I am sure that you have all seen those three little icons next to one of the buttons on your camera; the mountain, flower, and clock. This button is used to activate the macro setting for your camera. The macro setting, represented by the flower, is toggled on or off with the other settings depending upon the number of times you depress the activation button. When the macro setting is activated, a flower icon is typically displayed on your camera's LCD. By using this feature you can now place the camera closer to the subject, filling the capture area with the subject.

Depth of Field

Depth of field is the distance between objects in focus in your photograph. I am sure you have seen photographs where you have a long depth of field; meaning objects in the foreground, background, and everything in between are in focus. Conversely a shallow depth of field will only have the central object in focus and the foreground and backgrounds will be blurry. The depth of field is controlled by the aperture of the lens/exposure time, how close you are to a subject, and how much the lens is zoomed. Not all digital cameras have the aperture iris, thus they control depth of field with exposure time.

The lens aperture is the opening in the lens that allows light to pass through, it is controlled by an iris inside the lens. Since your camera is set to automatic, you don't have direct control of the aperture setting and thus depth of field. To check the f-stop, look at the f# on the LCD screen; the larger the number, f22, the greater the depth of

field; the smaller the number, f2.8, the smaller the depth of field. Many digital cameras don't allow you to alter the aperture; however, you can affect the depth of field by controlling the amount of light on your sample figure, which is why I bring it up. The more light you have on your subject the smaller the iris will open (the larger f#) the greater the depth of field; however, you can wash out your figure with too much light so be careful. When the subject figure is not well lit, the iris opens more to allow additional light to enter the camera (the smaller the $f^{\#}$), which narrows the depth of field. This means the objects in your figures hands might be out of focus while the main body of the figure is in focus.

There are three ways to combat a narrow depth of field when photographing figures; one is to make sure that the figure and any thing they are holding are in the same plane of focus (Line them up in a straight line such that they are all about equal distance from the camera lens), the second is to use a wider angle of view (don't zoom in), and the third is to increase the lighting. Proper lighting can solve many of the depth of field issues; it will be addressed in the photo studio section shortly. You can take your camera out of automatic mode and adjust the aperture more precisely than by altering the light levels, distance to subject, or level of zoom; to do so please refer to your user's guide.

Conversely, a shallow depth of field can be used by the photographer to isolate subject matter or make part of a photograph stand out to the viewer, so this is an area where experimentation





Figure 3 – Depth of Field: Note the difference in these two images of the same vignette. In the photo on the left look at the two regions circled. These are the closest and furthest items in the photo, and they are out of focus and blurry. In the second image the lighting has been altered and a longer exposure time was used resulting in a larger f-stop, which increased the depth of field to bring these areas into focus. Depth of field can get so small that an entire Minifig isn't in focus. Be careful of lighting as this is the best remedy for a narrow depth of field.



Figure 4 – Narrow Depth of Field: This figure was made for a special Houston TEXLug event, where it was photographed by Anthony Sava in a well lit area. Anthony demonstrates a narrow depth of field in this photo, which removes the distracting background by blurring it in the image. The depth of field in this photo can be seen by examining the corners of the black box the figure is displayed on; notice the near and far corners are slightly out of focus. This figure is sporting a custom gun from BrickArms. Photo used with permission.







Figure 5 - Resolution: This series of images demonstrates what happens with the various resolution settings of your camera. This custom figure has been cropped out of a 640x480, 1280x960, and 2272x1704 images; which results in several different sized images. When we post online we need a figure of approximately 400 pixels tall. This means that the 1280x960 would be a good starting size for our image, when we crop out the figure it is 614 pixels. This allows us to resample and resize the image to make it easier for others to download and view. This figure sports a custom sabre hilt by Deathstickman of FBTB and MCN.

is encouraged. Think about your photos before you take them: decide what you are trying to capture; use them to show off or highlight your custom work.

Insufficient light/aperture opening can be one reason you get blurry photos. If the camera can not open the aperture wide enough to get sufficient light in automatic mode, it will extend the exposure time in order to get the additional light. When the exposure time is greater than 1/60 to 1/30 of a second you will detect motion in either or both, your subject and/or in your hands as they hold the camera, thus blurring the image captured. If you can't get sufficient light on a subject figure, consider setting your camera on a stationary object or a tripod and using the timer feature. I suggest the timer feature as the act of depressing the button can cause camera movement and continue to blur your images on longer exposures.

Resolution

This is a tricky subject and one tends to think the higher the resolution the better the image. After all, cameras with more mega-pixels have higher resolution and are more expensive, so they must be better, right? This is not necessarily true depending on your how you are going to display or print your photographs. Most of the time we use our digital photographs to post online or email to friends, we don't need a 2272

x 1704 pixel image to put on the web. We need a small image of approximately 400 to 600 pixels high. If you capture your image at the highest resolution your camera can capture, details not visible to the naked eye will be visible. This is because you have essentially placed the figure under a microscope. You are magnifying the figure by using the resolution in combination with the macro features. If you merely shrink this image to a smaller size this "magnified" view will still be visible, as well as the larger file size. You will need to resample the image as you resize it in order to reduce the magnification effect and to reduce the file size. Another solution is to take images at a lower resolution. I suggest something in the 1280-1024 pixel size as this is a middle of the road resolution and will not create the "magnified" views as easily. Thus when you crop your image to the 400 pixel size it will appear as close to the lifelike item as possible.

Flash

There are advantages and disadvantages to using your flash. The flash will increase the light falling on your subject and thus increase the depth of field by using a smaller aperture (larger f#), which is good. The flash will also help remove any motion that might appear in your image from camera movement,

which is also good. However if you want to minimize the shadows created from the light placed on the subject figure a flash isn't good. A flash will create a very hard/dark shadow region from the flash hitting your figure. Also if you are taking a picture of a subject with flat surfaces the flash could reflect off these surfaces and wash out your image. If you are going to use your flash make sure the light from the flash hits these surfaces at an angle so the light reflects in an angle away from the lens.

II Photo Studio

A photo studio is made of a few elements; light source (typically 2), background, camera, and possibly a diffuser or reflector. The studio is fairly simple to set up and can be created on any desk or tabletop.

Desk lamps work well as light sources, it helps if they are the same type, but this isn't critical. Merely place the light sources on opposite sides of the figure and angle the light such that it falls on the figure at 45 degree angles. This helps reduce the shadows as the two lights interfere with each other minimizing the shadows each light creates.

A seamless background can be created by using poster board or a sheet of colored construction paper. Merely find a tall object like a coffee can and attach the paper or poster board so that it drapes from the top of the object to the table top with a slight bend forward to form an L shape. You can change the background color to accentuate the figure. White and Black work well, but as there are many LEGO® elements in these colors, therefore a neutral light grey or blue might be best, feel free to experiment.

Light diffusion is the next trick to work out for your studio. There are commercially available diffusers called Light Tents (check eBay), which will give you professional results. However you likely have all the tools in your house to make a diffuser. If you have a 1 gallon plastic milk jug lying around, you have the perfect diffuser for a Minifig or anything of like size. Start by cutting the bottom off the jug, then cut off the handle, making a flat open side, and finish by cutting a hole in the lid large enough for your camera lens. Make sure you remove any labels. By laying the jug on its side you can place your camera on the table and slide the lens into one end and the background into the other. Then shine your lights through the jug and onto the figure, diffusing the light and eliminating shadows.

One last comment on composition, even though you are taking a picture of a figure in a static environment doesn't mean you shouldn't "pose" the figure as if something is going on around it. Make it have bold action, turn its head, place items in its hands, breathe life into your figure and your photograph.







Figure 6 – Milk Jug Photo Studio: This is a great and inexpensive light diffusion system that allows for well lit pictures. In this setup I have used two different fluorescent lights to light the figures. It might be better if two halogen desk lamps were used, but I used what was on hand. The milk jug cut in half works well to diffuse the light and minimize the shadows. By using a piece of colored construction paper a seamless background is created that allows for easy photo editing. Remember you can pull the edges of the milk jug together to make the interior space taller to allow larger items, however the milk jug setup is really too small for anything much larger than a Minifig.

III Picture Editing (The Basics)

Now you have captured a few images of your favorite new custom figure and you really want to make sure the pictures are the best you can share. Load them onto your computer from your camera and start editing. Editing is where a lot of experimentation can occur; to convert your color image to black and white, to darken the image, to crop out excessive background, it is all possible and only limited by your imagination. There are many programs on the market for photo editing, with the leader in the field being Adobe PhotoShop, followed closely by Corel PhotoPaint.

These are very high end programs; however there are several freeware/shareware programs that can be used as well (Check www.tucows.com). One that I particularly like is called Irfanview (http://www.irfanview.com/). This program is very small yet very powerful.



Figure 7 – Advanced Photo Editing: This photo by Ace Kim of FBTB demonstrates photo editing at its best. Notice how well he has captured Boba Fett with this simple yet imposing pose; Boba is sporting a Little Armory Blaster and looks ready for action. The lighting and pose capture Boba's arm and leg decoration. While we will not be getting into this advanced photo editing, it is good to examine these photos for creative ideas. Photo used with permission.

Cropping

It will allow you to crop your images by merely drawing a box around them and then using the crop command under Edit > Crop. One of the nice features is that you can resize the box instead of having to redraw the whole thing.

Enhance Color Options

Under the enhance color options you can adjust the color balance, brightness, contrast, gamma correction, and saturation. This will allow you to fix any imbalances in your photos caused by the lighting you use. Without a long explanation, the colors we see are directly affected by the light that shines on them, so if you use fluorescent light, tungsten (incandescent), or candle light you will get very different shades of color; this is a way to correct the colors in your photo. This area requires experimentation and deciding what looks best to you. If you need additional information on these different image settings I suggest this article: http://www.shortcourses.com/editing/index.htm

Resize/Resample

Of course the minimum editing required is resizing or resampling. When you resize an image you merely make it larger or smaller, however when you resample you change the number of pixels in an image. Upsampling uses interpolation to increase the number of pixels; where as Downsampling throws away pixels to reduce the size. It is best to resample your images when you resize them, making the file sizes smaller for faster load times. It is always better to shrink or downsample an image than it is to enlarge or upsample. This way you are removing "extra" information as opposed to having to use interpolation to create information.

Irfanview doesn't stop there, it has many additions that can be installed allowing you to not only alter the image by converting it to black and white or sepia tone, but gives you a wide variety of photo alterations. Play with your pictures and see what you can











Figure 8 – Basic Photo Editing: In this series of photos we can see the progression of photo editing. In the first image we see the initial photograph. This image is then cropped, balanced for light, color, and then the image is extracted in Photoshop. With this custom figure extracted he is ready to be overlaid on a special background, to make a custom image. Note that this rapscallion is sporting a chromed Little Armory Blaster.

create. Just to remember to be polite when you post your image, much of the world is still on dial up modems and it can take them some time to download your 1200 x 1500 pixel image. Keep your large original image for printing purposes, but share a smaller file that makes it easy for all to enjoy.

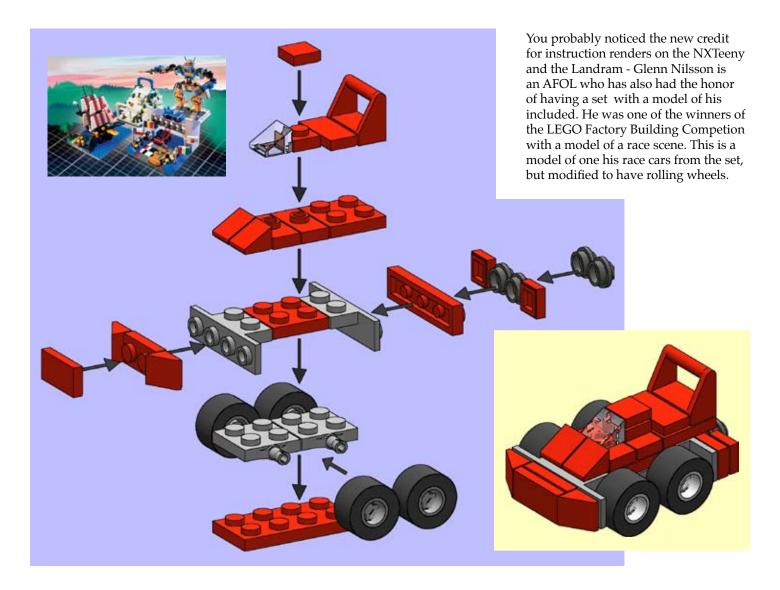
Next Time:

Minifig Customization 101 – Custom Accessory Creation through LEGO Element Modification

Micro Car

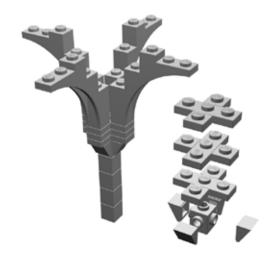
Design and Renders by Glenn Nilsson

You Can Build It: Micro Scale



Bricks for Thought

Archway from Erik Amzallag Render by Geoff Gray



Event:LEGOFEST XXII

The Brick Goes to Ballabio!

