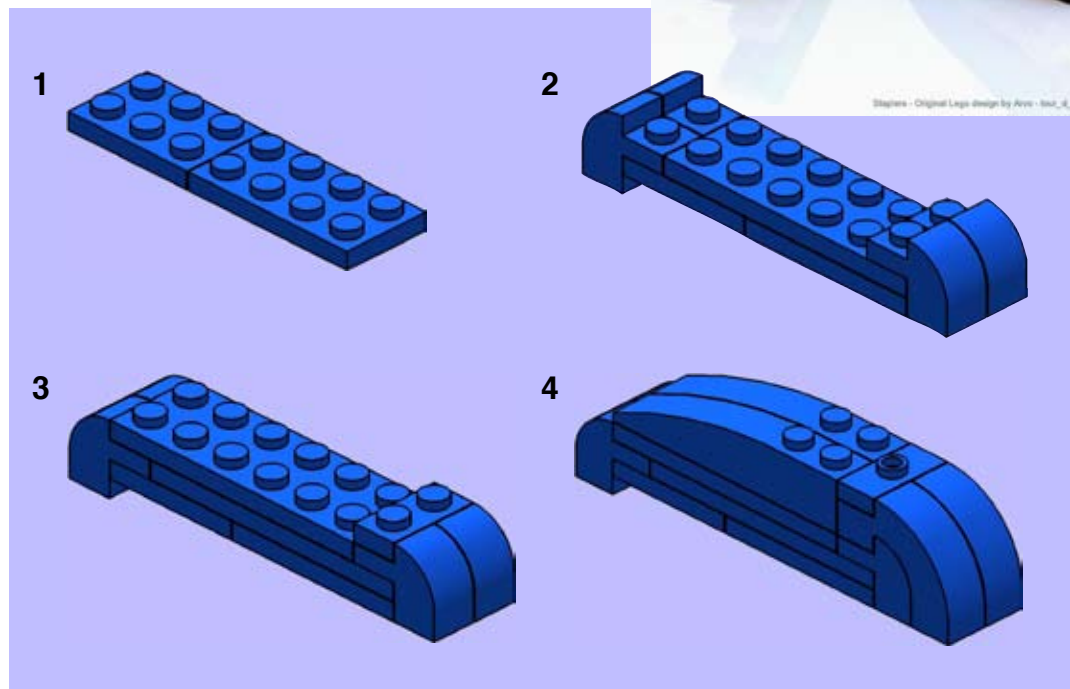
You Can Build It: Stapler

*Designed and modeled by Arvo
Rendered by Glenn Nissen*

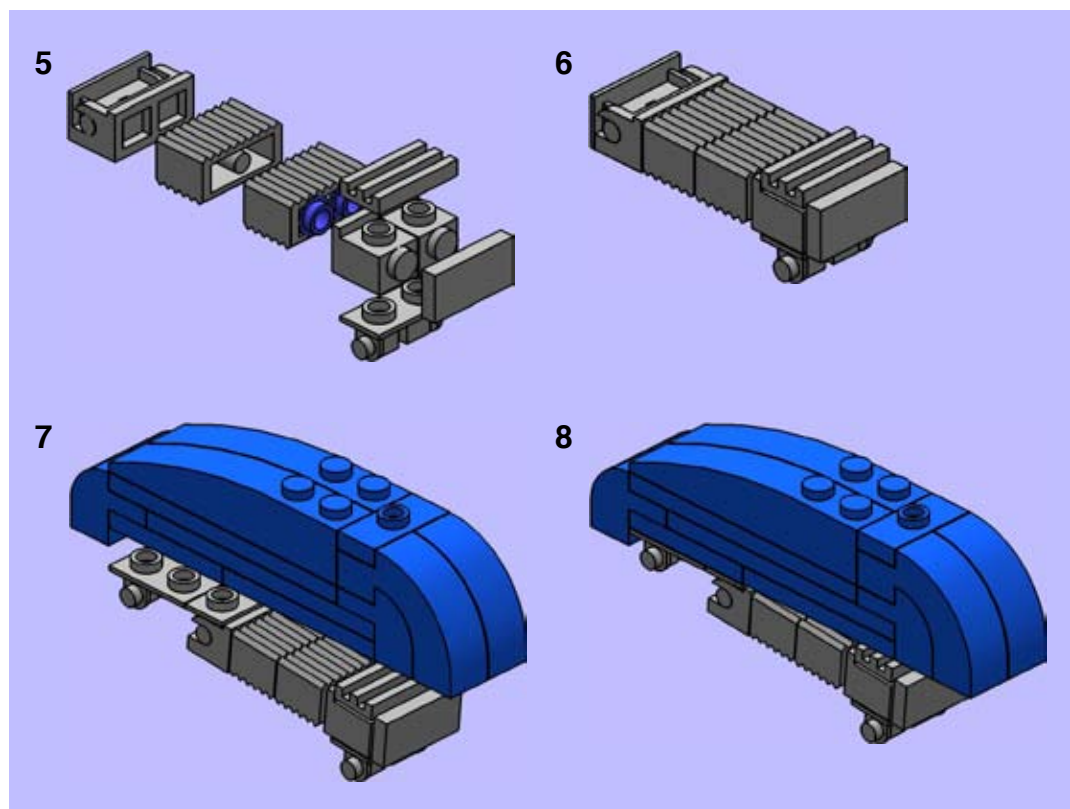
Here's a fun little model of a common office item, as done by Arvo! You'll be able to see how they cleverly use Studs Not on Top (SNOT) to make a model that is uncanny in its design. Enjoy! 

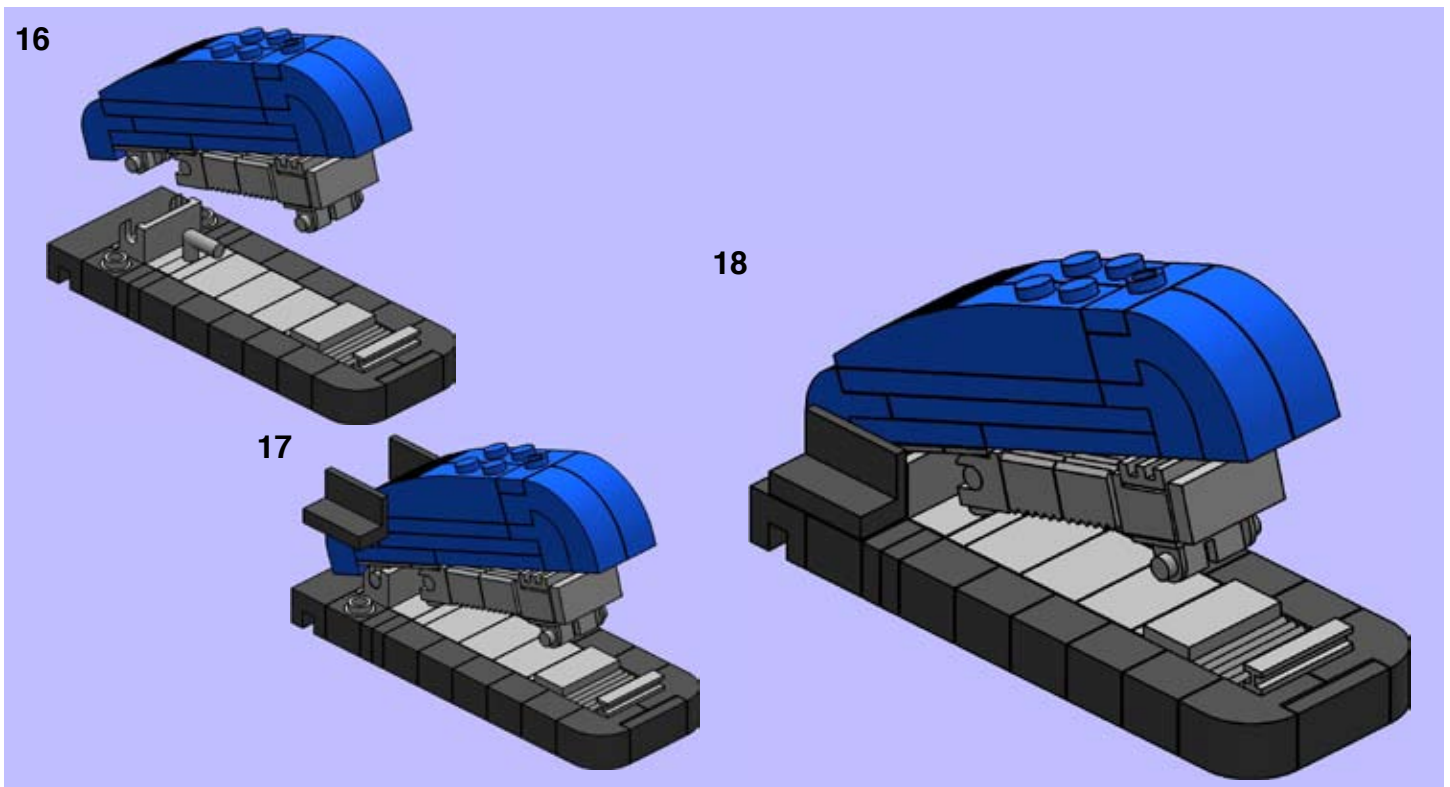
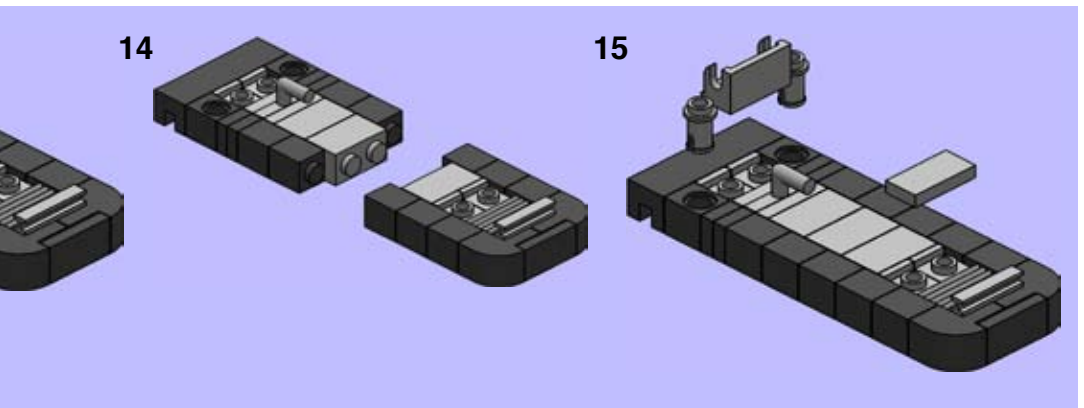
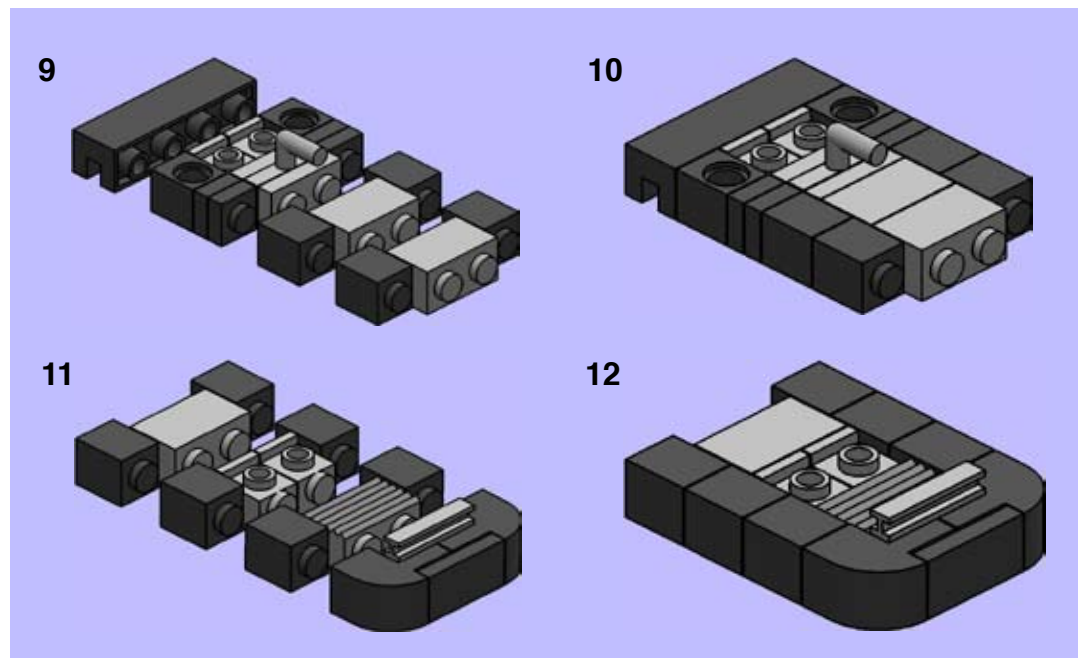