In Italy, there are more than a few LEGO expos - BrickJournal has a report from a summer event!

By Marco Chiappa Photos by Gaetano Chiappa





Where is Ballabio?

Ballabio is a small town very close to Lecco in northern Italy. Lecco is 50 km north of Milan and is on the right bank of the famous Como Lake. Ballabio is 5 km from Lecco and is surrounded by high mountains in a very evocative place. Some people from Italy and from Europe come to Ballabio for holidays.

Why a LEGOfest in Ballabio?

Some people asked why a LEGOfest had to be in a small town and not in a big city. The answer is simple: the location choose ItLUG and not vice versa. In the winter of 2005, a member of Pro Loco of Ballabio (an association of volunteers that help the municipality to organize events and shows for inhabitants and tourists) asked me if I want to organize a LEGO meeting. I posted the question on the ItLUG forum and I had some good answers.

The first official meeting between Pro Loco and I happened in the middle of January 2006 and I was astonished because the space that they offered me was big and beautiful: an entire gymnasium (500 square meters) and adjoining rooms. ItLUG never had a space like this for a LEGOfest! The logical consequence was that I should plan for a great show, not to a simple meeting between friends.

How was the LEGOFest organized?

The practical organization was divided in two parts: the show and logistics. ItLUG had to think about the show and Pro Loco guys had to think about the logistics (room, tables, fences and so on). We set the date for the first and the second of July, a weekend: Saturday for setup and Sunday for the open exhibition.

The excitement of ItLUG members reached the sky in a few days and members started to build or rearrange their existing building for the show. Pro Loco and I had a meeting every Tuesday from February to the end of June to organize all the details. I remember the days when I was afraid to leave empty spaces (the worst thing for a public exhibition) but in the end, ItLUG members repaid me and Pro Loco for all the work that we did.

For the first time in Italy, ItLUG had institutional support, in fact the Lecco's Province gave support to us.

We prepared flyers for shops and public sites and we sent mail to all local TV, newspaper, friends, firms and everyone we knew.

Two weeks before the show we had another great surprise: LEGO Italy was to take part in the event. ItLUG awaited this news for too long, in fact Ballabio is the first place where we had TLG with us. LEGO Italy came with a Ferrari F1 in scale 1:1, some sculptures and a playground for children. At this point we decided to use a nearby room (about 150 square meters) for the children's playground.

How was the show?

The exhibition was divided between the big room (the gymnasium) and the "mirror" room for the children's playground.

The big room had tables all around for MOC displays and two separate spaces in the center: one for great ball contraption and one for Ferrari F1 in scale 1:1.

The work of ItLUG members was simply great! They dreamt of a great LEGOfest and they did everything possible to make

it come true. The Technic dockyard caught some attendees with 1:20 scale excavators, bulldozer, trucks, crane and other machines - all working. The dockyard was 10 meters x 2 meters and made by only three AFOLs: Fabio Sali, Paolo Panzone and Cristian Sala.

For the first time ItLUG presented the city's diorama, a modular system with standard connections. Some people are involved in this theme and we saw some new MOCs: the huge theatre of Gaetano Notaro, the university of Mario Ferrari, the square of Ezio Maino, the railway station and the trains of Carlo Ottolina and the house of Luca Giannitti.

On the other side we had a huge collection of 9V trains by Roberto Milani. Marco Chiappa for the first time presented the belltower of San Nicolò (1.92 m high), some train engines and a town layout. Luca Giannitti showed the fantastic station Sassi-Superga, busses and streetcars. Alex Cordero presented a F1 pit-stop. Cristian Sala, Arianna Rossi, and Luca Zaccari had a huge collection of sculptures: maxifig, Simpson in miniland scale, shoes, motorbike and others. Gabriele Biffi showed a collection of Star Wars sets next to a collection of helicopters by Luca Zaccari.

A little space was dedicated to the MINDSTORMS next to a display with old sets from the seventies.

Dino Baldi presented a huge spaceship, the complete collection of Tiny Turbos and a complete collection of Adventurers sets. Gaetano Notaro presented a fantastic medieval bridge and by it you could find the F1 cars of Luca Rusconi (especially the Lotus John Player Special). Antonella Carabelli presented an Ice Planet diorama completely covered by a black sheet and illuminated by a ultraviolet lamp. In the center of the room you could see a fantastic model of a Ferrari F1 in scale 1:1 offered by LEGO Italy and an incredible Great Ball Contraption. The GBC was a blast! The public crowded the stand all the day. Mario Ferrari, Stefano Ferrari and Luca Zaccari estimated that 13,000 balls passed in the machine.

In the adjoining room we had a children's playground: tables with LEGO Sytem, LEGO Duplo and soccer fields. Children filled the area all the day and demonstrated again that children like to play with LEGO. In a corner of the room some children presented some buildings in a contest with prizes offered by Teorema Giocattoli (a shop of Lecco).

The show was a blast! 2000 visitors on Sunday and 200 visitors at the Saturday's inauguration was a great success. You have to know that Ballabio has 3000 inhabitants: how can anyone imagine a success like this at the first attempt?

What's in store for next year?

The work for the next edition of LEGOfest in Ballabio is in progress. The space will be much larger because we'll have the entire school, so there will be 4 times the exhibition space. With this space we want to push the event to the next level, an international event. Every AFOL from around the world is invited.

We are working towards putting some selling points in the show and other services like a bar or restaurant. We are negotiating with nearby hotels, camping and restaurants because we want the exhibitors to have the best at good prices.

Like next year, LEGOfest will be the main event of all the summer in Ballabio and nearby towns

Stay tuned on: http://www.itlug.org.







Event: NMRA 2006

All aboard!

The "L" gauge comes to NMRA 2006

Article by Jeramy Spurgeon Photography by Geoff Gray

or the second year, the International LEGO Train Club Organization (ILTCO) was invited to display at the National Model Railroaders Association's National Train Show (NMRA NTS). This year's show was held in Philadelphia, PA during the first weekend in July. The National Train Show is the single largest train display in the United States and having an AFOL presence there is important for the LEGO Train Community.



Many trains fans crowded around to get a good view of LEGO trains

Steve Barile of the Greater Portland LEGO Railroaders (GPLR) was again the lead coordinator for this event. Jeramy Spurgeon was tasked to head up the layout coordination, with the help and guidance of last year's layout coordinator, Paul Janssen. In total, we had nine active/affiliate ILTCO member clubs make the trek to the City of Brotherly Love. These nine clubs included DelvaLUG, GardensLUG, TCLTC, PennLUG, MichLUG/LTC, WamaLUG/LTC, IndyLUG, COLTC,

and SHSL. For many the journey was a long one, but the excitement of such an extraordinary LEGO Train exposition was the driving force for us all.

Wednesday, the first day of set up: A few clubs began to trickle into the Philadelphia Convention Center, most weary after their long drive. We piled out of our vehicles and gasped at the sheer immensity of our allocated 90 foot by 100 foot space. We began marking out individual club areas and tables started coming together. The Convention Center had Union contracts for labor and we were lucky to have two of the nicest, hardest working guys helping us with whatever we needed. By the end of the first day, we had several clubs in the showroom and lots of tables up. We all retired to our hotel rooms, exhausted from this first day.

We arranged a room block at a hotel near the Philadelphia airport, about ten or so miles from the Convention Center. This proved handy for several reasons. First, it was a LOT cheaper to stay on the outskirts of town. Secondly, what better way to commute back and forth to train show, than by train? Matt Bieda helped us all grab a weekly pass on the SEPTA and we happily let our vehicles rest for a week.

Thursday sailed on a lot smoother now that we all had our beauty sleep. Again, with the help of the two Union Contractors, by the end of the second



A city panorama

set up day, most clubs were ready to go. Friday morning we bustled around positioning minifigs and planting flowers. By the time the show opened, we were all practicing the answers

"We piled out of our vehicles and gasped at the sheer immensity of our allocated 90 foot by 100 foot space. We began marking out individual club areas and tables started coming together."

to all of the inevitable questions we would receive, "Yes LEGO makes trains!", "About 1 million bricks", "I'd say around 6 months", "Yes, 100% LEGO", "Nope, not a drop of glue". I'm sure anybody that has displayed at a public event knows the questions to these answers.

This year's layout was split into two sections. This helped the flow of traffic through our nearly 1850 square feet of LEGO cities. The crowd seemed light at first, but soon began to grow into a steadfast wall of onlookers.

Friday ended and we all headed back to the hotel. The only restaurant near was a Ruby Tuesday, and luckily they have a full bar. John Neal brought a case of freshly made ILTCO shirts



A scenic waterfall

commemorating the event. Many of us tried them on right there in the restaurant. We hung out until the wee hours of the morning talking LEGO and having a laugh.

Steve Witt flew into town to hang out at his first LEGO Train event. I think we showed him that trains are just as much fun as "Space". Saturday proved to be another busy day, and many started to get hoarse from talking to so many excited patrons. Steve Barile spread the ILTCO word by appearing on a local TV station with a special gift,

a miniature of the studio designed and built by Paul Janssen. Steve Witt and LEGO provided a festive pizza party on Saturday evening, with organization help from Chris Forbes-Nicotera, Christina Hitchcock, Geoff Gray, and Denise Jadud. Kevin Salm drove down from New York with a car load of goodies for a riotous Dirty Brickster game, MC'ed by Larry Pieniazek. Many of us, again, headed to Ruby Tuesday for a night cap.

The last day had arrived. Many of us were ready to go home, but at the same time, were reluctant to leave such good friends. However, in the end Philly had beaten us, "ILTOC 1 - Philly 43"; a running joke about some of the crazy mix-ups and local Philly hospitality. The show turned out to be a great success. We had a total of 59 AFOLs in attending to the nearly 21,000 visitors that passed through our layout. Next year's show had already gained some momentum, even before the Philadelphia show had ended. Many clubs were eager to do it again, and the 2007 show will be held in Detroit, MI. We already have more clubs interested in displaying than in 2006. This will definitely be one train show not to miss! More info can be found here: www.iltco.org and here www. nationaltrainshow.org.



Even in LEGO cities, skyscrapers dominate



Girls and Their Robots

Teaching can be challenging, but teaching robotics is something different... or is it?

Article and photos by Jim Foulds

During the third week of July 2006, the Girl Scouts of Freedom Valley, Pennsylvania held a day camp to introduce girls to the science and engineering of robotics using the LEGO® MINDSTORMS™ robotics system. I was privileged to be one of 18 adults who volunteered their time to work with the 15 Girl Scouts, ages 9-11, who participated in the week-long program. Very few of the scouts had any prior experience with the Mindstorms system, so it was our job to help introduce it to the rest. This was a challenge as just a few of the volunteers had any real experience with the Mindstorms system themselves.

With the help of FIRST LEGO League, the Girl Scouts were able to acquire three complete mission challenge sets from last year. The challenge from 2006 involved oceanography, so all the missions were themed on some form of ocean exploration. The girls were divided into three teams which they named: Eco-Sounders, Dipsy Divers, and Foogleys. The first day of the camp was spent introducing them to the concepts of building the robots, programming them, and explaining how they will work in completing the mission challenges. We also answered lots of questions such as, "How come this won't stay together?" or "How do I make it do this?". The volunteers worked hard to not just give the answers to them but rather help the girls identify the problems and come up with solutions. At first there was a lot of frustration, but as time went on, it turned to understanding and pride that they figured it out for themselves.

When I returned Tuesday morning, one group took me over to their work area and showed me what they'd done. I was surprised to see that they had taken the basic

concepts and expanded on them to make the robot do a dance.. So with the basic understanding of the robotics system, the girls were ready to focus on how to accomplish the challenges. Tuesday was mostly spent going over different ideas and approaches to the missions. Some rudimentary robots were built to see how they would move about the mat and interact with the missions objects.

Wednesday arrived and with the learning curve behind them, the groups were in full swing developing their robots to complete the missions. Bits of discussions could be heard... "Do you think we should have the motor go for five or six seconds?" or "Should we have the robot turn here, so it can hit this, or should it do that then come back?". Choosing which challenges to attempt caused much debate in the teams, including the possible points earned versus the complexity of the missions. The oceanography theme definitely



struck a chord with the girls. There was a lot of sympathy for the trapped dolphin which was the most popular mission among the teams. Second was 'bumping the shark', which required the robot to move a shark from its position without moving any other fish.

Thursday came and the pressure to fine tune their robots to complete the challenges was rising. The frustration of repetitive testing was wearing on the girls. "Why doesn't it work!?" or "It did it the last three times, why didn't it do it this time!?" could be heard repeatedly. This is where the volunteers really showed their worth as we helped keep the girls focused and eased their frustrations by offering ideas as to what to try or change.

On Friday, the last day of camp, the competition area was set-up and each team was given time to practice and make any final adjustments. In addition to working on their robots throughout the week, the groups were instructed to create a short presentation on any topic related to the ocean. So between their robot sessions, the teams spent time researching and creating their presentations.

In the last hours before the finale, the girls hurried about to finish everything up. All too soon, the parents were arriving in anticipation for the big event. The teams gave their first presentations - and did well - so we moved to the competition part of the gathering. Three judges were selected from the volunteers to keep score. It was decided that each team would have two attempts to complete as many challenges as they could and the scores from each attempt would be combined for a total score. In the end, the Dipsy Divers won, but in truth all the girls won that day.

The camp was a huge success for all those involved. The girls were introduced to the world of robotics and engineering. The volunteers got a chance to help out and some time away from work. The Freedom Valley Girls Scouts were able to generate enough interest to sponsor three teams for the First LEGO League. Of all the things that I learned from this, I share this thought: You can't just call it a robot, you have to give it a name. Hence, the Eco-Sounders had 'Crash', because it never seemed to do exactly what they expected and had a tendency to crash through the objects on the mat. The Dipsy Divers had 'Roomba', because their robot reminded one of the girls of the robotic vacuum that she had in her house. The Foogleys had 'Elgoog', because well, I'm not sure, I never did quite get the riddles that they always asked me.





The Tradition Continues!

Germany's largest LEGO fan convention was in Berlin, and BrickJournal was there!

Article by Holger Matthes Photography by Sascha Broich It seems to have become a tradition: Again, in summer 2006 the 1000steine-Land was held in Berlin. And again this year it was the biggest event organized by LEGO fans for LEGO fans. More than 170 registered members and more than 3500 visitors were counted at the front desk.

This year the date was chosen late in summer. The TSL – the short form for 1000steine-Land – was overwhelmed by "the" big event in Germany in 2006. We, as LEGO fans building MOCs for this event, had to realise that most of us are also big soccer fans when the FIFA Worldcup is held in our country. The official motto was "A time to make friends" … but all LEGO bricks stayed untouched in their bins.

It was hard to get rid of all soccer enthusiasm, but eventually the weeks just before such a big event like TSL become grueling weeks for LEGO fans planning to present a new model. But what German AFOL could get up from his comfortable seat in front of the TV while watching a thrilling quarter-final match to work at his LEGO building area? For example, I did not complete Dresdner Frauenkirche until the last day before the event. Last bricks were added and transport boxes were made just hours before departure.

General Arrangements

Like the previous year the general arrangements for TSL were cleared very early. The venue was the Seeterrassen in Berlin-Tegel. We also kept the same format of one non-public day as AFOL convention and two public days with exposition. We added Thursday for setup and Monday to tear down and clean up the place.

Arrival and Setup

The event and the models shown seem to become bigger and bigger every year. So it was a good idea to have a whole day for setup at the venue. The citizens of Noppingen.de needed a whole day to set up their huge city with houses, train tracks, industrial and harbour buildings and a whole representative palace. A grain silo collapsed while getting it out of the box, delaying setup a bit. But luckily it wasn't too hot and sweaty like last year. The air-conditioning worked and the late summer offered some really comfortable temperatures.

The later the evening, the bigger the trucks which arrived carrying models. A Bavarian team with the Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier, mountain with inside train loop and many blinking fire trucks were loaded in a mid-sized 7.5 ton truck. The guys had some trouble to carry all the models to their final destinations.

Visit from Billund

A big surprise for most of the LEGO fans was we were welcomed by LEGO CEO Jørgen Vig Knudstorp! He and the owner of the company, Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, were accompanied by upper management staff and the design department from LEGO headquarters in Billund/Denmark. With pride the LEGO fans could observe how the ladies and gentlemen from LEGO felt comfortable while discovering the great enthusiasm among fans and their great models. After his visit, Mr. Knudstrop dedicated a whole page in the employee's magazine "LEGO Life" with a picture gallery and a "Postcard from Berlin".

Official Part

A presentation was given on the "LEGO Hobby Train Set" – a universal building set developed in cooperation with 10 LEGO fans. Paal Smith-Meyer from LEGO went through the slides with Tim Gould and Holger Matthes who represented two of the fans involved. Tim and Holger showed their train prototypes which were built only with the approximately 1000 elements in this set. The "LEGO Hobby Train Set" is a LEGO Direct product and will be available in spring 2007.

The morning was fully packed with presentations and discussion groups. The LEGO employees talked about the development of the new IR-train-system and questions concerning quality issues were discussed among fans and the LEGO Group. Fans gave presen-

tations and talks covering topics like "Photography and LEGO", "Usage of Electronic equipment" and "A Modular Concept for Train-layouts".

The high concentration of simultaneous activities went on during the day. There was a "2x4 brick throwing" competition, the speed building contest which featured the #8285 LEGO Technic Tow Truck, and attendees everywhere setting up their models for the public expo in the following days.

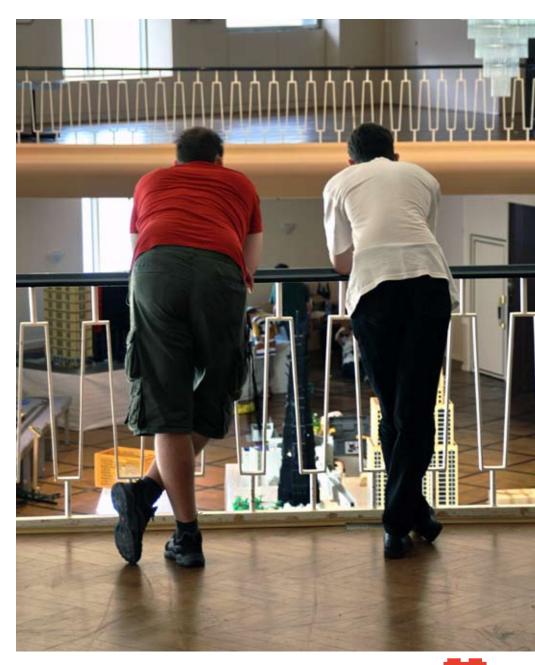
During all this it was very relaxing to lean at the gallery and observe everything from a bird eye's perspective. Such a break included the chance to meet other fans and to have a lively chat with them.

Our special non-public day ended at a nearby seafood restaurant with a buffet for everybody til the food ran out. For most of us AFOLs attending this Friday ended up with some (?) drinks in the Irish Pub near the hotel.

Public Event

After weeks and months of building several MOCs, after a safe journey to Berlin and a well-done setup of everything, the doors were finally opened to the public. From the early beginning a large number of visitors entered the venue and our barriers were tested. Overall the visitors didn't break the rule and they were only looking with the eyes, not with the fingers.

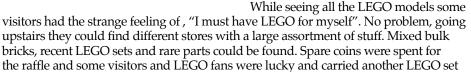
The excited visitors quickly discovered an endless number of fan-created LEGO models. To name just a few impressive MOCs: Batman's Gotham City and scenes from Lord of the Rings. Just a few steps ahead were realistic looking old hanseatic (North German) houses, a huge church with brilliant SNOT (Studs Not On Top) - walls and a minifig procession





out front, a fair, Berlin's Anhalterbahnhof, New York with Empire State Building in the 30's, and the Frauenkirche in Dresden after its rebuild. Next to that was Amsterdam and another leap in time to the beginning of civilian aviation. All was covered by the city of Noppingen, a giant Duplo castle and various trucks and construction machinery in 1:13 scale.

The next room offered something to "touch" and "make". Train racing and the Candy Crane from Holland were just waiting to be tried out and the instant coffee machine was for our Dutch friends who drink coffee all the time. Brickfilms were made onsite and the play tables were busy the whole time. And there were more incredible MOCs to be seen: A huge mountain with an inside train-loop, skiing area and an Asian temple on top, fair rides and a Ferris wheel made of 1 x4 plates. Also, there was an ICE-train-station with European high-speed trains, a modular built train-layout with many lovely details and a complete zoo.



home.

But there was still more: At the upper level of the Seeterassen a gigantic Moonbase was set up. While walking along the endless Moonbase corridors and stations you really could forget to see all the other smaller models like the chain bridge from Budapest built by a Hungarian LEGO fan. Just in front of the final staircase you could see sculptures of minifigures and others. Reaching the final platform the visitors were overwhelmed by other masterpieces in model making with LEGO: Palace Noppingen offered it's wide orchard and gardens for a rest, but the kids' eyes were all stuck to the position lights and spinning propellers of 15-feet-long *Harry S. Truman* Aircraft Carrier.



Event Hours

Friday, 18th August 2006: Open only for 1000steine-members and members of other LEGO User Groups.

Saturday, 19th August 2006: *Public expo from 9 am till 7 pm*

Sunday, 20th August 2006: Public expo form 9 am till 6 pm

Berlin-Tegel, Seeterassen

Entrance fees/Prizes

3 Euro/kids

5 Euro/adults

12 Euro/familiy (max. 2 adults and all own kids)

 $19\,Euro/1000 steine$ members including dinner.

1000steine-Land 2006 was a big success! Hopefully you will join in 2007 as well?

Further information at www.1000steine-land.de and www.1000steine.com





Event: BrickFest® 2006





A Photo Album

BrickFest 2006 was a incredible weekend for AFOLs and public alike, as the Washington DC event packed the house with displays and presentations. Here's some thoughts and photos from the event!

Article by Joe Meno Photography by Calum Tsang and Jeff Elliott





For three sweltering days last summer (August 25-27, 2006) LEGO fans converged to enjoy the largest convention of its type to celebrate their hobby. BrickFest took place in Tyson's Corner, a suburb south of Washington, DC. It was hosted at a hotel and convention center; a change of venue from the college campus that hosted it for the past several years.

Over 400 LEGO builders from across the country and Europe came and displayed models and gave presentations about different aspects of the hobby, from minifigure customization to brickfilming (making stop-motion movies using LEGO elements and minifigures). Other presentations included Mindstorms challenges and building technique seminars. Friday, day one, was devoted to the AFOLs, while Saturday & Sunday were open to the public.

The models themselves were among the best in the United States, from human sculptures to 7 foot skyscrapers. There were minirobots that could fit on a finger, steam-powered spaceships, and cranes 10 feet tall! An amazing 2' tall dragon took up the length of a table and nearby a Mindstorms set was playing tic-tac-toe. There were modern trains, a drawbridge that worked, and a moonbase module shaped as a geodesic dome. A pneumatically controlled, life-size, Star Wars Battle Droid rose



from a 3x3′ box to stand at 6′ tall and in the corner quadrant, Great Ball Contraptions dropped, loaded, hauled, and catapulted LEGO soccer balls in every direction.

All the creations were in the same display area – a large ballroom – so everyone could see almost all the LEGO themes together. It was great to just stand in the doorway and see LEGO MOCs rising above the crowds everywhere you looked.

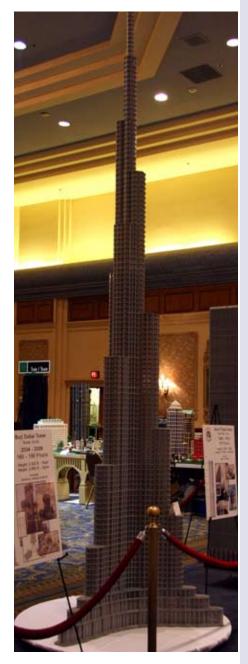
The LEGO Group also was present, with 30 executives and employees arriving from Enfield, Connecticut; Slough, United Kingdom; and Billund, Denmark. They also took part in the event, providing the Keynote Speaker - Tormod Askildsen of Community Development and presentations by LEGO Set Designers, Jamie Berard and Tim Ainley. LEGO Set Designers also competed to bring moonbase modules to BrickFest, which were later put up for auction. The CEO of the LEGO Group, Jørgen Vig Knudstorp, held a brief question and answer session after the keynote.

Over 3200 people visited the display on the public days, and the reactions were universally those of amazement and wonder. Whether it was a train layout, a spacecraft, a Mindstorms robot or the Great Ball Contraption, something impressed and inspired everyone.









One of the guests at BrickFest was a member of the LEGO contingent. Cecilia Weckstrom filmed the event and was often spotted with digital video camera in hand. Here's her thoughts on BrickFest:







The 2006 Brickfest was the first-ever LEGO fan event I attended. There has been much discussion and rumours in the Company about the amazing creations, energy and enthusiasm present at fan events, but I must say - it truly is one of those that you need to experience for yourself, before you really understand what people mean.

I arrived on Thursday afternoon to the Hotel in Vienna, Virginia, USA, hosting the event and the air was thick with anticipation. Fans were beginning to stream into the building with boxes of all sizes and shapes, things in bubble-wrap - tables inside were being arranged, models receiving last-minute love and care. There was excitement, many people seeing each other after a year-long break and spontaneously giving each other bear hugs and recounting last time of meeting - it felt like a coming together of a long-lost family.

As I watched the models emerge and the exhibition room take shape, I forgot all vestiges of jet-lag and tiredness and couldn't help but get infected by the energy shared by all, running around feverishly trying to film as much of it as possible, for it felt so unique I didn't want my colleagues back at LEGO to miss a single thing.