Body Top



Body Bottom





Stand

Minifig Customization 101: Custom Accessory Creation Through LEGO Element Modification (Part 1)

Article and Photography
by Jared K. Burks
and Emily J. Brownlow

Having learned to create a custom figure and to photograph them (see *BrickJournal* Issue #5 and #6 respectively), it is time to learn how to accessorize that figure. There are many different types of minifig accessories so this will be a multi-issue article; the first in the installment will be on custom accessory creation through LEGO element modification. For this article I have wrangled up some assistance, Emily Brownlow (Jager Enterprises <http://www.minifigcustomizationnetwork.com/forum/3020>), who is an excellent helmet creator and caster.

I know many think it is sacrilegious to cut LEGO elements. But LEGO can't make everything for us; it would just be too expensive. However, LEGO has given us a great foundation of parts and they tell us to use our imaginations, so let's do just that. I just ask that you not limit your imagination, get out that x-acto knife and pull out some LEGO elements; it really is ok to cut them!

In this lesson we will be handling hobby knives, hobby saws, and razor blades; all of which are sharp. If you are a younger reader please seek the assistance of a parent or other adult when handling these items. If you are an older reader please use care and caution; your fingers are not replaceable. Kevlar gloves are available to protect your fingers, I recommend these to all. They can be found in most woodworking/carving stores or online from hobby sites. I also recommend a non-slip cutting mat as well. The best lesson I have learned is to use sandpaper when possible as many items can be created by sanding, more on this in a moment.

Proper Cutting Technique

1. Always adequately light your work area.
2. Never cut towards your fingers, always cut away to avoid blade slips (where the blade slips and can accidentally cut you).
3. Avoid holding parts in your hand while cutting. If you must hand hold a part to cut it, always wear a Kevlar glove.
4. If the part is thicker than 1/8 of an inch (minifig handle thickness) use a hobby saw or Dremel Rotary Tool. These are much safer for cutting through thicker materials.
5. Use a hobby cutting mat and a desk or table. Never cut parts in your lap or on odd or uneven surfaces.
6. Only use sharp tools. Dull tools can hang and cause slips and accidents more frequently than sharp tools.



Figure 1 - Tools of the Trade: razorblades, hobby knives, hobby saws, sandpaper, cutting mats, Brasso, superglue, ruler, and protective equipment.

The lessons in this article are going to be photographic step-by-step examples. Instead of trying to dictate how each item should be cut and/or sanded, the location of modifications will be noted and the manner of removing the excess material will be left up to you and your skill level. There are always multiple ways of altering parts. Honestly, most any accessory can be created using LEGO elements as a base, the only limitation is your imagination. Tips and pointers will be given through the instructional photos.

This lesson will begin with the creation of some basic minifig scale hand weapons. While LEGO makes a few for us to use, variety - as we all know - is the spice of life. So we will begin with axes to equip our peasants. This is a simple and straight forward lesson, merely make a cut and you have a new item. Quick, easy, and simple, yet effective, so let's get cutting.

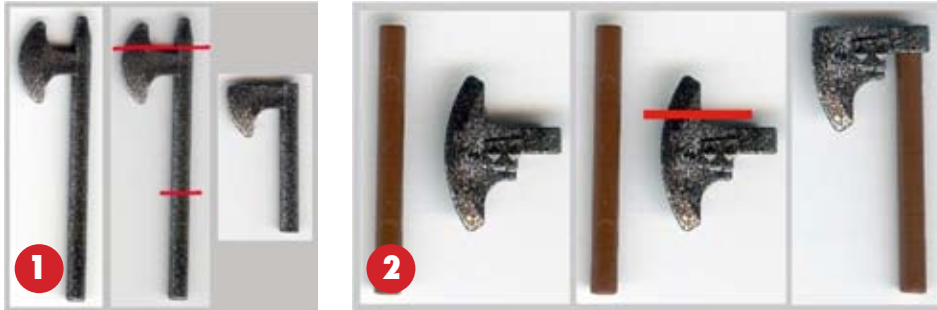


Figure 2 – Axes: 1. This example displays a quick and simple way to alter an existing LEGO halberd into a hand axe to give your peasants a fighting chance. Two simple cuts and you have a new weapon. 2. Just to show you that there are always multiple ways to make the same or similar items, check out this hand axe, which mixes a brown bar with a modified axe-head. Two-Tonic Knight is the resident blacksmith of modified LEGO weapons for Classic-Castle (<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=83128>).

Now that you have the basics of cutting down, let's take it a step further and add some glue to the mix by making a few custom swords. After all, our knights need new weapons to attack those well-armed peasants. These are merely a few examples, get creative and you can make almost any type of sword. In this first set of examples all you need to do is cut and glue, so work on straight and accurate cuts, as in the axe examples. If you do so there is nothing to clean up and your new accessory is ready for action.

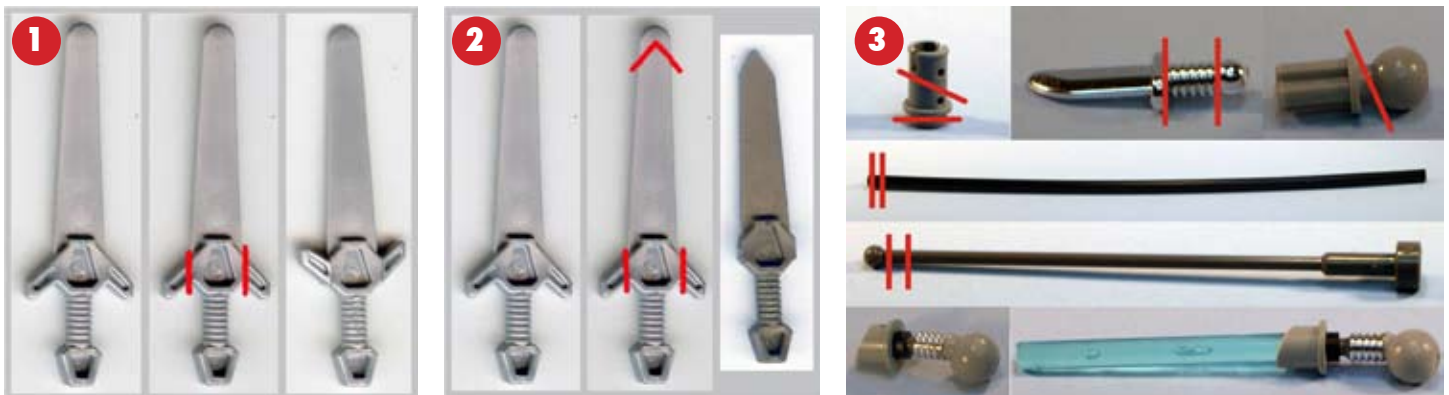


Figure 3 – Swords: 1. This example displays a quick and simple way to alter an existing LEGO sword to give your knights a slightly different weapon by merely flipping the guard. This is a basic first item to make. Cut off the guard and invert, reattaching with superglue. 2. Want to get a bit more complex and make a Bronze Age short sword? Follow the steps in image 2. Merely cut the tip of the sword and remove the guard. You have a Spartan figure almost ready now. 3. Are you more of a Star Wars fan and tired of the single style of sabre hilts? Well now you can make your own. This is a bit more advanced so practice your cutting; everything needs to be straight and flush. Inspiration for this item was drawn from Deathstickman's work (<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=114500>).

Our knights are equipped, now our castle guard needs to be able to fend off the evil black knight. The classic weapons for this are long two handed style weapons, pole-arms, halberds, pikes, and spears. So let's take our new found skills and step them up just a bit with some precision cutting and in the last example, the naginata, some precision gluing.

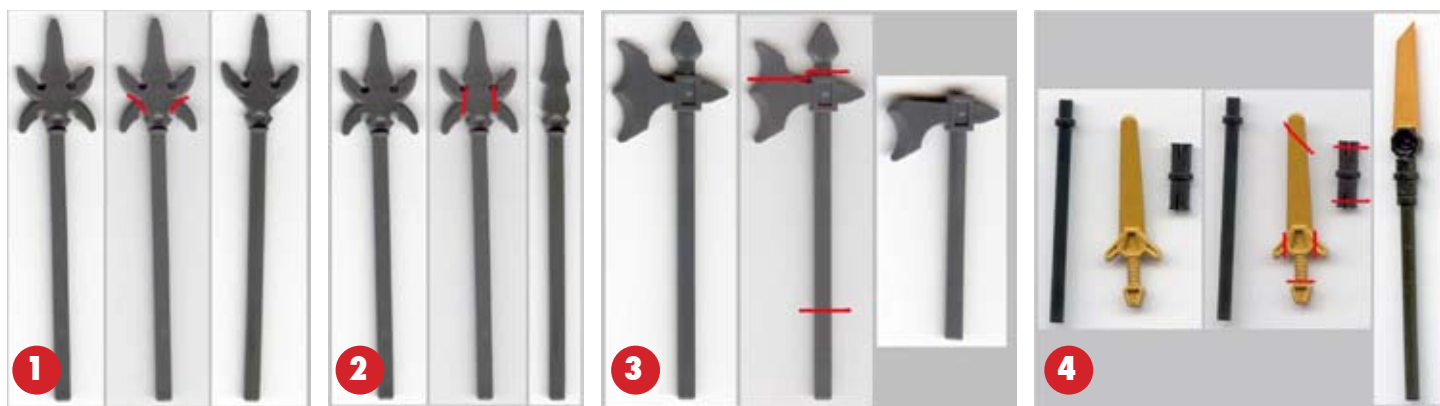


Figure 4 – Two-handed Weapons: 1. In this example two precision cuts alter the LEGO pike into a different type of pike, so now we have a bit of variety (the removed pieces can also be useful so save them). 2. Want to make a fancy spear? With four precise cuts you have a new spear. 3. Now let's make a large axe style halberd. With a few quick cuts you have one, just be careful or you can remove too much. It is always better to remove too little as additional cuts can be made. 4. You have small cutting down, let's get a bit complex and mix this together with some glue again and make a naginata. Just be careful here, I know it looks like the handle of the sword is removed but it is really inside the technic pin. Also a little paint was used to make the blade stand out more.