Saturday morning it was opened up to the public. I emerged bleary-eyed to breakfast to notice even more things had gone up after I eventually scampered off to bed and the room was buzzing with activity. Tons and tons of people were pushing and shoving to get closer to the models and fans stood patiently by explaining to all inquisitive minds about the intricacies of building models. It was an amazing feeling to see everything finished. I couldn't help but marvel at the talent and skill collected in this ballroom, filled to the brim with models, some of them big enough to dwarf the average 5-year old.

Watching it all I was simply humbled. Having spent 5 years at the company as a front-end concept developer and designer, building countless models myself, I could truly appreciate the craftsmanship, ingenuity, experimentation and expression that goes into the models. These models are a testament to - and a celebration of - true talent, creativity, inquisitiveness - all the things that have spawned the many inventions of mankind, the furious pursuit of perfection in design, the refusal to surrender to a seemingly insurmountable problem - yes, they are LEGO models you say, but in reality, they represent a lot more. They represent the true power of creativity.

And that's the best way to explain BrickFest 2006: it was simply an incredible celebration of the brick and its builders.

And what a celebration it was!

















Event: Belgica 2006



A small replica of the sorting centre in Ghent (very realistically detailed)

Going Postal in Belgium

The Belgian LEGO Users Group has a special connection to the Belgian Postal Service. See how they 'built' it in this article!

Article and photographs by Maarten Steurbaut



Preparation with the BeLUG-crew

Part one:

The Belgian Postal Service "De Post" built four new giant sorting centres in Ghent (opened May 2006), Charleroi X (opened August 2006), Antwerp (opened scheduled late 2006) and Liege (opening scheduled early 2007). In Ghent and Charleroi X an official opening ceremony was organized for the entire staff of "De Post" with their relatives. The slogan of the entire event-campaign was "building a future together". To illustrate the term "building" the DUPLO brick became their event-image (in collaboration with the LEGO Group):

- Hosts and hostesses who helped out during the event all wore a T-shirt with the event-slogan on the back, and a bunch of DUPLO bricks on the chest.
- Everybody who attended the event got their picture taken with a Polaroid camera: the largest border of the picture also had these DUPLO bricks imprinted.
- The band "The Incredible Time Machine" had their name painted behind the stage in a LEGO-like font, but according to the bandmembers that was a sheer coincidence ;-).

The event organizers had something big in mind: they wanted real interaction with the public (it was intended to be a family event after all), so they came up with the idea of "building" something big with DUPLO. The Belgian LEGO Users Group, BeLUG, was contacted to help them out. I don't really know who it was, but somebody finally came up with the idea of building a huge mosaic representing the logo of the Postal Service. To ensure public interaction, every visitor would receive a DUPLO brick at the entrance. After a guided tour through the entire building the visitors would get the chance to place that brick on the mosaic: everybody would "build (a future) together".

There are a few mosaic conversion-programs out there, for example Bob Kojima's Bricksaic or LUGNET Mosaic Maker. But there are two good reasons why they couldn't be used:

• The mosaic had to be built with only 2x2 and 2x4 DUPLO bricks. Rescaling the image is always necessary before you can use these programs.

• Nobody wants the mosaic to fall apart while building, therefore it's very important to maintain a brickwall-structure wherever possible. Neither of these programs take this brickwall-structure into consideration (I recently added a new module to my program especially for this brickwall-structure).

Because I have quite some experience with mosaics (from LEGO or from ministeck), and of course because I had my own mosaic conversion-program, the BeLUG-committee asked me if I wanted to lead this project.

While I ran the logo through my conversion-program, some members of the club also joined forces to make a small replica of one of the sorting centres. It was on display during the entire event.

The mosaic had to be 3 metres high and 4 metres wide. That would require approximately 11,000 DUPLO bricks. 20,000 bricks were ordered to make sure there were plenty of bricks on hand. The mosaic had to be pre-built partially to give even the first visitors an idea of what the mosaic represented. And there was more: the organizers wanted a finished mosaic every day, so we had to take it (half) apart again every evening, to start all over the next day. At each location the event would last two days: a Friday-afternoon and an entire Saturday (Ghent: September, 29-30 / Charleroi X: October 13-14). To move from one location to another we had to take it apart completely...

Two weeks before the event, I got together with fellow BeLUG-members to prebuild approximately two-thirds of the mosaic. We decided to play safe and prebuild two-thirds instead of half the mosaic, because I read about what happened with Eric Harshbarger. I wouldn't make the same mistake of miscalculating the time required to finish the mosaic (apparently I had been too cautious: it never was a problem to build half the mosaic in one day...).

Because the backing for the mosaic was 3 metres high it turned out to be impossible to transport it in one piece to the different locations. So we had to build the mosaic up in modules. Building instructions were made for a brickwall-structured mosaic, which hampered dividing it in modules: pyramids and inverse pyramids seemed to me the best solution. We assembled all these parts to make sure that no mistakes were made. We even placed the inverse pyramids one stud forward to be able to take them apart easily for transport (after all, this was just a final rehearsal).

On the first day of the event, we quickly realized that there were a few flaws in the organization:

- We only had one small step-ladder to build up the wall. If everybody had to climb up that ladder with one brick, it would have taken us several days to finish that wall.
- At the entrance the bricks were not distributed in the same order as they were required for the mosaic. Many visitors simply ended up throwing their brick in a big box instead of the intended interactivity.
- And last but not least: as you all know LEGO is a popular toy. Most of the visitors just kept their brick instead of helping us finishing the wall.

We had to come up with a solution quickly, before it all turned into disaster:

- We literally had to beg the people who distributed the bricks at the entrance to give us quickly all the material we would need to finish the wall (they had plenty to distribute).
- I kept building in modules so I only had to climb the step-ladder occasionally.
- We let the visitors build their own wall with the (leftover) bricks that were distributed at the entrance.

The total number of visitors in Ghent was approximately 4500, Charleroi X had almost 4000 visitors (and I think at least half of them



The finished logo; it's huge... and it has "only" 11.000 pieces



Part of the BeLUG-layout



The finished mosaic. If you take a closer look to the upper white part: I was a bit embarrassed I had to use really old bricks. We didn't have enough white bricks



The DUPLO wall was built a fifth time. I was too busy with the logo of Belgica 2006, I got help from BeLUG-colleagues Jean-Marc and Ludo

took their brick home). According to the event-organization it was a success, because it will be repeated early 2007 for the other two sorting centres.

More pictures can be found on my webpage - http://www.maartensteurbaut.net/De_Post.htm

Part two

Apparently, they were quite pleased with the result of the DUPLO mosaic. On very short notice, BeLUG was again contacted to participate in another event: Belgica 2006, a World Philatelic Exhibition (with the Belgian Post as co-host of this exhibition). This international exhibition took place from November 16th to 20th, 2006 at the International Convention and Exhibition Centre, "The Heysel," in Brussels.

They needed someone to build a mosaic again, by now they knew who to turn to: me...

No surprises about the representation of the mosaic; the logo of the event. However this time there was another restriction: because everything was decided on very short notice, it was impossible to order bricks from TLG. The current brick-supply of LEGO Benelux was checked: for the most part 2x4 bricks. If I wanted the mosaic to look good, I had to come up with something new. I decided to use the smallest side of the 2x4 bricks to obtain the best resolution, resulting in a four studs wide mosaic. By maintaining the brickwall-structure, the sides of the mosaic would be "unfinished". It turned out to be a good idea: it looks a bit like a real stamp, and thus fitting well in this exhibition...

It soon became very clear to me that building with DUPLO bricks is much easier than building with standard LEGO bricks. The DUPLO bricks simply click onto each other, while force is needed to click LEGO bricks together. I had five days to make a mosaic of approximately 27,000 pieces: an average of 6,000 bricks to be clicked together every day to have it finished by noon the final day. That is approximately the same amount of bricks that went through my hands in one day to finish the DUPLO wall. Building the DUPLO wall was easy, this was hard labour.

On the weekdays there were lots of schoolchildren on a day trip. They were all very much attracted to our layout (18 metres long). Even the people from the organizing committee told me that BeLUG had the most beautiful display of the entire exhibition (if that's not a compliment...).

Especially the first day I had to explain over and over again what I was doing. After all I was starting from scratch, no semi-finished model this time to give the visitors an idea of what was going to be represented. The following days it became easier for the kids to guess.

The total amount of people who attended this exhibition was roughly estimated at 50,000. That is much more than the LEGO Festival that was organized a few years back on the same location...

Epilogue:

It may be a cliché, but I'd really like to build a mosaic on commission one day. I truly envy people like Eric Harshbarger, Sean Kenney,... They get paid for their creations. I attended to these events as a member of BeLUG. It's all done on a voluntary basis. Volunteers have to take a day off from work, and all they get is a small traveling allowance (hardly enough to buy a new LEGO-set).

We all do it because we like LEGO and we want to show the people what can be done with a little bit of imagination and lots of creativity.

Bricks In Italy: LEGOFest 2006

BrickJournal visits a LEGO event in Turin - and finds a lot of fun!

Text by: Davide Cavagnino, Alex Cordero, and Luca Giannitti

Pictures by: Didier Enjary and Luca Giannitti

The Winter Olympic Games host city, Turin, hosted on 23rd and 24th of September 2006 an ItLUG LEGOfest for the second time. It was organized by the same people of the 2005 LEGOfest (brothers Luca & Andrea Giannitti, Diego Rosati and Gianluca Morelli) and it took place in the same hall of the previous year.

Appromately one year later, the LEGOfest came back to Turin, after the successful event in Ballabio (July 1-2, 2006). The show was open not just to the ItLUG members, but, as the previous year, to the French AFOLs of FreeLug and to the AFOLs from other nearby countries (Switzerland, Germany...). The LEGOfest in Turin is the largest international event of ItLUG.

More than 20 AFOLs came from Italy, mostly from the northern part of the country, but there were also people from southern Italy that traveled for over 1000 Km in order to reach Turin! From abroad came people from France, Switzerland, Germany and Denmark: from France there was the presence of LEGO Ambassador and FreeLug member Didier Enjary, the FreeLug members Loys Bailly and Ronan Poirer; from Switzerland Beat Felber, Beat Schuler and Alessandro Corti; from Germany came the 1000steine member Wolfgang Mok (aka "Womo" on the 1000steine forum) and, last but not least, Jan Beyer from Denmark, project manager of LEGO Community Development!

Thanks to the positive experience with the LEGO fest in Ballabio, the LEGO Group was again involved in the event.

The first day of the exposition was the setting-up day for the AFOLs, while the second day the show was open to the general public. About 400 visitors attended the event: it can seem a small number of visitors, but the total available area of the LEGOfest was quite small and from opening up to closing time, it was filled with visitors and sometimes people had to wait outside the hall.

Entering the corridor that led to the exposition room, a visitor could immediately get the AFOL comics booklet and the LEGO catalog, but, moreover, he could see a man sized Knights' Kingdom figure made out of LEGO bricks (it was the blue Sir Jayko). This figure was brought by people from the LEGO Group, coming from Milan; the LEGO Group gave an important contribution to the show bringing many flags, some big minifigures and also a Harry Potter (about 60 cm tall) fighting a big Basilisk, all made of bricks.

The exposition hall contained many tables, each one having mainly MOCs displayed and some other standard LEGO sets. The purpose was to show mainly personal creations and not just official LEGO sets, because the potential of the LEGO boxes doesn't end with the model shown outside the cover box, even if they are very nice.

Event:LEGOFEST XXIII



The real bus used on Saturday evening for the AFOL transportation



The LEGO model of the bus



LEGOfest exhibitors see the station Sassi-Superga made out of LEGO showed into the real station



A French Loco made by Loys Bailly



One of the impressive vehicles displayed into the Technic building site



The belltower of the LEGO Ambassador Marco Chiappa



A shooting of the ItLUG town diorama

To the left of the entrance, a large table had many LEGO TECHNIC® MOCs (some models were made by the guys from Switzerland), ranging from trucks to excavators, silos, and a two meter tall crane. There were models motorized and controlled through wired-pneumatic control made of LEGO pieces and RC radio units. Many other TECHNIC® models were shown on another side of the hall: they were mainly motorbikes and Formula 1 cars.

In front of the entrance, a very detailed model of the belltower of the church San Nicolò in Lecco (Italy) caught the attention of the visitors: this model was 1 meter and 92 centimeters high.

Near the TECHNIC® table, there was a city model from the FreeLUG guys: its main subjects were a big fire department with a helicopter and trucks, and a two ring railway with trains, motorized switches and custom made train semaphores (these recalled the good old electric sets of the 12V line, and could give a suggestion to the LEGO group to build the same sets for the 9V line!).

On the Star WarsTM theme, one layout showed the battle on the EndorTM moon and other exhibitors showed many official sets, among which was the impressive new Death Star II.

There was also a display of many space models, from the Eighties LEGO product line. Remaining on the side of the official sets, the airplane 7893 from the new LEGO Airport Series and the Metroliner 4558 were also shown.