Accessories aren't limited to weapons. Want to make a new hat? Grab some sand paper and let's get to it. Most of the items presented so far can be made with sand paper. In the next figure no knives were used; just sand paper, Brasso, and a small hand drill. The sandpaper is used to remove the top of the pith helmet to make it look much more like a floppy hat. One of the greatest tricks in parts creation is the use of Brasso. No one likes those cut marks or rough areas left by sand paper, we all like shiny bricks. Well, Brasso can do just that, restore shine to the surface of a piece. After you have cut and/or sanded a LEGO element, take a rag with Brasso on it and rub the cut area until the "evidence" of the cut or sanding is removed, then wash the element. Now you have a new accessory that shows no signs of having ever been modified. After you have the hat shining, use the drill to make two small indentations in the sides of the hat to allow the goggles to attach. LEGO really helps us out here, there are small lines that run down the side of the hat and they mark the perfect location for our small dimples. Using this drilling technique you can add goggles or similar items to most any headgear.

Figure 5 – Floppy hats: 1. Here we make a floppy hat out of a pith helmet. Merely sand away the top of the helmet, but be careful not to sand all the way through the helmet so check frequently. After you have it close to where you want to stop, switch from sanding to Brasso, which will remove the sanding marks and return the modified LEGO element to a shiny state. Now take your hand drill (2) and make two small indentations on either side of the hat to allow the goggles to attach. Inspiration for this hat was taken from Dr Venkman of FBTB (<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?i=1486327>). Want to take your work to his level? Heat up the brim of the hat in boiling water and give it a little flop with a pair of tweezers. 2. Hand drill.



In this next example, we show that no parts are wasted when you start cutting. We demonstrate two different types of hat/hair combos and extreme cold gear. We will re-use the drill in this step so keep it close by. Here we will remove the lower portion of helmets to add hair and give the figure the appearance of his hair sticking out of the bottom, after all not all knights and kings are clean cut.

Figure 6 – Hat Hair: 1. This first example is a two-for-one. Using the four parts in the top panel we can make two unique hats, one for our friend to protect him from the cold elements and one to give him a bit more room for his hair. Merely follow the cutting lines to get the parts required. Make sure you clean them up a little before gluing any items together. To do this either use a bit of sandpaper or Brasso to remove the rough cut edges. In these examples I suggest using the razor saw as it will cut through this thicker element in a safer manner. 2. To show hair isn't just for helmets, but for crowns too, here is another example of what you can do with all this extra hair you have laying around. Inspiration for the hat/hair combo piece was taken from Legofreak of ClassicCastle and MCN (<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=107540>).



Now that we have shown you how to make many new weapons and a couple of new hats, get to work and let's see what you come up with. Just remember if there isn't an element made by LEGO that will give you just what you want, any plastic part from any toy, model, or whatever can be used. If you still can't find what you need, visit your local hobby shop and pick up some sheet styrene (sheet plastic). With this you really can create anything; all it takes is some practice. **b**

Next Time: **Minifig Customization 101 – Custom Cloth Accessories**

Building: Map Mosaic



Builder's name: Duncan Titmarsh
Project name: Tube Map
Country: United Kingdom
Building Time: 1 year
Project completed: December 2006
Number of Parts: Approx 25,000
Size: 167cm x 114cm

The London Underground Map

Most models are of buildings and vehicles, but there are a few models that are completely different. Here, a builder decided to make a model of a map used by travelers and commuters, and the result is...a LEGO Map!

Article and photography by Duncan Titmarsh

I had inspiration for this model while travelling on the Tube (the London subway system); I had a small version of the map on me and thought to myself, "would this be possible in LEGO?" TLG had just brought out the tile letter packs, so I could do the names of the stations.

I had a small map blown up to the actual size of the final build. I had an outline in my head, so the following week I started on a test build to work out the colour scheme. Finally, I decided on white and light grey for the different zones, built studs up and two studs wide. The tube lines are built out of one-stud plates 2 layers thick with tiles on top to make them smooth. I fitted the tube lines onto the model by using 1x1 Technic bricks with a half-pin and clipping the plates on. This made it easier for the lines running at 45-degrees, for the bends I used the 1x4 hinge plates. Where I couldn't get the hinge plates in the correct colour I used the same as the background colour.

The hardest part of the build (fitting the names on) was being stuck with the LEGO letter size, which made it very difficult in zone one (the center of town). There are over 2500 letters on the model and when I began to order them, TLG had decided to discontinue them. I had to turn to BrickLink (an online LEGO secondary market), which cost a lot more than expected. I had to shorten some of the names as I could not fit them in. I also had to leave out four stations as I could not fit them in either. In retrospect, to make this build easier, I should have made it bigger.

The model is mounted on a piece of 18mm plywood and held on by screwing through technic bricks which are then covered by the tube lines on top. I had a Perspex (plexiglass) cover made to fit over the whole model. This would stop dust from getting in or people picking bits off, as it isn't glued.

The Tube was first shown at the Brickish (the British LEGO Users Group) Christmas party in December 2006. Then it went on display at Hamleys toy shop in London. 



Want a Snack?

Starting with two MINDSTORMS RCX bricks, a builder in Portugal built a fully functioning vending machine. We get to see how it works!

Article and photography by Ricardo Oliveira

Vending Machine II

Vending Machine II is like those real machines we see every day but built out of our beloved LEGO pieces. It dispenses thirteen different products including: cans, chocolate, popcorn, and French fries. It accepts coins from 5 cents up to 2€ and returns correct change.

I am Ricardo Oliveira, a LEGO fan and member of the Portuguese LUG (www.plug.pt). I am eighteen years old and a student of Electronic Engineering.

This new MOC leads on from my previous work: the Smart Candy Machine. Since becoming a member of PLUG, I have been encouraged to build a bigger and better one. This time it's developed much more than the original!

It took me all summer of 2006 to build it, but I have had this project on my mind for a long, long time. The body (where the products are stored) was virtually built in MLCAD to be able to work out the quantity and different types of pieces that would be required. After building the "brain", where all coin control is processed, I bought all the pieces that were needed to build the body. Then, unfortunately, I had to destroy my Ferrari sets 8653 and 8386 to build the block in the back, responsible for reaching and dispensing each product. This way, almost everything is old style LEGO building, but the back is new style (studless).

Functions:

1 – First, the user inserts the coins, from 5 cents up to 2€. Six different coins are catered for, while the machine recognizes each one, the slot is disabled to avoid blockages.

2 – The user presses the number of the product required on the keypad (1-5). There are thirteen different products (57 in total) and they're numbered in three shelves, like this: 11, 12, 13... 21, 22, 23... 31, 32, 33....

3 – If insufficient money has been inserted, the LCD displays the amount needed for that product. If there is enough money, the product is released and the change given if needed.

4 – There is a Return button to return the user's money.



5 – As the change is given, a light comes on inside the flap.

6 – All coins are saved in the appropriate box/drawer. These drawers can be opened by using a code chosen by me, which can only be modified through the NQC program.

7 – If the RCXs are always turned on, the machine's memory knows how many of each of the products and each of the coins are stored so it never tries to release products or coins that are not present.

8 – There is also a fibre optic light for aesthetic purposes in the base of the machine where the products fall. >>

Specifications:

Pieces: I would also like to know...

MINDSTORMS RCX Bricks: 2

Motors: 8

Lamps: 2 (on the inside of change flap)

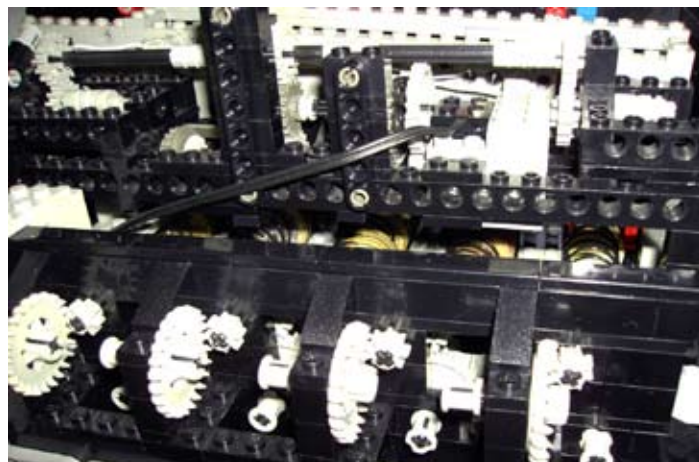
Sensors:

- 1 Rotation Sensor;
- 3 Light Sensors;
- 8 Touch Sensors
(6 of them used in the keypad);

Programming language:
NQC.

Special equipment:

- Extra wires (take a look at these instructions:
<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=187610>);
- Strong wire to make snacks spirals;
- Book spirals to save coins for change;
- Self adhesive aluminium tape to cover the ramp where coins have to make contact;
- Breadboard and resistances linked to the RCX inputs to identify coins and keys of keyboard;
- 2 acrylic parts, one to the front and one to the back like a drawer showing the mechanism in the main block;
- Some lamps to light up the products.



How it works!

1 – Coin Detector

This is the first step. The point is to get different values in input 1 by detecting the variation in electrical resistance of the different coins when inserted. Thus, I covered a base of tiles where the coins roll with a self adhesive aluminium tape. Because of the different diameters of the coins, they stop above the correct change spiral. (I'll explain later). To make the program easier, I tried some resistances so that, in percent mode, coins get the same percentage as their own value! That was not the case for the 5 cent coin because "5%" will be used for the "5" of keypad, and for the 2€, because there is no 200%.

When recognized, the value is added to the one in the LCD display.

2 – Collecting Coins

Once the value of the coin is established, it is collected to make part of the change. I built a short car that travels, using one motor, along the spirals arranged in parallel that contain the coins. When the car reaches a spiral, there is another motor that makes the spiral spin; the same thing happens upon reaching each spiral. This way, I just need two motors to give the change. Moreover, when the car moves out of its standard position, a pendulum falls due to gravity and the slot locks, until the car returns (when the user is able to insert another coin). Spinning the spirals will dispense coins or move them back to accept new ones from the user. So, firstly, the car goes to the correct spiral, spins it to create a space in the front, where the coin will fit. Then, a third motor moves the platform, where the coin was recognized and puts it in the front of the correct spiral. Each spiral has a limit of about 10-15 coins.

3 – What happens if coins exceed this limit? / Coin Drawers

Well, there is a problem if they run out! If they exceed the limit of the spiral, there is a hole in the bottom where the coins fall into a box, like a drawer (as you can see in the back). These drawers are locked and they can only be unlocked by using a code chosen by me which can only be modified through the program. When the code is input, the motor responsible for putting the coins in the spirals, with the help of the Lego differential spinning it to the other side, unlocks the drawers. It is a simple mechanism as you can see in some of the pictures.

4 – Keypad

The same breadboard used to detect coins before is now used to create the keypad. Resistances attached to several touch sensors are linked to each of the 6 keys. This unique 6 on 1 sensor is in the same port as the coin detector. 5 of these keys, as already stated, are numbers to choose the products. The other one is a Return key. When pressed, the program goes to the change process, once it dispenses the amount shown on the display (when giving the real change, the value of the product chosen is subtracted before). This part will be explained better below. The number keys, when pressed cause the following percentage values: "1" – 1%; "2" – 2%; "3" – 3%...

5 – Dispensing the Product


First of all, the RCX compares the amount inserted with the cost of the product and decides whether to dispense the product or refuse, and if so showing the cost of the product in the display for a few seconds, so that the user can insert more coins.

To reach the products, I used the same idea as for reaching the change spirals. I just added one dimension. With two dimensions, a car moves in a vertical plane, being able to reach all of the products. An extra motor in the car dispenses each product. The best way to engage each product mechanism was using pulleys. Pins in the pulley of the car engage in the holes of the product mechanism pulleys. This works fine! How to know when the product falls? In the base of the machine I built a suspension with a touch sensor. I hope the suspension is strong enough not to one day cause a surprise. When the sensor is pressed the motor stops dispensing the product. A fibre optic is also connected to the output of this motor. This makes a funny effect in the base while dispensing products.

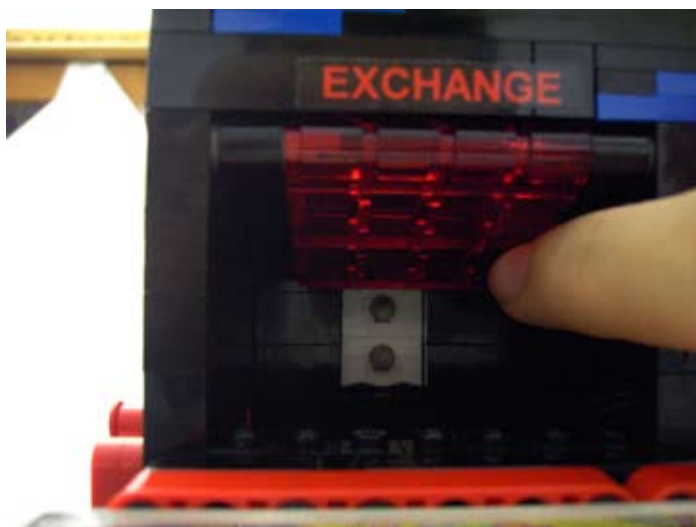
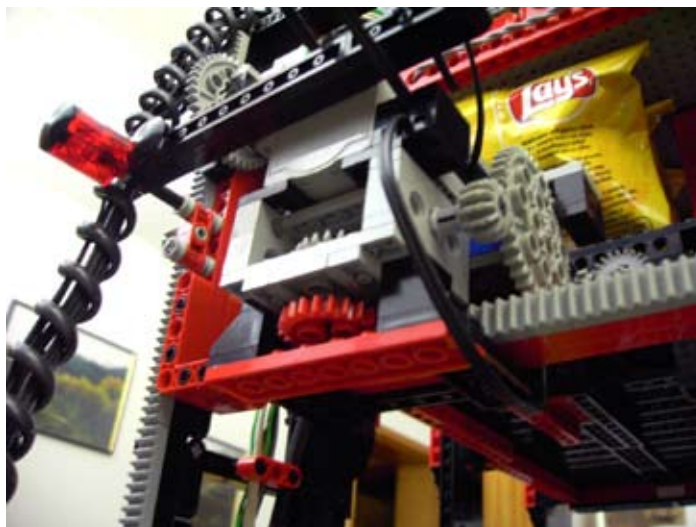
6 – Giving the Change

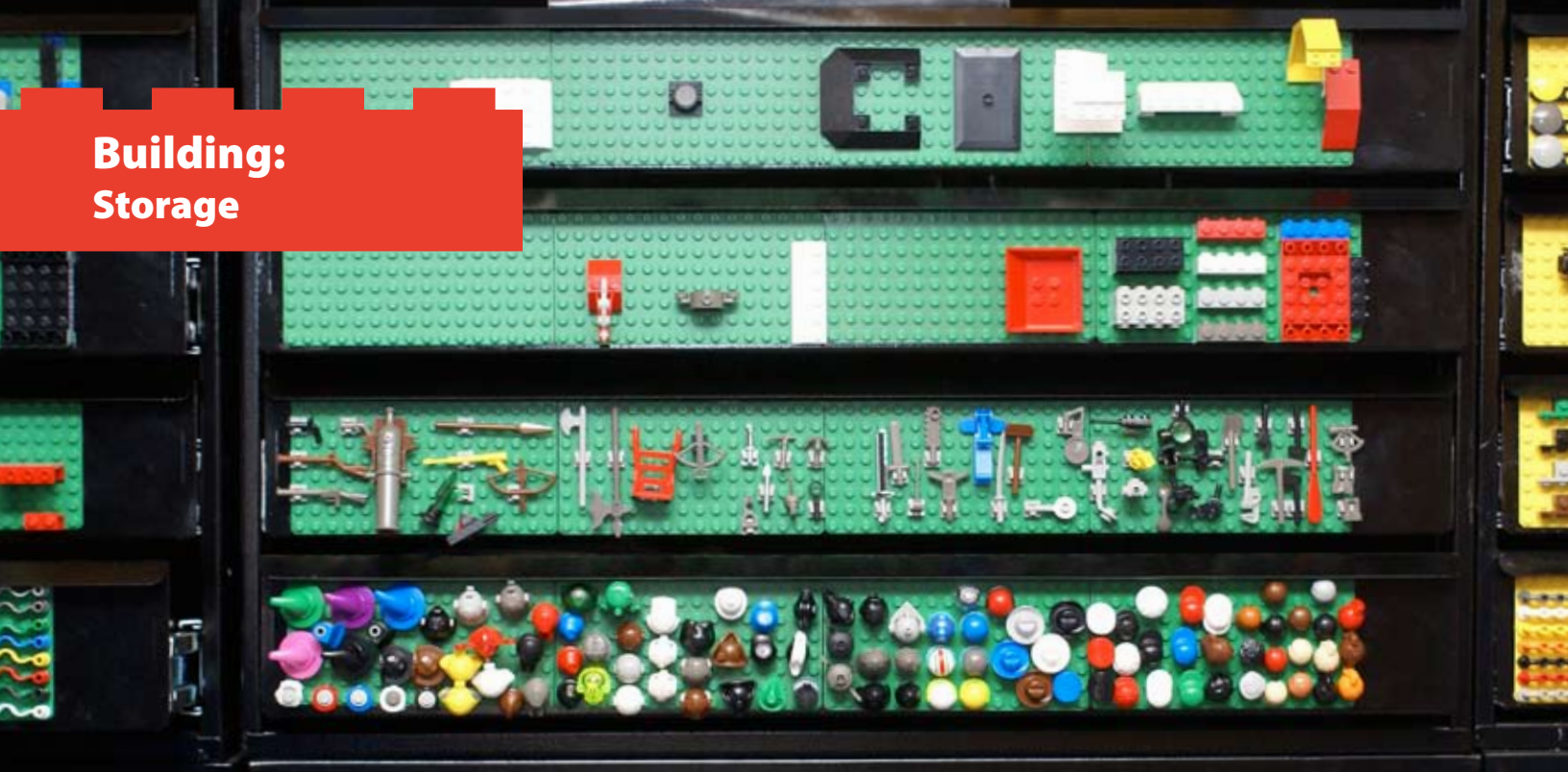
As stated before, the spirals that receive the coins are also the ones that release them as the change. The product cost decreases as the amount inserted increases. Coins of the highest value are given until the remaining change is lower than that coin, then it is repeated with the next value coin and so on until the change equals zero. I think that's the easiest and best way to give the change.

Curiosity: a lamp inside the change flap turns on when change is given. This lamp is connected to the same output of the motor that dispenses the coins. (What happens when this motor is on, but coins need to be collected from the back? I used a diode to avoid the lamp turning on in that situation :).

I hope you liked my MOC. Feel free to contact me (irmaos_oliveira@hotmail.com) about it or to write in the PLUG forum (www.plug.pt/forum). 

You can see many pictures of this machine at <http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=229618>





Sorting, Storage and all that Stuff!

One of the more interesting challenges a builder faces is storing the many elements that are needed for creating models. There is more than one approach, as you'll see.

*Article and Photography
by Joe Evangelista*

Above: A really large collection can be managed with drawers and parts attached on the faces. This is a method used by the LEGO Model builders in their offices, and by this user

Colors, shapes, sizes, themes, big bins and small bins – welcome to the world of Sorting & Storage. From the smallest 1x1 tile to the largest baseplate, they all have to be sorted and then stored *somewhere*!

The idea of storing your LEGO collection is not a new one, but rather one that evolves over time. When we're younger our collection tends to wind up in one or two large bins. No distinction is made for types of pieces or size, we just care about hearing that blissful ruffling sound as we try desperately to find that 1x1 plate on the bottom of the bin. At some point, however, we begin to expand and decide to keep certain pieces separate from the normal "riff-raff" of the collection, making them much more accessible when needed. That's all it takes, and the "sorting and storage" bug has bitten.

Once your collection starts to expand beyond what you can hold in your arms an inherent problems presents itself – where does the rest go?! While gathering a few plastic bins and storing them in a cabinet somewhere is a quick and easy fix, it doesn't allow you to find pieces with ease. Do you want clear bins in order to more easily see what's in there, or solid colored bins in order to limit the light exposure to your bricks, thus helping to preserve them a little while longer? Do you want certain pieces set aside, or everything randomly strewn about in smaller chunks?

Walking through your local Target or Wal*Mart, you can easily find plastic bins of all sizes suitable for storing and ultimately protecting your precious bricks from the elements. There are a few fan favorite bins that have proven to be very useful for storing and transporting bricks and creations. Akro Mills bins are a very useful bin as they are generally large enough to hold display items or random collections of parts. These are some of the few bins that have an interlocking lid that folds to the side when not in use. From experience, I have learned that Rubbermaid bins with locking lids are very handy, as many of my bins tend to otherwise fall over and spill their contents out on the floor. One thing to keep in mind is that the having a lot of the same bin makes it easier when storing, as most bins feature indentations on the lid and bottom that lend themselves very nicely to stacking.

Ok, so you've figured out how you're going to store your LEGO – GREAT! Now where does it all go?! This is a problem that many of us face. We spend a lot of money and time on this hobby and yet it seems that we have nowhere to put it! Can I store it in the family room next to the television? Will my significant other be upset if our coffee table is made out of LEGO? For some, an entirely separate room is needed as the LEGO itself takes up a great deal of space, but for others that is simply not an option. My collection, for example, is starting to come back together. Previously, it was spread out over three states! Sadly, I do not have a separate 'LEGO Room' rather, it all goes in my bedroom as I stack my bins to the ceiling. One option that can work well is to keep a small quantity of bricks on hand at your residence and the rest somewhere else (such as a storage facility, your parents' shed, an

uncle's attic, etc.). This allows you to have enough to build with and makes it convenient to swap bins in and out of storage without having to start building furniture out of LEGO. (while sounding nice, a LEGO bed might not be the best for your back!)


The question still remains though, "How do *you* sort an ever growing collection?"