In other areas the complete Pirates sets collection from 1989 was presented, as well as a fast food and a circuit for Tiny Turbos cars, an Atlantikwall World War II bunker and a Grand Prix Formula 1 pit stop. Near the Atlantikwall bunker, many other military vehicles were displayed: a copy of the German Tank Tiger VI Sd. Kfz. 181 made by Andrea Giannitti and a lot of present US Army tanks (like the Abram) and other military related vehicles. One display area was devoted to a MOC representing the Hogwarts™ castle: the over 150 cm long creation was made by Giuliano Beduglio and his whole family. Other MOCs represented some of the Harry Potter™ characters in a maxifig scale (about 30 cm tall).

The show continued with some MOC buildings in Belville ${\mathbb R}$ style, with houses, horses, and many figures.

And again, more transportation vehicles were presented with MOCs of trains (six- and eight wide) and Turin GTT buses and tramways. These were located in some new town models built according to the new Italian standard (by ItLUG members) for city modules.

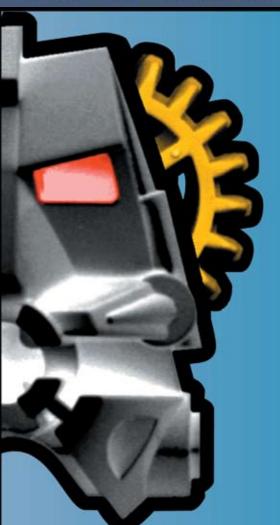
The impressive Sassi-Superga layout, already shown during the 2005 edition of the LEGOfest Torino, wasn't in the hall because it is being displayed in the real station of the Sassi-Superga, between the museum of the public transportation company of Turin and the restaurant located into the station. That restaurant was chosen for the collective dinner on Saturday evening but it was far from the LEGOfest hall, so a bus (like the one reproduced with the LEGO bricks) was rented for the event. This bus is one of the only two buses in Turin with a red/white livery and it is used only along the Sassi-Superga line.

Last but not least, the presence of the LEGO Ambassadors Didier Enjary (FreeLUG) and Marco Chiappa (ItLug) opened many starting point sfor discussions on future developments of our hobby. But more importantly, the friendly and "always available" chief of the LEGO Ambassador program, Jan Beyer, from LEGO Group, once more let us know that LEGO is a great company made of great people!





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White Bricks - Not Snow - Blanket Norway's Capital

Imagine three metric tons of white LEGO bricks dumped in front of a museum. Then imagine the person responsible for dumping them telling everyone and anyone to come down and play and build whatever they feel like, whenever they feel like. Sounds like a fantasy? For two weeks in September of 2006, that fantasy was very much a reality in the city of Oslo, Norway.

Eager children and adults alike were ready when a truck, filled to the brim with bricks, dumped its load on a huge wooden deck built outside the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design. A huge table, shaped like a horseshoe, was located nearby. It didn't take long before the table was turned into a display island for numerous creations of all sizes and shapes.

It was a bizarre - but beautiful - sight to see the open area, once a parking lot that for years stood out like an open sore in downtown Oslo, turned into a playground for children of all ages. The project (named "the Collectivity Project") was initiated by the Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson as a forerunner to the exhibition "Art in Turbulent Times" currently on display at the National Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition includes a few of the creations built during the two weeks the project ran and also includes video of LEGO architects and builders in action.

Over the course of the two week event nearly two thousand people dropped by often sitting for hours on the ground in all kinds of weather, day and night, while constructing models to their hearts' desire. As the days progressed these casual builders created skyscrapers, towers, cars, abstract figures, animals, robots, churches, houses, mathematical models, castles and constructions you'd never believe if you didn't see them. The monochromatic works evolved and grew; eventually covering the display table. It was a joy not only to see people rediscover their love for LEGO bricks, but also to see how creative they could be. You'd never dream that there are so many talented builders out there. And a lot of them made really advanced constructions with very basic bricks. On the last day people had to literally scrape the asphalt with their hands to find more bricks to play with. Almost every single brick was used.

Article by Hogne B. Petterson Photography by Asle Naess



The Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* talked to 22-year -old Patrick Grung while he was engrossed in the construction of a tower. He said he felt like he was ten years old again. He had also called home to say that he would be a little late. Grethe Moe, a teacher at Lilleborg School in Oslo told the paper that she was taking children that were refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan with her to build. "They've never been able to play with LEGO. We'll build something nice."

Kari Greve, a conservator at the museum, says they lost count of exactly how many models that were created.

"There were a lot!" she exclaimed via email.

"We only included four pieces in the exhibition. The artist didn't want to preserve any of the models, because it was the creative process itself that was important to him, not the result. But some of the models were so beautiful that we didn't have the heart to take them apart, so we shipped them to the Museum of Modern Art, although we do not consider them as works of art! They might have been taken apart and used for totally new creations – I haven't been there for a while to check. You see, the models that aren't on display are available for anyone to tear apart and build new things with. It's part of the vision of the artist that they shouldn't be static. When the exhibition ends on the 25th of February, we will send all the bricks back to the artist. He will then use them again in somewhere else in the world and give people the opportunity to create new and original works. A few years back he did a similar stunt in Trirana, Albania."

It's clear the artist's goal was to make the viewer actively take part in the artwork itself. And one can conclude that this goal was more than achieved. Making thousands of people gather around and collectively create something that was free, enjoyable and beautiful is truly a political, artistic and playful triumph.

You can find Hogne's website at http://www.elfworld.org









Back to Skærbæk!

From September 29 - October 1, there was a big time had in a little town in Denmark!

Article by Melody Krützfeldt and Christian Krützfeldt









The 'LEGO Fan Weekend' is a great multi-day event that is held at the recreational centre - Skærbæk Fritidscentre (see link 1 at the end of the article). Skærbæk is a little town located in South West Denmark – roughly 45 minutes from Germany, little over 1 hour away from Billund and around 30 minutes from Esbjerg Airport with daily flights to and from the UK.

This year's event stretched over two and a half days – with the set-up on Friday and public shows on Saturday and Sunday. Approximately 70 AFOLs including children attended from all over Europe including: Norway, France, Germany, Holland, and of course Denmark, (oh and Australia, if you include me;)). Many AFOLs displayed their MOCs in one of the two sports halls while in the other hall, children's activities were held, such as jumping castles, large tables where building competitions took place, a Dirt Crusher pit and a large projection screen.

The event, organised by Jan Beyer (LEGO Community Development Manager) and Danish club, Byggepladen, was very well planned. On Friday, the exhibitors were supplied with a plan to show where to arrange the tables and markings were mapped out for each set-up. Useful items such as tape, cloth, barriers, etc. were also provided.

There was a nice range of themes represented; some of the MOCs on display were moon base modules, Scala houses, a large DUPLO castle, town and train layouts, architectural buildings, mosaics, a micro-scale city, trucks, several ships including a large Viking ship, a Maersk-freighter and port and even a massive aircraft carrier. A speed building event also took place on one of the days.

However, no event is completely fun without being able to buy some LEGO. A small, official LEGO store selling sets, gear and bricks (poly bags and pickabrick tubs), and a couple of private stores selling more specialised LEGO parts were also there.

On Friday, after setting up and eating dinner, one of the cabins held a party: a tradition for the event. It started reasonably early and finished around 2am. Surprisingly, the cabins don't pick up a lot of outside sound, so it is possible to sleep while next door has a party or two.

On Saturday and Sunday the event was open to the public for a small fee. Throughout the days the public came to view all the MOCs and let their childrens' imagination go wild. It was not overly crowded, but there were plenty of visitors in the hall and therefore it didn't look empty. Some visitors from Saturday returned again on Sunday to enjoy another look. Since Saturday was the last night for most people staying in the area, a party was held in another cabin until the wee hours of the morning.

Eating breakfast, lunch or dinner (incl. dessert) is also possible at the centre with the use of prepaid vouchers (in this case for the event). The meals are served as buffet style in one of the conference rooms. As many liked to party in the nights before, getting up early for breakfast can be quite difficult for some. The food isn't the cheapest food available, but somewhat reasonable with the inclusion of more than a few drinks (soft drinks, slush ice, coffee and tea). However, bringing your own drinks and snacks into the halls is not allowed since the centre sells their own.

The event itself was not massive, but was a load of fun and with all the activities the centre has to offer and people to meet and greet, there is definitely plenty to do. Make sure you don't forget your gym gear or swimmers if you want to plan some extra activities during your stay. Several days stay is definitely recommended for any visitor.

Although Skaerbaek is only a small town, the recreational centre is also an excellent holiday choice for other activities within the centre and close by. The centre alone boasts several large halls, one where AFOLs display their MOCS and another where children's activities are held. The centre also has its own Gymnasium, conference rooms, free internet, café/restaurant, 10-pin bowling alley, pool tables, an indoor swimming area with a water slide, arcade games, indoor ball park for children, sports fields, and outside a children's playground with a blow-up 'mound' (for the children to jump around on), and many other fun activities. Also close by is the island of Rømø (see link 2 below) where an awesome collection of sand fields lay by the beach.

One of the other great things about the location of this event is the centre also has a decent amount of small holiday cottages/cabins close-by (several metres away) that sleep up to 6 people. The cabins are fairly clean and tidy and the facilities are decent (see link 1 for pictures and prices). You can hire your own bed linen and towels or bring your own.

More pictures from the event can be found on Brickshelf.com under the search term "Skaerbaek". The next Fan Weekend for 2007 is already planned for the last weekend in September. **We hope to see you there!**

Link 1 - http://www.kursus-fritidscenter.dk/

Link 2 - http://www.romocamping.dk/gb/romo.htm



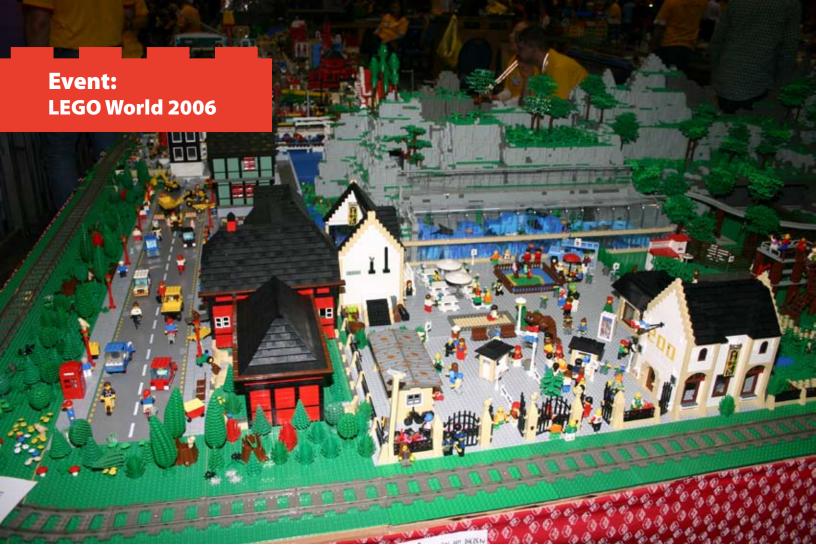












LEGO World 2006: an Impression

Zwolle, the Netherlands is the setting for the largest LEGO convention in the world. Here's a report from a participant!

Article by Sybrand Bonsma Photography by Dirk Plug In October 2006 the sixth LEGO World was held. This event, with over 50,000 visitors in six days took place in De IJsselhallen in Zwolle, The Netherlands. As in previous years the event was organized by LEGO and Libema exhibitions (that also owns the IJsselhallen) with support from Jetix (a Dutch television channel for children) and De Bouwsteen, the Dutch LEGO community.

LEGO World 2006 started for myself the year before, which is the same for many of the other participants of 2005. During the fifth edition of the event, I got many ideas from the creations of other AFOLs; I discussed with others how to build certain parts of my display and got a lot of useful comments from both AFOLs and visitors.

During and after the event I'd spent some time thinking how to put all ideas in a new creation. I'd ordered the bricks that were needed and then started building again, and made small but steady progress throughout the year.

Finally Wednesday, October 18 arrived. This day was used to put all our exhibitions together before the start of the event on Thursday. In the morning I had to put all my LEGO in my car and drive to Zwolle. When I arrived at about 11:00 am, already many people were there and setup had started. First all tables were put at the right places. As the floor plan had some last minute changes, it took some time before the tables for my exhibition were placed.

In the afternoon most people started to set up their displays with LEGO, but I want to specifically thank those volunteers that set up the decorating and the fences. Small fences are used to keep small hands from touching our LEGO without asking, but everybody, including the children, can still easily look over the fences and see our displays. Other decoration material was put in the halls, like LEGO banners. This year our hall was also decorated with city items: traffic signs and street name boards. All these street names had to do with LEGO (for example LEGO CTTY plaza, Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen Promenade and De Bouwsteen-straat).

I also started unpacking my Fabuland collection and a custom creation in the same style. This spring a number of members of De Bouwsteen made MOCs to be displayed in the LEGO museum in Billund. These models were brought back to the Netherlands just before LEGO World, so I put the model I displayed in Billund at my display. This was just a small portion of the LEGO shown at the event. By the end of the day the hall had undergone a severe transformation. Where it started as a large, empty space in the morning, in the evening it was full of LEGO.