It all comes down to personal style. The first way is to sort by color. This sorting method works well when building a creation out of only a few colors. It also lends itself to a large amount of creativity since seeing different types of pieces together in a bin can often lead to unique and innovative building designs. However, sorting by color can lead to difficulties when trying to find a certain type of piece as you still have to sift through a large amount of pieces to find that pesky 1x1 plate.

Another popular method of sorting is to sort by type of piece. This allows you to have as much or as little granularity as needed. Sorting out all the 1xN, 2xN bricks and plates into separate bins allows you to find those much easier. That's probably the easiest and most basic sorting by type. Sorting out your collection into plastic tool drawer sets allows you to put your tools, jumpers, headlights, tiles, hinges, clips, and many others into their own respective drawers. That makes finding that pesky 1x1 plate much easier! You can even label the outside of each drawer to indicate the pieces it contains. However, there are two inherent downfalls of this sorting system. First, is that it takes a great deal of time to get to this level of granularity, and second, it can limit creativity by not letting you sift through bins of unsorted pieces to see new combinations.

There are a few other methods that work well for unique pieces. Sorting by theme can be effective to easily locate Pirate boats, Technic pins, Paridisa pink bricks, Bionicle components, or Classic Space. This works well for those theme-specific pieces; but how do you assign a theme to a 1xN? Sorting by creation is yet another method and works well because it allows you to put all of your pieces for a certain model in one bin. This can be extremely helpful when displaying your creations for a show – fixing, expanding, changing your design only requires you to bring one bin and not your entire collection.

So is there a correct way to organize your collection? The answer is not as simple as a 'yes' or 'no'. There are many differing views, and people will strongly defend their own way of storing – whether it is hundreds of tiny containers, plastic bags, or just one large bin. Some people can spot color differences very easily and feel fine mixing colors together, others are meticulous and have different organizing trays for each color. The shocking fact is that they're all right!

One important thing to keep in mind is that there will always be that pesky piece that you only have one of, which doesn't seem to quite fit with how your collection is sorted. There is no end to the variations of how to sort and store, so feel free to experiment until you find one that you like the best. Because, just like in the ancient world where all roads led to Rome, in your LEGO world all roads lead to your collection. You determine how the roads are laid out in order to best get to your destination so that you can get the most enjoyment out of an exceptional hobby! 



Top: Baseplates can be stacked and are easy to store

Above: Basic bricks are also relative easy to store, but bulky

Below: Another large collection that is within a large drawer



Live to Build

Some builders sell models or take commissions. While building is a fun thing to do, is this something that is rewarding? Anne Henmi talks about the ins and outs of building professionally.

Article and Photography by Anne Henmi



A commissioned work by Anne

Over the summer and fall of 2006, I have received a lot of interesting questions related to the LEGO creations that I sell. Some of the questions were:

- How much do you make off your LEGO creations?
- What do you charge for your creations?
- Do you think it's very cool that you get to work with all these people for their weddings?
- Can you make me a life-size dog?
- Would you ever consider selling your LEGO Albert or is there a licensing issue?
- Why don't you accept Paypal?
- My check is going to bounce. What should I do?

Needless to say, it's been an interesting summer. I've received some strange requests such as: the life-size dog (a Brittany Spaniel, not a Saint Bernard), someone wanting to buy my Florida Gator mascot Albert, and working with a number of brides to add some fun to their wedding.

During the summer I don't usually do much building as the building bug doesn't usually hit until the cooler months, but this summer was different.

But the building bug was almost squashed early on by working with a customer who was very insistent on a MOC design I didn't exactly agree with. It was very trying to work with someone who presented me with a moving target.

Projects like that can kill any enthusiasm to build.

After that story about my insistent customer you may get the impression that I don't like to build. But nothing could be further from the truth. What's even better is when the building bug hits me full force and I want to work on multiple projects at the same time (it usually coincides with football season).

Last year I started working on a model of a dragon. I did at least two different versions of it before the summer hit. Then I had a lot of wedding projects to do, so I had to put the dragon away. It doesn't mean that I'm not coming back to it—it's just on hiatus for now. I have "builder's block" with the dragon MOC, and it's not a LEGO block.

During the summer I get to build MOCs for me, not for customers. I really like building for me. I know it sounds selfish, but this was a very hurried summer of building. It's funny how long it can take to build something. I worked on a hockey player sculpture for a customer, which was done in six weeks time, where the dragon has been worked on for over a year and is still incomplete.

Fortunately, I look forward to coming home in the evenings and working on my tsuru (a Japanese water bird) sculpture, and trying new building techniques.

If I'm feeling daring, I'll take on the challenge of the dragon again. Or, there are other sculptures, mosaics or projects I've had in my head that may finally get my attention. That's what keeps me building, not being paid to build.

What to sell, pre-designed or custom?

Deciding what you're going to sell is not as easy as it sounds. Most of the time people aren't going to pay you for custom work unless they have something specific in mind and let you know what exactly it is.

Some folks sell kits that include the pieces and instructions while others sell models fully built. I have done both but neither is particularly easy. Customs should be done without instructions, or you're to add a significant amount of time to the building process.

Selling is easier if you sell to a target group. For example, my dog figurines are sold as individual kits (instructions on CD) to rescue dog breed groups. I don't have the patience to deal with day-to-day customers, and that way the rescue groups can keep any after cost profits.

How much should you charge?

The amount you'll want to charge for your models depends on materials and labor. An obvious part of the cost is the bricks, but that's not all. Even if you get a killer deal on your LEGO pieces here are other costs that come into serious play:

- Packaging (if you're shipping the models/sets)
- Packaging for kits
- Instructions (printed or on CD-ROM)
- Time to create the original design
- Time to acquire the LEGO pieces
- Time to assemble the kit or custom MOC
- Cost of getting the LEGO pieces to you (shipping costs from BrickLink, LEGO Shop at Home, or the gas to the local toy store)

You can see that a lot of your costs need to be passed along to the customer. Believe it or not, this does not include time spent with the customer and even a modest sized project this can be an exceptional amount.

The Customers

Like every business, you have customers. And the type of customers you have can vary greatly from corporations to individuals. Because selling LEGO creations is such a niche market, you have to compete with everyone else who wants to do this, and you have to answer your customers' needs.

Speaking of customers, you need to scope the project carefully with them. The job can get way out of hand either from customer demands or from your own creative urges.



Dragon model in progress



A kit of a dog Anne sells



The undersea wedding model by Anne



One of many wedding models Anne designs and builds



Boxes for a corporate client

I've had some very well planned LEGO buildings: needing 18 LEGO boxes with the corporate logo, a hockey player sculpture, and Leonberger (a very large dog breed) dog figurine kits. As you can see, each customer had different needs and inevitably different time constraints.

The least enjoyable project I worked on was a wedding scene that took place in the ocean—an “under the sea” theme. The task was unpleasant partly because of the customer and partly because of the assignment. I had to make several design changes during the project because the customer was demanding alterations in the middle (talk about scope creep), and in the end I really didn't like the design. However, the customer was happy with it and that's what's important.

You also need to be aware of your own time management and constraints. While I didn't have to run out and order pieces for the hockey player, the time constraint made the project feel rushed at the end and I had to delay the delivery for a week because of my own time commitments and not wanting to sell someone shoddy work.

Payment

Before sending out any work, make sure you receive payment. No store ever allows you to walk out with the goods in the hope that you'll pay later, so you shouldn't either.

For sending money, I usually take a check. I've had nothing but problems with Paypal, so I don't use them based on my own personal experience. Since I don't have \$500 worth of merchandise being sold every month, I cannot process credit cards. If I have someone who orders from overseas (in my case, not in the United States), it has to be an international money order in the form of U.S. dollars for the exact amount only.

Even though I don't accept Paypal, I still get quite a few customers. However, I'm sure I'm missing out on a few for not being able to accept credit cards.

Packing and Shipping

You also need to talk to your customers about shipping. The larger the custom creation, the more it will cost to ship. Kits are not as worrisome, as it is just a quantity and size of the boxes issue.

However, anytime you have a custom creation you've sold, you need to pack it well. I mean very well. If you think it's packed well, pack it again. The hockey player was shipped all the way out to Florida and it survived because it was well-packed.

For shipping, find a carrier you trust. There are enough to choose from, and everyone has their good and bad experiences.

A Final Word

Here's a thought for those of you who are thinking of building for a living. Remember that right now you live to build, but building to live is a completely different passion.

You won't necessarily get to build the things you want because you'll be busy working on a custom creation for someone else.

However, if you're up for building LEGO creations for others, you'll find it rewarding to spend our time building something that someone will get joy from, and you'll get some money from as well. 

The event started out by the normal setting-up procedure on Friday which typically can take all day and almost all night. Although not all exhibitors show their models on the same days, occasionally you can find a new MOC here or there on either Saturday or Sunday - depending on how much time they can spare.

At most of these types of events we usually gather together to eat dinner (either eat out or eat upstairs in the meal room where cooked food and drinks are provided, often by fans), which is something that is nice to look forward to: eating with your friends and a bunch of LEGO friends at that. So Friday night's meal was Chinese take-out and the Saturday night over 50 fans and LEGO employees joined together for dinner at a local Italian restaurant.

It could be true that LEGO events (in general) are getting bigger and bigger. This year the event in Frechen attracted an amazing amount of people from the public not only inside the building but also outside! At one stage there were approximately 300 people outside waiting and lining up as the other two halls were completely filled with people! And these were decent sized halls! It was estimated that around 6500 people (possibly more) had turned up to the event over the 2 days; with Sunday being even more packed than the Saturday. While this is exciting for the exhibitors and organizers, it also leaves one thinking about what will they do the next year? - Apparently the event was announced on the radio and a TV crew and newspaper also attended the event (not to mention *BrickJournal* too).

On both Saturday and Sunday, several LEGO employees set up a stand where they announced a few goodies, showed off several new 2007 products and ran a couple of polls to gather valuable feedback (thankfully they also had these in English!). The polls were considerably interesting and they seem to have attracted a bit of attention, one was for a series of 3 beautiful buildings that hinted a possible sighting (or something similar) in the near future or so. The aim was to

Another Year... Another Great Event!

1000steine's annual meeting in Frechen, Germany was a success in more ways than one! With surprises from the LEGO Group and outstanding attendance, 2007 started with a bang!

*Article by Melody Krützfeldt
Photography by Melody Krützfeldt
and Stephan Sander*





gather people's thoughts and opinions to see what they liked best about the set, what they didn't like, and what they would change in order to make the set better...

The other eyecatcher was a set of 4 groovy cars all built by various people — this was the second poll in which questions were asked like what's your favourite model and what style you liked best, studless, tiled, or a bit of both etc. Of course such models attracted the male population with such enthusiasm as to what these models are all about... I have the feeling there are a few exciting and interesting things heading our way, maybe? Maybe not, only time can tell!

Oh and of course I can't forget the sketch of a building on a stand that was also on display, that was definitely causing a bit of a buzz and with every right to! What is it? What is it all about? What does it mean exactly? Is this something we can look forward to? Those very questions that are racing around the community will be answered soon enough! Keep your eyes out and wide-open for that one!

Thankfully again, loads of stores (also from Holland) were to be seen - selling used and new goods, always something to see and if you look close enough, a bargain or two can be found. Plenty of old hard-to-find sets and parts - always worth looking through, that is if you can beat the crowds.