Not only were there many people showing LEGO, many members also helped out as volunteers at the building contests or to show how some new LEGO products work or which hidden features they have. The event would not have been possible without the help of these volunteers and while I like to be part of the audience around the current LEGO sets, I signed up as volunteer again. However, my display was next to a display of another volunteer and as we both liked to have somebody keeping an eye on our collections, we decided that I would stay at our displays while she volunteered.

It was the first time in the six years of the event that I was actually at my own display. So this time I had the opportunity to answer questions of the audience and promote Fabuland. There were different kinds of visitors. Of course there are the AFOLs. They do know a lot of LEGO in general, (and often almost everything on a specific theme) and often had very specific questions, such as in which sets specific parts appeared. Then there are the regular adults. Many of the adults I spoke did know the theme from their own childhood (they often owned Fabuland themselves) and their children were now playing with the old LEGO sets of mum and dad. This meant a lot of recognition. The parents were looking for the sets they once had,









but also many of the children were trying to find out which were the sets they had the parts to. They often asked me if the sets can still be bought, but unfortunately this is no longer possible. The third group was mainly the younger children. They were usually very interested in the things that were moving, so for them the main attractions on my display were the windmill and the train. Of course they tried to identify which animals were riding in the train and it is amazing how much details these younger kids noticed in the displays.

This year there was again so much LEGO to see and, in my opinion, of much higher quality than in previous years.

I will try to give an impression of all that was shown by AFOLs, although I'm afraid I will forget many people. There were a number of collections shown, including Scala, Bionicle, Belville and the blue rail train era. Often these collections were combined with MOCs in the same style, including some very interesting ones, such as a car and a house built with all bricks upside down. Also there was a complete Technic collection, an overview of vintage LEGO starting with the first plastic models, some rare items such as LEGO fries, and also an overview of more recent LEGO sets.

There were some demonstrations such as Mindstorms, LDraw and Menno demonstrated his walking animals.

Space was well represented. There was a large Moonbase layout, a nice StarWars layout, a display with MOCs from various space themes such as Blacktron and M:Tron and a huge spaceship.

Other items were the SpongeBob display (unfortunately the SpongeBob sets are not released in Europe, so that they have to be ordered in the USA), a series of full-scale working LEGO clocks and number of great fantasy models using colors and parts that others often find useless.

There was a digital train track and a series of well-made Dutch trains. A much larger version of the Maersk boat was present and of course Leo's big castle. This castle, that is getting bigger each year, is on a scale of 1:25 and measures 2 by 3 meters. This year a well-decorated chapel extended the castle.

Our two youngest exhibitors had a large Duplo layout that changed almost everyday (sometimes helped by their parents).

Another great display was Aventuria, a theme park attraction where Technic figs were moved in carts using monorail through many different worlds. It contained a lot of cool figures, for example a Clikits frame with lights, built into a floor plate at a rocket lance platform.

There were large Technic cranes and more large-scale buildings including a traditional farm and an Austrian Town.

Of course there was also very much to see at minifig scale, such as a real Lunapark, the Watergate of Sneek, a large display of a fire brigade with a real fire engine as the background, and huge display from Dutch and Belgian AFOLs.

This displays contained a zoo, a working canal lock, an airport, a large mountain, many trains, some bridges, a town center, the Dutch tulip fields and much more.

In addition to our Belgian friends from BeLUG, there were also displays from FreeLUG (France) including 70s space sets and a nice globe, and ItLUG (Italy), which showed a motorized, Technic construction area and some nice maxi figures of Harry Potter, Batman, Spiderman and the Smurfs.

In addition to all the LEGO shown by AFOLs also LEGO itself brought a lot to see. Of course they showed much of the current product lines; there was a huge Exoforce area, a room for Bionicles, Duplo, Clikits, Belville and StarWars were present.



They transformed one hall into a LEGO jungle, with trees, bushes and a lot of full-scale LEGO animals. They made many models of famous (Belgian) persons, using interesting choices of materials, e.g. the use of snakes as hairs, and some models of well-known buildings like the London Tower Bridge and the City Hall of Bruxelles. From Billund came a display (approx. 2×4 meters) in LEGOLand style, meaning the figures were about 10 cm high and built from a large number of bricks.

It was also possible to buy LEGO and this opportunity was well used by many people. The toy store had many of the current LEGO sets in large quantities (although not always in large enough quantities; Mindstorms had been sold out a couple of times), whereas older sets, second hand sets and loose parts could be bought at a number of other places at the event. Not only AFOLS used the latter opportunities, also other visitors that wanted to make their own sets complete once again, buy the set they were looking for already a long time or because they became inspired by all the creations that were shown.

LEGO Shop at Home was present and well visited by looking at the fast decreasing amount of catalogues. Some LEGO designers gave talks to visitors about their work. A Dutch designer was present so children could ask questions in their native language, but most of the designers got asked questions in English.

There were also many things to do. Children could build at a number of places with Duplo, Belville or Technic, or participate in the large building contest. They could also play LEGO computer games or race with RC cars.

Then there were the shows of Jetix. These shows were two times a day and each time a number of the Dutch artists, well known by the children, less known by many AFOLs, were present for a music show, which thrilled many of the children attending.

As an eye catcher a 5-meter high Eiffel tower was being built throughout the show. Also a record attempt took place, where 5 of our members built the black tow truck in a new record time of 1 hour 15 minutes and 9 seconds..

On Saturday evening we had the traditional Chinese buffet. About 140 persons stayed to have a joint dinner at the cafeteria of the IJsselhallen.

After dinner we had two presentations from LEGO employees. The first was about quality control. One fascinating topic was the molding process. To obtain the best filling of the molds so no cracks occur and so the brick is cooled down as uniformly as possible, simulations are done with various mold layouts.

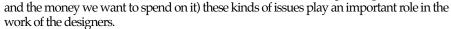




Also the brick color process was explained. They used the red Ferrari with different red colors in the engine as an example. There are different materials used for different kinds of bricks, depending on their uses and properties, like their flexibility. Although the same pigments are used for coloring these different materials, their combinations yield slightly different wavelengths. The eye is very sensitive for small wavelength variations in the red region (much more than to other colors such as green or blue). This becomes more evident for red models than for green or blue models.

The second presentation was about the design process. As an example a small new vehicle was used. They started with an idea, gathered a lot of information about this type of vehicle and started thinking about a model. In this case wheels of two different sizes were necessary and since there are only a limited number of wheel sizes available, it would not be possible to build the model on the scale desired. Therefore they modified the vehicle and managed to get a nice model of the right size. However, testing it with different age groups revealed that the model was too complicated for the targeted age. So they simplified it a little. In addition, some parts had to change colors because of the availability.

It was very interesting to see what kinds of restrictions the designers of LEGO have to deal with. Where we as AFOLs can build what we like (depending on our interests



Monday was the highlight of the event, at least for the AFOLs, many important people from LEGO arrived. In addition to members of the management team, Jorgen Vig Knudstorp and Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen visited the event. They were picked up from the airport by members of the board of De Bouwsteen and brought to the event.

They talked to visitors, but especially to the volunteers and exhibitors. They also posed for many photos with people and situations. Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen put the top of the Eiffel tower in position which finished the building of this large structure.

Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen was very interested in the comments of the AFOLs regarding LEGO, including on much of the older sets. He took a lot of time to talk to everybody, but of course for us it is always too short.

After this marvelous Monday we still had one day to go, before it was time to pack all our LEGO together and return home. The last day was sold out and over the six days of the event, more than 50,000 people had visited. It was seven (including set up) long days, but it was once again very nice. Much LEGO to see, many impressions and new ideas to build in 2007 and fun to talk to so many people about our great hobby: LEGO.





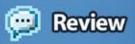


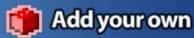












Event: LEGO Family Days

Meeting the LEGO Family



On October 28 and 29, 2006, a special event took place at Billund, home of the LEGO Group. BrickJournal's European Bureau Editor visited and as you will find, had a great time!

Article by Melody Krützfeldt, with Inger Buhl and Askel Krabbe Nielsen Photography by Melody Krützfeldt and the BrickJournal Image Bank. Maps by Christian Krützfeldt

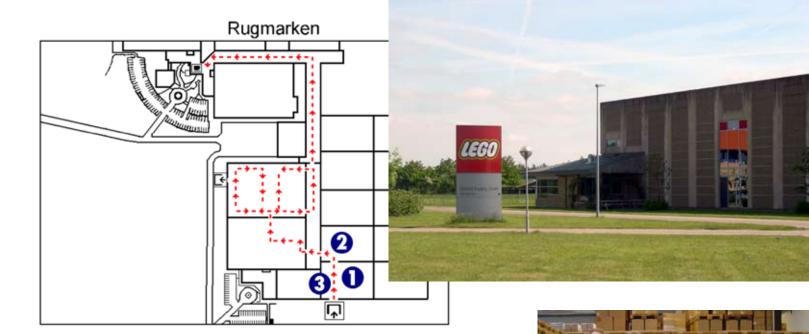


Every four years LEGO Billund opens their factories and centers for the LEGO employees and their families. The event takes place at the LEGO factories and offices in Billund, Denmark. The event is not open to the general public but is restricted to those to work within the LEGO facilities in Billund. This year was the first year to hold the event inside the Rugmarken Centre. In the past the event was held in the Auditorium. During the two days videos are shown and participants get a tour of the factory. This year it was extended to the Rugmarken Centre where, for the first time, LEGO fans held a display to show the employees how fans use the products they help produce.

Let's look at what goes on at the event, and then we'll have a quick chat with Aksel (a LEGO employee) who was also present at the event...

What is the idea of the event?

It's to allow the LEGO workers and their families to take an inside tour of the factories and surrounding buildings. This lets the employees show their families where they work and what they do. While certain areas are closed off for obvious reasons, the workers were still able to see where their co-workers spend their days and show their children how things function in the centers and in the factories. It takes between two and three hours to cover all the tours where they could see behind the scenes, how the bricks are molded, gathered and packed and to gain a good experience and understanding of the product.



So, what goes on at the event?

Rugmarken:

1&3. The families entered the Rugmarken Centre where they collected coloured vouchers for food and drinks and another ticket to choose a LEGO gift from the gift table. They proceeded over to the large projection screen where both old and recent television ads were shown and a small presentation was held (a presentation was held every 30 minutes). There were seats for the guests and the screen was surrounded by some fabulous LEGO sculptures and figures on either side.

2. In another room, adjacent to this area, LEGO AFOLs displayed their buildings,

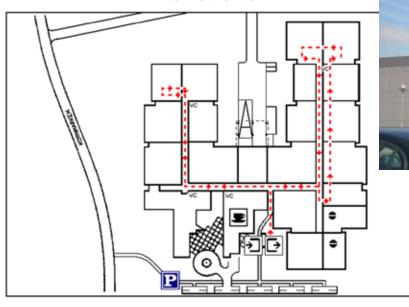
vehicles and layouts. The idea was to let the LEGO workers and their families see how their products are used everyday and what can be done with the elements produced. While there are many opportunities to see what fans build online, this display gave them a rare chance to see these models in person. The guests were also able to participate in building the wonderful, giant mosaic of Hans Christian Anderson. Five of the new LEGO NXT robotic systems were also on display; each programmed and built differently to show just a few of the various activities the NXT is capable of.

The groups then toured the factory starting through the Rugmarken Centre, they were able to explore and venture through, seeing how the packing facility is in production. This

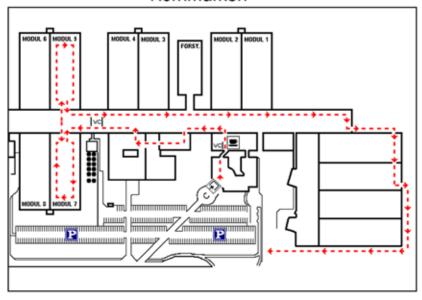
area is the Packing Department for products distributed all over the world as well as repackaging products and placing them into what we call 'poly' bags and then putting all together into boxes.

continued >>

Havremarken



Kornmarken



Idé-Huset



Havremarken:

This group of buildings contains offices for Administration, Building and Creating, Marketing, the Sales Department and even a few Model Builders.

Kornmarken:

Here, in these buildings, the moulding takes place. 800 machines working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week! There are 500 employees working in 52,000 sq m and the machines work to fill more than 424,000 storage boxes! WOW! What an impressive area! This place is where all your dreams come true and more. If you ever have the chance to go on a factory tour, this place is like 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', just in bricks! Yum! - Maybe you will even be lucky and have Aksel as your tour guide!

Ide-Huset (Idea House):

Another fantastic building where loads of Historic items are kept, like a museum for LEGO. The Vault is also in this area. The workers and their families were able to look around and see all things LEGO, from today and back to the past.

Who attended the event?

Over 4,000 LEGO Billund employees and their families attended, as well as Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, Jørgen Vig Knudstorp (CEO), Lisbeth Valther Pallesen (Executive Vice President

Community, Education & Direct Division), Jan Beyer (Community Development Manager)...

A Few Words with Aksel Krabbe Nielsen,

one of the tour guides of the event...

The employees seemed to have enjoyed themselves at the 'Family Days' event, have you had any feedback in regards to the day?

We have only had good feedback.

Was the event as successful as TLG expected it to be?

Yes.

How many people showed up in the end?

4300.

Have you attended many of these events yourself in the past?

I think this was the 5th time we did this event.

What would you suggest was the most fascinating area for those who attended the tours?

The LEGO fans site and moulding plant, Kornmarken.

The next event will take place in 2010; do you think many things will have changed regarding the event by then?

Many things will be changed till then, but still we don't know how it will look.

From what I have seen, a lot of employees have been working for TLG for a very long time, how long have you been working for TLG yourself?

284 months - nearly 24 years.

What is your role within the company today? I hear that in the past you had a rather interesting job working for LEGO, what exactly was it?

I started in LEGOLAND back in 1983 as a cowboy, I have worked in Marketing dept. in LEGOLAND, been Education Manager in LEGOLAND, Visitor Manager in Communication Dept and now in Stakeholder Relations.

Which direction would you like to see TLG go in the future?

The direction we are going now is fine!

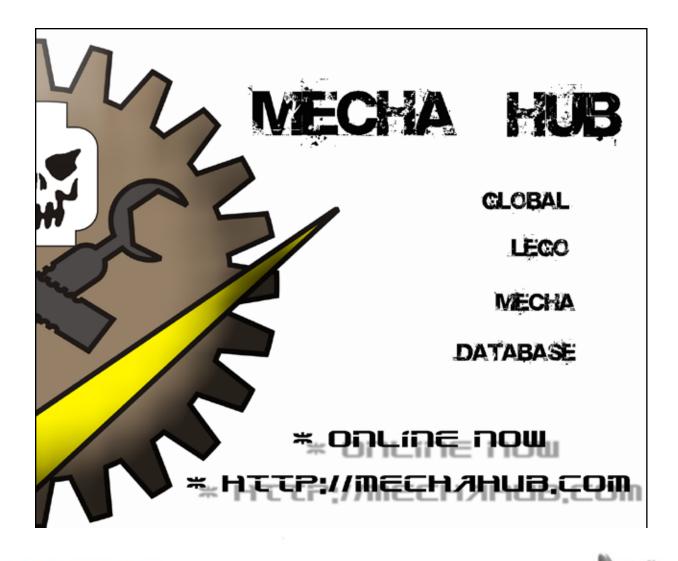
Where do you see yourself in the next 4 years?

In Stakeholder Relations

Many thanks, Aksel, for the quick chat; I hope to see you again in the future for another awesome factory tour or Family Days!











LEGO Events Near and Far

Before I began working on BrickJournal, I was an AFOL who got involved in – and enjoyed helping with – a lot of events and projects. Between North Carolina and Washington, DC (the two areas I concentrate my travel), I have been able to participate in displays that have taken place in malls, museums, libraries and even a planetarium! In all of those, I have been a displayer and sometimes a coordinator. Last year, things were different.



Event: LEGO Building Blitz

Photography by Joe Lewis and Joe Meno

Ben Lewis in Potomac, Maryland (a suburb of Washington, DC) wanted to help with Habitat for Humanity, but was too young to be a volunteer. So he created an activity for younger volunteers that involved building for the needy...but with LEGO bricks! With some support from his community, the LEGO Building Blitz was born. It was hosted by a local mall (Montogomery Mall in Maryland) October 22, 2006 and a small display was done by local adult builders. A local clown company also gave a festive air to the event.

The Building Blitz was a building challenge where teams created a house with a set of parts randomly selected from donated bricks and elements. There was a time limit, and afterwards, the best model house was picked from a panel of judges.

At the event beginning there were 24 teams poised to build, and when the "go" signal went, there was a frenzy of motion to open the bags of parts. Then there

was a funny pause – most of the parts offered were not typical and quite a challenge to use! From there, the competition picked up steam, punctuated by various comments of disbelief from the builders. The finished houses were all different and clever builds and there were a lot of smiles and laughter that could be seen and heard.

While the Blitz was going on, onlookers were able to find out more about Habitat for Humanity and give donations. LEGO bricks were also given for the Builders of Tomorrow campaign for New Orleans schools. Over 50,000 bricks were donated from the event. There also was a display of a neighborhood that was done by some adult builders. Since it was before Halloween, it included a haunted house and graveyard in the layout, and a couple of ghosts and skeletons visiting.

What was wonderful about the whole thing was it wasn't really a LEGO event – it was a fundraiser that happened to have LEGO elements included. The organizer was a teenager, and what he







created was an event that made a great local impact and also launched the local Youth Volunteer Program for Habitat for Humanity. It's just a glance at what the future holds for the adult LEGO community, and it came from the next generation of builders.













Orlando was the setting for the Festival of the Masters at Downtown Disney November 10-12, 2006. Festival of the Masters is a juried arts and crafts show, and is one of the largest in the American South. The show includes activities and events for all ages, and the LEGO Imagination Center took part in the festivities.

To coincide with the Festival, The LEGO Imagination center had two activities: a building event, and a LEGO display. Some new sets for 2007 were also shipped in to display and sell, so the new ExoForce, Aquaraiders, Technic and Mosaic sets were available before December!

Members of the Greater Florida LEGO Users Group (GFLUG) were invited to display, and other builders from as far north as North Carolina joined to present their models. The theme, as determined by the coordinator, KK Quah, was Hollywood, so models based on movies and television shows were the primary focus.



What made this display different from most is that Festival of the Masters is an outdoor show, so all displays had to be taken down each night. This made things a little interesting at the end of the day, and meant most of the models had to have portability. Set up was pretty quick but teardown was even quicker. Everything was stored for the night – then we came back and brought it all out again.

Our models came from a wide variety of shows and movies. A city layout had Spiderman stopping a train, and Batman in his Batmobile was close by. Another layout was of Rick's Place, from the movie *Casablanca*, as well as the plane and the scene with Rick and Ilsa. From Harry Potter was a model of Hogwarts Castle, with each room decorated as in the movie. The largest layout of all was of the entire plane crash from *LOST*.

Chase scenes were also present. There was a cool boat chase from *Live and Let Die* and the helicopter chase from *Mission Impossible*. Being in Downtown Disney, it was only appropriate to have some Disney inspired models too, including Ariel's Grotto from *the Little Mermaid*, the *Nautilus* from 20,000 *Leagues Under the Sea*, a spaceship (the red one) from *Lilo and Stitch*, and another from *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

Some sculptures and whimsical figures were shown, and a demo model of the Mindstorms NXT was constantly being taken through its paces.

Inside the LEGO Imagination Center, there was a building event where visitors built giant bricks then added them to build a seven-foot tall model of Yoda. This took place over the entire weekend and there was a constant stream of people participating. 250,000 people were expected to show, and it certainly looked that way.











It seemed like a never-ending river of people who flowed by the model display - they took their time to look over each MOC and express their pleasure. They gave smiles of recognition to the models, and the Disney creations generated the most, including even some Disney employees who recalled the old 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea ride. There were other things going on for the show, such as chalk painting, but the LEGO display and event was one of only a few specifically geared for kids – and kids at heart. This made it supremely popular.

All in all, it was great fun and for me, a lot like an artists' gathering. Each of the people who displayed enjoyed the company of the public and each other, and the display was a gallery of both the talent and the hospitality of the group. Next year looks to be better, and I am looking forward to returning.





















Photography by Joe Meno and Patrick Rumpel



A suburb of Munich was the site of a display hosted by 1000steine, the German LEGO club. Bricking Bavaria, as it was dubbed, drew 50 builders from Germany and Holland. They presented some of the most incredible MOCs I've seen to date.

The site was a local church, which opened much of its space to the displayers. Different areas and rooms were utilized to host themes and clubs. Upstairs the Dutch LEGO club had two interactive displays where a person could run a train with an exercise bike or try to pick up candy with a Technic-based candy crane. There was also a loft area reserved for Star Wars and moonbase MOCs, and dioramas of Endor's forests and Jabba's palace interior were there alongside custom Star Wars models and a moonbase display with a giant robot bay. Downstairs, there was a Mindstorms room where attendees could 'gamble' for candy using tokens that were given with their admission. By winning 5 tokens from Mindstorms vending machines that worked like casino games, people were able to redeem their tokens into another machine and receive a piece of candy. I really liked how they tied it all together.

The main meeting room held a tremendous assortment of models, from mosaics to a 15 foot long aircraft carrier MOC. The tallest model was a 7 foot TV tower. Other large models included a replica of the Frankfurt train terminal, a mountain with a train track that spiraled inside, and four churches.

There were other items too - like the characters from the movie *Cars*. Cool train layouts which included working streetlights and Christmas lights, and a town layout which showed off Bavarian style buildings.

At the entrance hall were more, including a fire trucks layout with lighted vehicles, a firehouse and a town layout. By the windows were large sculptures of cartoon characters, provided by the LEGO Group.

A few hundred visitors and their families came through, but the highlight was when one of the German TV networks visited and did a report on the event, taking footage of the models and interviewing some of the builders.

For a newcomer and a foreigner, this was a great introduction to the German community - their models were outstanding and they were great hosts. So welcoming, helping each other set up, answering endless questions and even feeding everyone. I'm looking forward to going again.

























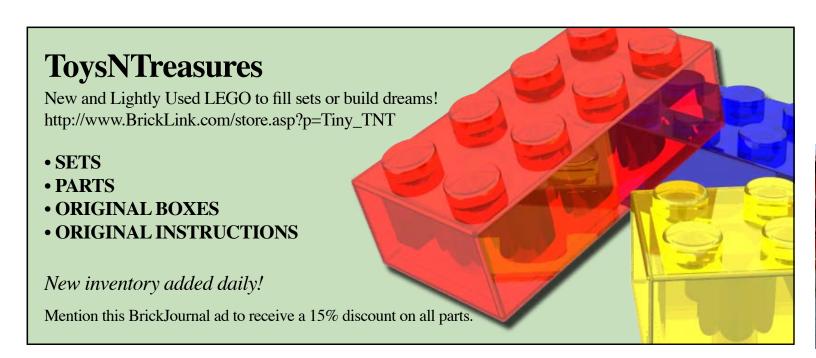












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S0937FG, which stands for Singapore LEGO Fanatics Group, was founded about 2 years ago by a bunch of fun-loving AFOLs based in Singapore. The number "0937" is actually the word "LEGO" read upside-down! This idea came from a core-group member, Eugene Tan. We wanted very much to use the name

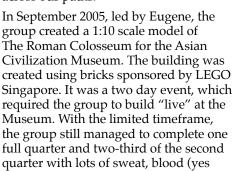
"LEGO" in the group's name but was a little worried about the "legal" implications. Hence this was the best method then!

When we started, there were less than 20 AFOLs. Although the group was small, we bravely took on the projects that came

across our paths.

group created a 1:10 scale model of The Roman Colosseum for the Asian Civilization Museum. The building was Singapore. It was a two day event, which required the group to build "live" at the Museum. With the limited timeframe, the group still managed to complete one full quarter and two-third of the second quarter with lots of sweat, blood (yes someone was injured by bricks!) and knee bruises.

Later in November/December 2005, the group spent 18 days building a 3-story tall (almost 10m, including the star) LEGO Christmas Tree at a shopping mall with bricks sponsored by LEGO Singapore. The 8m tall tree was built on a wire-meshed frame where many wonderful creations were placed over it. There was a lot of free play during the 18 days where each member used their own creativity to add Christmas related MOCs onto the frame. There were a



Club Spotlight: Singapore LFG

Looking to the Far East

BrickJournal meets up with a group in Asia!

Article by Diana Wong LEGO Ambassador Singapore, S0937FG

Photography by Diana Wong and Nicholas Foo



Santa with reindeer, musical angels, snowman, the 12-Days-Of-Christmas, all sizes of presents, musical notes, elves, candy-sticks, socks, jingle-bells, Christmas wreaths, Christmas wishes, candles, mini-towns, and more. The challenges were how to secure all the creations to the wire frame and placing the creations up high on the tree. Its was like using LEGO bricks to create lots of Christmas ornaments to decorate a really huge Christmas tree.

Besides the Christmas tree, the group also created huge Christmas candles that were place around the shopping mall walkway.

After two successful projects, we were more ambitious and took on the LEGO World Cup project with LEGO Singapore by working on totally new designs in March 2006. Eugene designed the soccer stadium and Nicholas Foo designed the "Soccer Player Megafigs Scenes". Since











we were not allowed (like in the Christmas project) to build in the shopping mall, we spent many weekends in one of the AFOL's home and created all the modules for the stadium and "Megafigs" parts. They would be put together overnight at the mall on 23 May. It was another great experience as all of us has to race against time to complete the stadium (decorated with 3000 minifigs, and many other accessories) and the 5 Soccer Scenes by next morning 7am. We did it! We were all tired but really proud of the work we did.

The stadium was really well received by the public and even had air-time on a local news channel!