Also on the agenda was a speed-build in which several members participated as well as auctions that were held over the few days – at some of these events the aim is to hold the world record by building the set the fastest and going by the rules with the same amount of contestants. Last year's contestants ended up in the local newspaper.

Another competition at the event was a large container filled with 1 x 1 round brown bricks as part of a competition, near the main entrance. The main objective was to guess how many parts there are in order to win a prize.

The addictive 'tombola' – where you purchase tickets for 1€ each in order to try and find a corresponding number on your ticket that matches a prize, don't be surprised if you end up






with several small sets and a few odds and ends, although there are always some nice prizes available - if you are lucky enough to get the right numbers!

But apart from meeting new people as well as friends, shopping and showing to the public, fans and the public also come for the MOCs. Like most LEGO shows there is always something that makes your jaw drop and your mouth drool; plenty of beautiful MOCs and tons of inspiration and ideas. Don't forget to take truckloads of pictures as you will forget all the fine details on many of the fabulous MOCs on display.

As you can see from the various pictures, one of the nice things about these events is the variety of the MOCs and displays, including Star Wars collections, crazy but gorgeous dragons and a Duplo Castle, cars, a huge Batcave, a windmill and trains, an elaborate church, a massive naval ship, large buildings and a fair, plenty of architecture, tall buildings, a beautiful train station that is still in progress, a charming castle, gorgeous-highly-detailed buildings, fire stations, Technic and a huge oil rig and so much more!

The event ended on Sunday afternoon, when the AFOLs began to pack and clean up. Some planned to leave on Monday while others prepared for a long journey home (even to another country for some). For those who could not get a room in time or transportation to a local hotel, some found a comfortable place on the floor within the halls; the main hall also has showers, so this isn't a problem for many.

So planning to come along next year? It is more than worth the trip! I am sure you won't be disappointed, that is if you can get through those ever-growing crowds! You can read more about the event's details here: http://www.jahrestreffen-frechen.de/info/index_e.php - Many thanks to those who organized another great event and thanks to Stephan Sander for use of his camera. 





Organizer's note

Hi, this is Tretty speaking. I am the mastermind behind the LEGO fan event in Frechen.

I just want to describe this weekend briefly from my point of view: It was a complete blast. I was overwhelmed by the dimensions of this year's event. Visitors had to queue outside for the first time at a LEGO fan event in Germany! My team and I were surprised about this huge interest from the public.

All this wouldn't have become true without my team. They all worked hard before, at, and till the last minute of the event. I would like to say THANK YOU to Rainer (Lemming), Jürgen (JuergenL, the cook), Gregor (BricksInLev) and the members of Cologne's regulars' LEGO table.

I would also like to say thank you to everybody who brought his and her MOCs or voluntary manpower – without all this, the weekend wouldn't have been what it was for many 1000steine folks and other visitors: a gigantic weekend or just a mega LEGO festival.

I am really looking forward to next year's LEGO fan event in Frechen! I hope you all will join in!

Yours,

Tretty (Andreas Tretbar)

http://www.jahrestreffen-frechen.de/home/index_e.php [English]



Moonbase: Berlin

One of the largest Moonbases at a LEGO event was in Germany this past year. But if you're wondering what a Moonbase is and how they are set up, read on!

*Article by Thomas Nickolaus
Photographs by 1000steine.de*



1000steine-Land 2006 – The Moonbase Project

On August 18-20, 2006 the LEGO event 1000steine-Land (TSL) took place in the capital of Germany, Berlin. A lot of great models were on display, most of them built by adult fans of LEGO. For the first time in the TSL series there was also a Moonbase layout. The size was quite impressive; almost twenty-four square meters.

The Moonbase was built as a community project by a total of eighteen builders from both Germany and Switzerland. The Moonbase standard made it possible that everyone could carry out his own ideas independent of the others. The models were then assembled on-site into a large moon station. It had several power stations, control towers, space ports, bars, a church, alien modules, research stations, and much more. The installation was equipped with a large Monorail train layout including an automated station, many different spaceships, spacemen of most known and unknown races, robots and Mecha.

What is a Moonbase?

The Moonbase idea was developed in July 2002 by American LEGO space fans. They defined a simple set of rules for so-called 'modules'. Space models which are built following this standard can be combined smoothly. Thus a Moonbase develops in a





simple manner from individual buildings of different designers. This basis can consist of only two or up to 200 modules.

The Moonbase concept works so well because it is very flexible and gets along with just a few simple rules. It is almost as simple as LEGO in its origins, where every brick fits to the others. Only the components are a little bigger. Individual modules always occupy at least one large baseplate with 48 x 48 studs (i.e. the baseplate #628, both old grey and new grey are allowed). Each building is connected with standardized passages to the adjacent modules from other builders. These corridors have a defined shape and are located in the center of the baseplate sides. Open passage ends are locked, so that no breathing air for the spacemen escapes the station. A single building can also be built on several baseplates which creates a super module. The whole standard with detailed examples can be found on the Internet at www.zemi.net/moonbase/

The creative part, in other words what a module represents, is left completely to the imagination of the individual designers. There are almost no borders set to the form and size of the module. Whether one builds a high-tech building, a classical castle with Moonbase corridor connections, a drive-in for spaceships or something completely new - everything is possible!

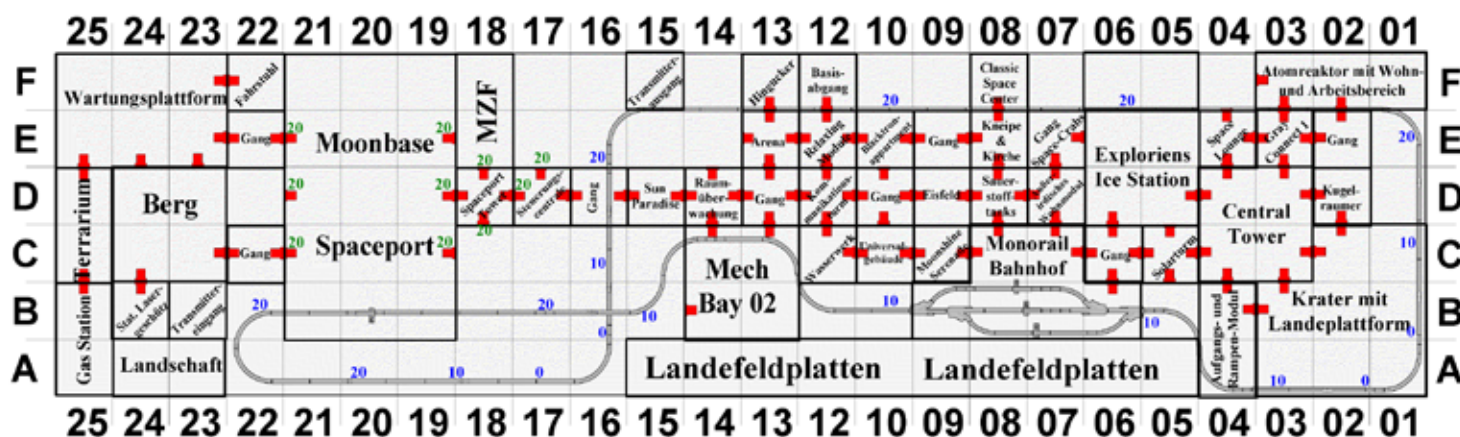
When the Moonbase is provided with additional extras like a Monorail, a large space port, and spacemen, the whole thing begins to live. And each and every small MOC contributes to the success of the overall project.

Planning

The preparation of the Moonbase at TSL 2006 began in January 2006. A first group of inspired space fans had been found very quickly over the forum of 1000steine.de. The Moonbase standard was also accepted immediately by everybody. Some had already made good experience with earlier exhibitions. Some even had finished Moonbase modules available.

A mailing list was put in place to organize us. First that worked very well. But after a short period of time it was almost impossible to follow the many discussions led by email. Therefore, the website www.moonbaseforum.de was established. There it was possible to discuss the different ideas and to answer questions, in a forum which was only accessible by members. The Internet side is still on-line and open for everyone. It will be used again in 2007.

At the beginning we planned with quite modest space requirements of 20-30 baseplates at the exhibition. At this time we did not know yet that the group would grow and that we would later be limited essentially by the extents of the room itself. When we approached the threshold of 40 modules, we made the first plan of the layout. We decided for a simple rectangular arrangement, which we maintained up to the end. It should be possible to walk around the whole installation so that all modules could be viewed from all sides. We first placed the largest modules on firm places. The highest buildings naturally into the center, all lower buildings outward. The single modules were planned only a day before the start of the exhibition. At the end our plan had 25 x 6 baseplates (below). It was an enormous layout, which we would not have dreamed of with the start of the project.




It turned out to be very important to specify the layout of the Monorail tracks quite early. We had many tracks available and could therefore plan a large design. Switches and two stations were intended as well. This meant for some modules that tracks had to run on them. These were integrated by the module builders very well into their models. In other places the Monorail tracks flew over the connection corridors on an overall height of twenty bricks.

Exhibition

After the whole group of eighteen people had planned, discussed, and above all built for months, everybody looked forward to the day of the exhibition. There were many great pictures of finished modules in our Moonbase forum and also some announcements of secret projects. We all wanted to see our base 'live'. At the last minute we created the MOC description cards, a flyer regarding the Moonbase standard and a big plan of the whole layout.

Then, on the verge of the exhibition, the Moonbase concept could prove its value. Two events thwarted our planning: A supermodule with altogether 16 baseplates could not be brought to the exhibition. In addition, several simple modules had not survived the transport to Berlin and could therefore not be used. Some of them could be replaced by modules which were brought in by other exhibitors. They had built them in accordance with the standard and in the confidence that a Moonbase will be with the TSL. Additionally we loosened the Moonbase layout a little with simple corridors, landscapes, landing places and crater plates. Some of them were even constructed on the setup day of the exhibition. Thus the individual buildings stood not so closely together and showed to advantage. The whole scene was populated with fleets of spaceships, many vehicles and astronauts, and some very exotic alien populations. Finally our Moonbase sized 27 x 6 base plates with 48 x 48 studs each. That corresponds to 1296 x 288 studs or 10.30 x 2.30 meters!

We received a lot of positive feedback for the entire Moonbase during the exhibition. Some modules were artworks in themselves. They were full of creativity and imagination. Others were constructed in a very skilled and professional way. The winner of our group internal Best of Show award was the maintenance platform of Sebastian and Thomas Grassmann (top). But only all contributions together, from the corridor end-cap over all the spaceships up to the supermodules let the overall project succeed.

Perhaps we could inspire others during the exhibition of this great community project. We had enormous fun for sure! We already look forward to the next Moonbase at the TSL 2007. Feel free to join us! Everybody is welcome, no matter how much experience (s)he might already have with Moonbase modules or spacecrafts. The first ideas for the next project were already exchanged on the disassembling day of the TSL 2006. You will be excited! 



The participants of 1000steine.de:

Bernd the Brick – Bernd Broich
 Chewbacca – Sebastian Grassmann
 Dan – Dan Demmler
 Diddi – Dieter Römer
 FelixS – Felix Brun
 Hümpfch™ – Ronald Borchert
 lapuempfe – Annette Pitsch
 Legolars67 – Lars Wernitz
 Mickes – Michael Clever
 Oliver – Oliver Graubohm
 Sascha – Sascha Broich
 Sebastian S. – Sebastian Schieborowski
 shadow020498 – Thomas Grassmann
 Tagl – Marco Tagliaferri
 TASTER – Tobias Reichling
 trickolous – Thomas Nickolaus
 x_Speed – Stephan Sander

Event: Bouwsteen-Land 2007



Happy Anniversary, De Bouwsteen!

Holland's LEGO Club celebrated their anniversary a little early with a two-day event. Here's a report on the celebration and festivities by the president of the club!

*Article by Paul Wolters
Photography by members
of De Bouwsteen*

On the 20th and 21st of January 2007, "De Bouwsteen" celebrated its 12 ½ year anniversary.

In a way, this club is even older because it was originally called the LEGO Collectors Club. But when a new board was chosen they went to a lawyer and chamber of commerce on November 10, 1994. So when you look into it correctly you can see that our anniversary is actually on the 10th of May 2007. Another factor that we had to deal with was finding a date where as many members as possible can join the party.

This celebration was also the first time (except for LEGO World, which is always 6 days!) that our club did a two-day event with a big party on Saturday evening.

The name that the founders came up with back in 1994 was "The Dutch LEGO club" but LEGO Netherlands did not agree with that name. So LEGO representatives made a house visit to one of the founders and suggested to change to the present name and even suggested to use the very first logo of the company back in the late 40s and early 50s; the little guy with the overalls. Today, the club is still using the logo and it gave Kjeld a smile when he visited LEGO World in 2003.



Top and Left: Many people, both public and club members attended the event and saw the displays.

Left Bottom: One of the areas was a free build area, which was pretty busy.

Middle Bottom: One of the many models is examined by a curious boy.

Right Bottom: One of de Bouwsteen's members shows some materials to Lisbeth Valther Pallesen, LEGO Group Executive Vice President for Community, Education and Direct



Back in 1994, the Internet was not a common thing so the only contact there was with the outside world was through club days and of course a very good contact with LEGO Netherlands. At that time we still had our own country office in Grootegast, Netherlands (my god, I miss those good old days).

The terms like AFOLS, SNOT etc. were not even invented in that time.

In 2001 we had our first LEGO world as a part of the IJselhallen, Jettix and LEGO Benelux and today we are a successful partner with our own opinion and influence.

The club weekend was very successful, the number of persons with a MOC was bigger then the numbers of sales people, so now we have to start concentrating on making more models. De Bouwsteen is a club with a lot of collectors, so modelling needs a high grade of attention.

The event hall was nearly 4000 square metres and it was filled with nice market tables with good lighting. There were 3600 visitors on Saturday and 5100 visitors on Sunday.

Saturday evening was reserved for members only and we planned a party in another part of the event halls. We provided some good food and desserts and during the evening there were a few bits and bites. In addition to the 250 members that were attending the party we had also some special guests: Shop@Home, LEGO Benelux, IJselhallen, they were all present during the evening, and from Billund we had Jan Beyer and LEGO Group Executive Vice President for Community, Education and Direct Lisbeth Valther Pallesen.

We had a prize draw and all the guests received something. The biggest prize that could be won was a free Billund trip in May when the Bouwsteen has their yearly Billund trip and tour. The funny thing, however, was that the prize was won by a Shop@Home employee named Dennis. He was very sporting though and donated the prize to a female Bouwsteen member and made that person very happy!

After dinner we had a word of welcome by Paul Wolters, who introduced Lisbeth Valther Pallesen. Lisbeth came on stage and had a beautiful speech. We really enjoyed listening to her. The next official thing was thanking the founders of the club who were surprised with a nice bouquet of flowers and many well wishes.

Top: Paul Wolters speaks to the club members.

Middle: One of the mosaic developers at his display.

Right: Paul (Center) with Jan Beyer (right and an unidentified person.

Bottom: The public was amazed at the models that were displayed.



Making a Mosaic




The mosaic presented by Jan was made as seen above from top left to the bottom right.

Jan Beyer arranged a very nice surprise for the club by presenting our logo as a mosaic. The mosaic was not yet built and 36 members had to start building it. After an hour or so the project came to an end by putting the mosaic together on a special stand on the stage.

This mosaic was developed by Tobias Reichling and Adrian Schütz and you can view/see this mosaic on: http://www.pictobrick.de/content_de/gallery_bouwsteen.html

It is a wonderful masterpiece and the club is very grateful to the developers/designers of the mosaic. Of course, it will be present on all our upcoming events!

This evening everybody was mingling and talking. Moments with just members only without visitors is very unique and the members had the time of their lives. At midnight the party was over and each one of them took off and did their own thing to find his/her bed. It was a short night too, because the next morning at 7:30 a.m. they needed to be present again for the public club day. 

Community: LugPOL



Building a LEGO Club in Poland

LugPOL, the Polish LEGO club, has been around for three years. Here is their story!

*Article by Maciej Drwiega, Andrzej Szlaga, Smyk, and Nexus 7
Photography provided by LugPOL*

It all started on the 23rd of May 2004, when MrGorgo - or Daniel Gordziejonok, today jokingly ranked as "Club Member Better Than Others" - launched his site called lego.jelenia.com which soon became the new home for Polish AFOLs. Renamed to The LEGO Users Group Poland (LugPol) it attracted those of us who had frequented LUGNET's news boards as well as those who met each other at the LEGO section of the most popular Polish online auction service. I still remember my e-mails to LEGO buyers and sellers, ending invariably with, "and if you're seriously interested in LEGO, please, visit our site at www.lugpol.org." This is how we met and befriended each other on the Internet. What was before (at least for most of us) you probably know all too well: never forgotten childhood with Christmas LEGO bonanza, never fulfilled dreams of more and more sets and bricks, never expected teenage Dark Age... and even less expected to return to the LEGO universe.

We needed eighteen months to raise the emerging community to another level: as Daniel had to devote himself to his career issues, a trio of seasoned club members (Maciej Drwiega, Andrzej "Shaggie" Szlaga and Maciej "dmac" Szymanski) took the helm. We changed the domain name to lugpol.pl and moved the site to a new, much faster server as the old site had constantly struggled with free server problems. But most importantly, we had to evolve into a more adult-oriented service, since the sudden onslaught of ten or eleven year-olds had rendered any intelligent discussion virtually impossible. (But don't worry; the kids were not abandoned altogether, as one of LugPol's users set another site for those under sixteen.)

The People of LugPol

Some of our members and their achievements

Many talented people have joined LugPol over time and their efforts were noticed quite a few times: Piglet aka Ciamek (Maciej Koszyka) - <http://mocpages.com/home.php/1907> <http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?m=Piglet> won Colossal Castle Contest II with his "Home of a Knight" - <http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=107698> (Medieval Life category). Shaggie



copied that achievement with his Mountain Pass Outpost (Miscellaneous category) - <http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=104752> while Lomero - <http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=Lomero> (Piotr Rybak) and Gras1 - <http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=gras1> (Krzysztof Jankowski) earned "honorable mentions" for their creations. This year's CCC results have not been published yet, but our team participated again and we're hoping for the best, even though competition is extremely tough. In March 2006 Shaggie became one of the LEGO Ambassadors. We were very proud and full of hope when this happened, since we desperately needed someone to voice our concerns about LEGO's strategy - like not including our country on the list of countries serviced by Shop At Home. Unfortunately, Shaggie's term ended not so long ago and our problems remain unsolved. Nevertheless, our international presence did not end right there. In August 2006 Maciej Drwiega and dmac visited Berlin, Germany, to present their models at the 1000SteineLand event (<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=1986688>). It was there that they finally met in person one of our club members, born in Poland but living in Germany, the one and only Misterzumbi. Even though Misterzumbi (<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=misterzumbi>) is an incredibly talented LEGO builder - he was part of the team working on the gorgeous Empire State Building model, not to mention dozens of smaller items presented in Berlin - his next accomplishment wouldn't be much of a shocker. A couple of months later we were electrified by the news that Misterzumbi went to Billund to become designer for the LEGO Company. It seems we were not the only ones delighted by his creativity.

In the meantime, we've had some excellent fun on our local ground. USA based - but Polish to the core - member of LugPol, Nexus 7, came up with a great idea, a game, to be more specific: Brick Transport Tycoon. Our latest claim to fame came from Jerac (<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=Jerrec>) who was recognized the most impressive newcomer by The Brothers Brick. Again, we were not surprised as Jerac won first edition of our own Brick Transport Tycoon contest.

In this section we can't miss - not only because of the sheer size of his creations - big truck models by Maciej Drwiega (<http://lego.drwiega.net/gallery/index.php>). We can only marvel at his fantastic life-like reality and attention to detail. Maciej knows everything about trucks and Model Team, and I'm sure you'll hear more about his models in near future.

Another member of LugPol worth mentioning is Maciej "dmac" Szymanski. We were astounded by his unbelievable model of a Lambda class Imperial shuttle (<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=124587>). This is a large scale model with many movable parts and four electric motors. Final recognition came when it was used in Triumph of the Empire brickfilm.

Guide to LugPol

What it looks like, what you can find there

Let me give you a quick tour of our forum (<http://www.lugpol.pl/forum/index.php>).

First, there is a general section with a place to introduce yourself and be greeted by others. There is also a link to club issues and a constantly growing library of set's reviews.

Second, we have a System section divided into Glorious Past, Here and Now, Rail Roads, Into the Future, and BTT topics.

Next, there are sections for our Technic, Truck Trials, Model Team, and Mindstorms fans.

A separate section has been dedicated to CAD users.

Lastly, we have the ever so busy Hyde Park section where everything LEGO related is discussed.

We are open to new members and always welcome guests. The main language of our forum is Polish but you can navigate it in English and we use English when necessary.



LugPol's Activities

What we do

Apart from the obvious - building many great MOCs and showing them to others – we do other things, most notably meeting periodically and having fun. Below you will find a short report from one such event.

10th Festival of Toys, Games and Plays

On September 23rd 2006, within the 10th Festival of Toys, Games and Plays organized by Toys and Play Museum in Kielce, Poland, a meeting and exhibition of LugPol members' models was held (<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=207011>).

I arrived at the location on Saturday before eleven o'clock. Most of the exhibitors were already there, some of them arrived even the day before. We set up three tents, covering us and our models from the sun, on the vast courtyard of the impressive Museum's building.


All stands were surrounded by tape to separate our models from sticky fingers of kids - in vain, as it turned out later. At first we were afraid we wouldn't fill this really big courtyard, but our doubts proved to be baseless.

The following colleagues participated in the meeting: Aurimax and Benny80 (impressive cranes and some of the most interesting and largest Technic sets), Ciamek with Lady Ciamek (famous gunship helicopters and other cute System models), Maciej Drwiega (huge 1:13 trucks and Star Wars Imperial shuttle by dmac), Mkur (realistic Trains models and sets), Darek Mroz (Control Center sets, Spybots, Mindstorms and other computerized sets), Pedro (truck for Truck Trial), Pixel (truck for Truck Trial and, amazingly, a working hovercraft), Shaggie (steam engine), Smyk (truck for Truck Trial), Szarikm (Trains layout) and Zbik (Komatsu wheel loader).