On November 26th, our group had the great opportunity to meet Mr. Jørgen Vig Knudstorp, the LEGO CEO, in person and up close. In this dinner meeting, the group shared our passion on LEGO while Mr Knudstorp shared the LEGO Group's directions and visions. We then presented him with a MOC especially created for him – The Merlion. This symbolic sculpture of Singapore was designed by Nicholas in minifig scale. The group, led by Diana, spent almost 1.5 months to conceptualize the idea and eventually getting the MOC "fixed" into a hand-made acrylic box (made by Eugene). This MOC used 857 elements to build. There is also a S0937FG minifig (made by Leroy) waving the Singapore Flag, welcoming Mr Knudstorp.

S0937FG today has close to 90 registered forum members, and we hope to involve more AFOLs in our next project. You can come and talk to us at the following location:

Forum: http://s0937fg.proboards41.com/

Brickshelf: http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.

cgi?m=Singapore0937FG

MOCPage: http://www.mocpages.com/home.php/2441

Email: S0937FG@gmail.com

You may contact us at the above location or email Diana, the group LEGO Ambassador at dianavirus@gmail.com



BrickJournal Is Coming to Your Town...Layout!

In support of *BrickJournal*, ME Models has created a Delivery Truck (ME #1004) and a London Bus (ME #1005). Both models are sporting the exclusive *BrickJournal* logos, with proceeds from the sale of every model going to support the magazine. Each model comes in a sealed collector box with high quality laser printed instructions and decals. The models may be purchased by going to this website: http://www.me-models.com.

ALL buyers and multiple orders welcome. PAYPAL, cash, money orders and personal checks are accepted. Postage will be calculated when you place your order.



BrickJournal Delivery Truck (comes with minifigure driver)

\$22



BrickJournal London Bus (comes with minifigure driver)

\$25



Please e-mail ME Models if you have any questions at memodels@me-models.com.

Not Quite LEGO: Star Wars® Kubricks

It's time for another edition of "Not Quite LEGO" —the column that takes a look at some of the other toys out there that are "not quite LEGO." No, we're not talking about MegaBloks, but about other toys that are sometimes similar to LEGO, or may be of interest to LEGO fans in general!

Article and photos by Greg Hyland

LEGO Star Wars vs. Star Wars Kubricks – Kubricks Gives Us the Figures We Wish We Had In LEGO!

Kubricksare a line of figures made by the Japanese toy company MediCom that resemble, and surely are inspired by, our beloved LEGO mini-figure. At first the Kubrick line was meant to be a customizable figure line, where different coloured bodies and parts were sold, but the Kubrick line really caught on when they started getting various character licenses from movies, television and video games, such as *Planet of the Apes, Reservoir Dogs* and *Batman*. In January 2003, they got the line that I'm sure most Kubrick collectors wished for: *Star Wars*!

The Star Wars Kubrick line started off mimicking the way the original Kenner Star Wars figures came out in 1977, by releasing Kubrick recreations of the original four Kenner Star Wars figures, Luke, Leia, R2-D2 and Chewbacca, and also replicating the original "Early Bird" mail-in certificate and packaging. After that, they'd release sets of six individually boxed figures (and one or two more randomly packed "chase" figures) every six months. The choice of figures at times followed next to no logical assortment, and seemed almost random at times. Minor characters would often appear before more known characters (for instance "important" characters like Darth Vader or C-3PO didn't appear until the third and fourth lines!). While LEGO has a considerable jump on the Kubrick line with the amount of characters made, there are still a few standout characters that the Kubricks have done that LEGO has vet to do.

Here, we'll take a look at some of these characters, and maybe get a glimpse of how LEGO *might* possibly do these same characters!



Boussh – This is the one figure that is noticeably absent in our Jabba's Palace set, and a popular figure done by customizers. While a regular Kenner figure's helmet fits nicely on the mini-figure head, what we really want is the "official" LEGO helmet piece! Kubrick Boussh comes with both the Boussh helmet and Leia hair, and was in Series 7, released in November 2006.



Ewoks – Kubricks didn't cop out with some easy colour re-use, the way our LEGO friends did. The difference between Wicket and Paploo is obvious, with different cloak pieces. Wicket came out in Series 3, released in October 2004 and Paploo was in a Japanese Toys R Us exclusive boxed set from December 2004.



Spirits of Obi-Wan and Anakin – How many of us wouldn't LOVE a transparent mini-figure? This would be such an easy figure for LEGO to make, with no new parts and minimal printing needed. And check out the version on Anakin Kubricks chose... I guess the Original Trilogy DVDs haven't reached them yet... The Spirit of Obi-Wan was in the first Japanese Toys R Us exclusive boxed set from December 2004 and the Spirit of Anakin was in Series 7 from November 2006.



Death Star Trooper

– Sometimes an extra
Samurai helmet on an
Imperial Officer doesn't cut
it. This is a figure the army
builder types would kill for.
The Death Star Trooper was
in Series 6 from June 2006.



Bounty Hunters – The very first individual boxed line of Kubricks was a set of all six Bounty Hunters. While we just got LEGO versions of Dengar and IG-88, Kubricks gave us the other fan-favorite non-speaking-or-moving characters, 4-LOM, Bossk and Zuckuss. All these figures were in Series 1 from summer 2003.



Rebel Trooper – The LEGO Star Wars 2 video games teased us with this figure, and let's face it, it's a figure we all really want. That pesky helmet is all we need! The Rebel Trooper was in Series 6 from June 2006.



Admiral Ackbar – "It's a trap!" With the likes of Chewbacca, Greedo and Jar Jar, LEGO set the precedent that aliens have special molded heads. So that's what it'll take to get Admiral Ackbar, and possibly what's keeping us from having him! Ackbar was in Series 5 from November 2005.



Cantina Band Member-Get a bunch and make the whole band! This guy actually came with a few different instruments so you could do just that! There's almost no excuse that this guy doesn't exist in LEGO, and should really have come with the Cantina set. As with the Tuskin Raiders and Ten Nunb (and in opposition about what I said about Admiral Ackbar), a printed head is all that is needed! The Cantina Band Member was in Series 2 from November 2003.



Death Star Gunner – Surely a special helmet would be needed (or perhaps they could share a black version of a helmet that might get made for the Rebel trooper on a black head?), but the Death Star Gunner is another figure that the army builder types would love. The Death Star Trooper was in Series 5 from November 2005.

Other figures that Kubricks have produced that are absent from the LEGO line include Bespin Han, Endor Leia, Nien Nunb, RA-7, R4-M9, K-3PO, Snaggletooth, an Imperial R5, Ceremonial Luke, and then there's chase and exclusive characters (that you'll never own unless you are rich or live in Japan!) that have been made like Jorg Sacul and the "Blackhole" Stormtrooper, and even Indiana Jones (using the Han Solo face!).

While Kubrick figures aren't widely available in North America or Europe, look for them in most specialty toy or comic book stores, or a look on eBay will come up with dozens of sellers (mostly in Japan or Hong Kong). Be warned... collecting these figures can be pricey, with the newer figures going for \$10-\$15 each, and exclusive and chase figures going for as much as \$150. The original "Early Bird" set (with Luke, Leia, Chewie and R2) can go for as much as \$250!









Star Wars Kubrick Checklist

Series 1 - Summer 2003:

- ☐ 4-LOM
- ☐ Boba Fett 2 green gauntlets (ESB)
- □ Bossk
- □ Dengar
- □ IG-88
- □ Zuckuss

Chase Figures:

- ☐ Boba Fett 2 red gauntlets
- □ Boba Fett 1 yellow & 1 red (vintage)

Series 2 - Nov 2003:

- ☐ Cantina Band Member
- □ Greedo
- ☐ Han Solo
- ☐ Obi-Wan Kenobi
- ☐ Sandtrooper orange pauldron
- □ Tusken Raider
- Chase Figures:
- ☐ Sandtrooper white pauldron
- □ Indiana Jones

Series 3 - Oct 2004:

- □ AT-AT
- C-3PO
- ☐ Han Solo in Carbonite
- □ Iawa
- ☐ Lando Calrissian
- Wicket
- Chase Figures
- ☐ Hibernation Sickness Han Solo
- □ Logray
- □ Vinyl Cape Jawa

Series 4 - Jul 2005:

- □ Darth Vader
- ☐ Emperor
- ☐ Han Hoth
- □ Luke Bespin
- □ Nien Nunb
- ☐ Stormtrooper
- ☐ Chase Figures
- □ Darth Vader w / Luke's face
- ☐ Han Solo Stormtrooper



- ☐ Luke Skywalker Stormtrooper
- E. Series 5 Nov 2005:
- ☐ Admiral Ackbar
- ☐ Death Star Gunner
- □ Luke Skywalker Jedi Knight
- ☐ Princess Leia Slave
- ☐ Snaggletooth Red
- ☐ Yoda
- Chase Figures
- ☐ Han Solo Endor
- ☐ Snaggletooth Blue
- □ Walrusman

Series 6 - Jun 2006:

- ☐ Death Star Trooper
- ☐ Luke Skywalker X-Wing Pilot
- □ R4-M9
- □ RA-7
- □ Rebel Trooper
- ☐ TIE Fighter Pilot
- Chase Figures
- ☐ Grand Moff Tarkin
- ☐ Imperial Commander
- □ Wedge Antilles

Series 7 - Nov 2006:

- ☐ Anakin Skywalker Spirit
- ☐ Lando Calrissian Skiff Guard
- ☐ Princess Leia Boussh
- ☐ Gammorean Guard
- ☐ Emperor's Royal Guard
- ☐ Scout Trooper
- Chase Figures
- ☐ Anakin Skywalker Old
- ☐ Yak Face
- ☐ Emperor's Blue Guard

Carded Kubricks:

- ☐ "Bape" Boba Fett Series 1 Vintage version - 2003 Medicom Toy Exhibition exclusive - 150
- ☐ Luke Skywalker Blonde hair - Art of Star Wars exclusive at Kyoto National Museum & internet exclusive
- □ R2-D2 "Droids" version
- Wonder Festival (Feb 22/04) & internet mail order exclusive - 2004 pcs total
- ☐ "Parco" Sandtrooper black pauldron - 2004 Medicom Toy Exhibition exclusive (Jun 12/04)
- 150 pcs?
- ☐ Boba Fett "Droids" version - Wonder Festival (Aug 29/04) & internet mail order exclusive
- 2004 pcs total

- ☐ Princess Leia Holographic
 - World Character Convention 19 (Nov 21/04) & internet excl.

 - 2004 pcs total
- ☐ "Parco" Darth Vader Series
- 4 version 2005 Medicom Toys Exhibition exclusive (Jun 29/05)
- ☐ "Parco" Jorg Sacul 2006 Medicom Toy Exhibition exclusive (Jun 23/06)
- ☐ Blackhole Stormtrooper (assume it's carded?) - WCC 2006? & internet exclusive - 2006 pcs total

Kubrick Boxsets:

Early Bird Set - Jan 2003

- □ Chewbacca
- □ Luke
- ☐ Princess Leia
- □ R2-D2

Speeder Bike Boxset - Apr 2004

- ☐ Endor Luke
- ☐ Endor Leia
- ☐ Speeder Bike

Toys R Us Exclusive Boxset - Dec

- ☐ Han Solo Bespin
- □ Paploo
- □ R2-Q5
- □ R5-D4
- ☐ Spirit of Obi-Wan

Max Rebo Band Boxset - Feb

- □ Doda Bodonawieedo
- □ Droopy McCool
- □ Max Rebo
- ☐ Sy Snootles

Toys R Us Exclusive Boxset 2 - Dec 2005

- ☐ Imperial R5 Unit
- ☐ K-3PO
- ☐ Luke Skywalker Ceremonial
- ☐ Ten Nunb
- ☐ Wicket Ewoks Cartoon

Speeder Bike Boxset 2 - Nov 2006

- ☐ Biker Scout
- ☐ Speeder Bike

Mail Away Boxset - Apr 2007

- ☐ B-Wing Pilot
- ☐ C-3PO Droids style
- ☐ Dagobah Luke Skywalker & Yoda
- ☐ Snowtrooper

Crane not included.



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Last Word











Wow! Could the year have been any busier?

My apologies to some of my contributors for those event reports that didn't make it to press – They will be in the next issue, along with the other things that have happened in the meantime.

Issue 6 has been an eye opener for me. This was the first time that I truly saw the global reach of LEGO bricks. It's amazing to see articles submitted that chronicle happenings in Italy, Germany, and the United States, all directly related to the LEGO hobby. Can you believe that the CEO of the LEGO Group went to Singapore on business and met an adult LEGO club? Yes, this hobby is maturing and continuing to spread.

I also was lucky enough to attend an event overseas and see the differences between events in the US and in Europe. Each place has its own personality, and I was able to experience both firsthand. I'm hoping in the coming year that I'm able to attend even more events in even more countries.

This is the end of Issue 6 but you might be wondering, "What's up with next issue?" I can tell you, there's some exclusive content coming, more great articles and models...and best of all you won't have to wait long for it.

And one last thing – comments and thoughts are always welcome! Drop me a line at: admin@brickjournal.com

See you next time!



AFOLs