The models astonished all the guests, both children and adults. We all had to answer never-ending questions, the most frequent of which were, "How long did it take you to build it?", "How many parts does it contain?", "How much does it cost and where one can buy it?" Although, there were exceptions, like the kid who said Zbik's Komatsu loader does not impress him at all. We also had a spectacular disaster, when one of the Benny's beautiful cranes collapsed.

About 5 p.m. the display was over - we started disassembling and packing the models, tents, decorations and tables, which took two hours at least. Then, some participants said goodbye and went back home and the rest of us headed to the dormitory, where the guestrooms were waiting for us. The event organizers took care of proper music and short interviews with participants and administrators, and the museum took care not only of our accommodation and travel costs reimbursement, but also about our stomachs. A less formal meeting of LugPol members with the museum's representatives took place in the evening.

Thanks to the really professional attitude of organizers and museum workers, thanks to the enthusiasm and efforts of exhibitors, and last but not least thanks to the high attendance and beautiful weather, the meeting was remarkably successful and definitely we all will remember it for a long time. It was the biggest LugPol meeting so far and we hope it's just a beginning of the new tradition of annual meetings in Kielce.

To be continued ... 



LEGO Builders Unite in Austria

Members of the Austrian LEGO Club discuss their beginnings and future plans!

In June 2006, five Viennese fellow collectors of LEGO sets met with their mates to go to the public with their hobby. Under the slogan "there must be some other freaks like us" they founded the LEGO GEMEINSCHAFT OESTERREICH (LGOE). Therefore, the internet platform www.lugnet.at was introduced to ease the communication with other LEGO fans.

The intention of the club was to contact others but mostly to show the collections and MOCs to the public. It's much more fun to see the eyes of kids and adults open wide when they see what's possible with simple Lego bricks than just to leave the buildings in the flat or cellar and show them to a few friends :-).

The first exhibition started in July 2006. In the medieval hall ("Hofkeller") of Gross Schweinbarth – a township not far from Vienna – the models were shown in the 200m² hall. Even though the weather was hot, and one would normally prefer to go swimming, approximately 300 enthusiastic visitors came to see our indoor exhibition.

Just a month later the next exhibition took place in Vienna. The larger venue of 300m² allowed 450 visitors to adore the sets and MOCs shown, a rather good start for such a small and young community. The success was crowned with an invitation to a large scale exhibition for kids in Vienna called «Kiddy World 2006». It was placed in the largest Austrian conference center (Austria Center Vienna -ACV) next to the UN headquarters. Due to new members within the short time of existence we



could cover an area of 600 m² displaying various LEGO items built and collected by our members. This event was visited by 8,000 parents and their kids!

Main themes at the 2006 exhibitions were:

- history of LEGO trains – with all models since 1966
- self-constructed and digital controlled Lego Train facility on up to 30m² tracks
- dioramas with topics adventure (Egypt), western, medieval, Lord of the Rings
- model team, sculptures, Technic, Mindstorms

Exhibitions for 2007 are in planning stage and all members are working on new MOCs, dioramas, etc. 

Article by and photos by the members of LGOE

A few statistics:

Members when the club was founded: 10
Number of members now: 15
Founded: June 2006
Exhibitions so far: 3

Links:

The club: www.lugnet.at
LEGO fans in Austria: www.brick.at
- <http://lego.brandls.info/>
Locations & exhibitions:
www.kiddyworld.at
www.acv.at
www.gross-schweinbarth.at



Crane not included.



Architecture • Engineering • Construction

www.BrickStructures.com

Community: The Portuguese LUG

LEGO® Fans at the Extreme West of Europe: a Contribution to LUG History.

*Article by Sérgio Antunes,
President of the Portuguese
LEGO User's Group.*

*Photography
by PLUG members*



Once upon a time, at the end of the 20th century, some Portuguese guys, Internet navigators and LEGO fans, were delighted to discover through LUGNET that there were a lot of other people like them in the world. Adult fans of LEGO® with common associations and everything! Amazing, they all thought. It's not surprising that the first PLUG talks happened there, in the local forums. Then meetings were planned and took place, more people joined and the idea of creating an official LUG in Portugal seemed to be a possibility after all. So, in September 2004, PLUG became a real institution with elected officials to manage the association and other designated members to take care of the various issues we have to deal with.

Events haven't stopped since, from simple meetings to public exhibitions, good relations with other institutions, including the LEGO® Company, have flourished. We have also been spotted by the press and have had several articles published about us and we have even appeared on TV. Now we are proud of having our own web page www.plug.pt, forum www.plug.pt/forum and private mailing list. At the time of this writing, we have 37 members and 71 forum members.


Meanwhile, we have had many adventures. The funniest ones are those when other people watch a lot of grownups playing with LEGO® in this Latin, hot-blooded, little country. For instance when dining together in a restaurant at Christmas, we exchanged gifts of LEGO® and were actually playing with them after the meal. Everyone at the other tables was astonished and couldn't believe there could be such an association... Or when picking up LEGO® in shops and being asked, "Is this for a school? Are you teachers?" "No, this is for us!" answers the white-bearded guy. Of course romance is already an issue too: a certain member asking the phone number of another member's daughter. Hey, don't tell her father! Other strange but true stories happened in a wrestling match when someone cried "PLUG" so that one of the fighters, a PLUG member of course, could hear and met him after the fight, or in a PLUG meeting where a lot of the members were trapped in a lift for a while without any LEGO® pieces in their pockets to pass the time until rescue came.

An option that was a bit difficult in the beginning, even more so than all the bureaucracy to give birth to the



association, was the choice of keeping PLUG independent of dealers or any other particular interests apart from the group's progress and the LEGO® subjects. Shop owners and dealers or people who were too ambitious who wouldn't mind stepping on others, smelled good opportunities and so some "shielding" and "cleaning" was needed.

Future plans include the realization of an international AFOLs meeting. Portugal is a nice sunny country with a lot to offer tourists and is the nearest European country to the USA. So our ambition is to be a meeting point between the two continents full of LUGs and AFOLs. We started the process a year ago hoping to do it in 2007 but reached the conclusion that we were not yet prepared enough for it. So our "Atlantic AFOL Meeting" is delayed for a future date still to be decided.

Many thanks to my friend Philip Kirkman-Page from Bristol for helping me to write this article in English. 



Last Word



Well there you have it! Fantastic!


This issue is a little smaller than the last issue, but with only less than 1 month apart (from issue 6), we still managed to cover some great and exciting articles! And doesn't this year look surprisingly good; with many new things yet to hit our shelves, and some goodies at that!

In this issue, I really feel like we more or less travelled the world with so many great articles from so many places and so much to explore!

In future issues, we have some great things planned, some that I, myself am very excited about! As for running the European bureau and being a contributor, I am always amazed at seeing what comes out of all the articles we and others send in, as well as what Joe and his team have to offer!

I look forward to each and every issue that comes out; they just get more and more exciting! Of course, there are always things happening around the world, in countries we have not yet explored, but would love to, so if you have any interesting article ideas, contact us!

Well, that's it for now, time to get more work done for issue 8!

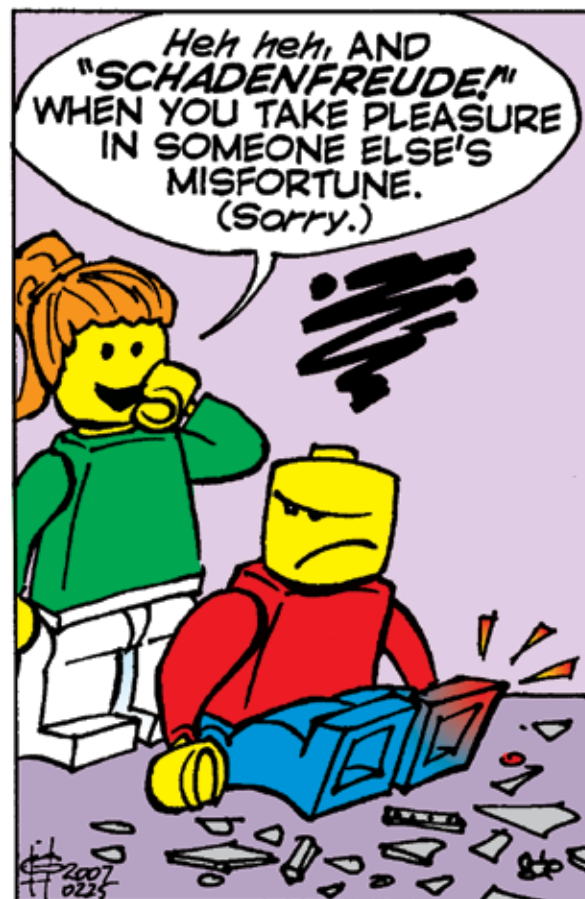
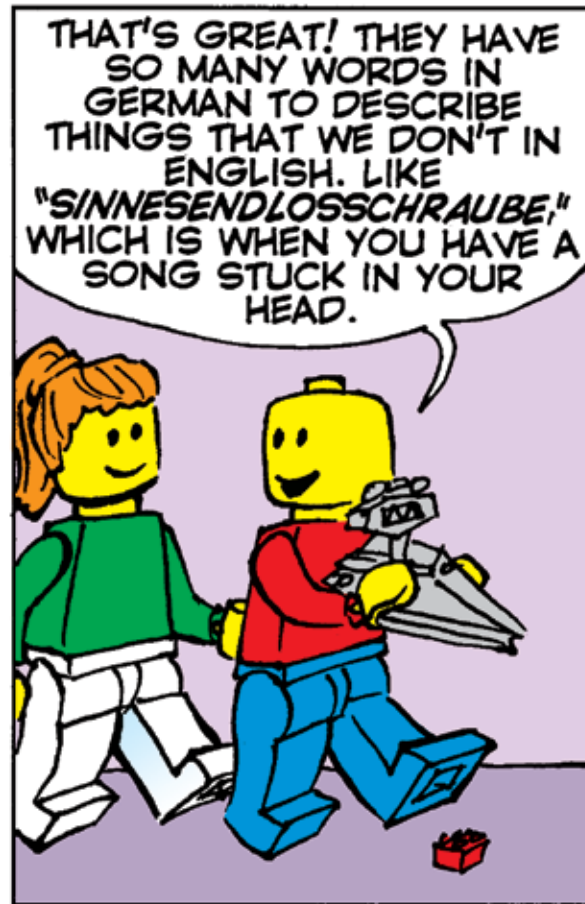
Till then, brick on and don't forget to stop by the Café Corner ;) 

Mel. K

European Bureau for BrickJournal

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PS. Many thanks to Joe for all his hard work and being able to bring these issues together. He works very hard and as you can see, his work pays off! Also thanks to all the contributors/writers/editors who helped out in their own special way!



NOT YOUR TYPICAL BRICKS.



If you have seen THE engraved Brick Badges at Brick-Fest™ and other LEGO conventions, you have seen the work of Tommy Armstrong, the Brick Engraver. He can engrave names and line art directly to a brick, making it a unique item for things like keychains, badges, and models.

A new innovation from Tommy is WoodStitches®, where a wood veneer is bonded to LEGO® elements. These elements can be used with other LEGO bricks and also to create beautiful mosaics (such as the one at left) and desk nameplates.

If you're interested in seeing the wide assortment of brick engravings and finishes that Tommy offers, you can go to **www.brickengraver.com** and browse through his catalog.

You'll see that his work is not typical.

And neither are his bricks.

