



# The Drink Tank 434 ~ November 2021

Cover by Karl Applegate & Benjamin Garcia

**[P. 3 - In Defense of DUPLO](#)**

By Christopher J. Garcia

**[P. 5—Exterminate!](#)**

by James Shields

**[P. 11—My LEGO Story](#)**

by Matthew Appleton

**[P. 17—LEGOgraphy](#)**

by Sam Moore

**[P. 23—Adventures in LEGO](#)**

by Victor D'Agostino III

**[P. 25—Imperial Walkers on the North Ridge: Recreating the Battle of Hoth in LEGO](#)**

by James Shields

**[P. 44—The Joy of LEGO](#)**

by James Bacon

**[P. 61—It's a Start](#)**

by Chuck Serface

**[P. 66—What LEGO Masters Tells Us About LEGO](#)**

by Christopher J. Garcia

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## In Defense of DUPLO by Christopher J. Garcia

When I was a kid, I had a Firehouse set of LEGO. My dad was a firefighter, so I wanted a firehouse set. Makes sense, no? I built it a couple of times over the years, but it was never my primary building medium. Nor were the Tinker Toys or Lincoln Logs I had all over my room.

No, I was a DUPLO kid.

Well into my teens, when I played with building stuff, it was DUPLO. That is likely a shock, as they're the baby form of LEGO, but honestly, the big, easy-to-grip blocks were my way. Why?

Well, you see, I've got fat fingers.

Now, I hesitated on getting an iPhone, and still have a lot of trouble using one accurately, because I got these pudgy little sausage fingers. I'm not at all dexterous. For most LEGO use you need the ability to deal with small pieces and put them together exactly. With DUPLO, it's far more approximate value.

Which is why I insisted on so much DUPLO for the boys.

Most dads buy endless amounts of LEGO so they can build like they would have when they were kids. I made sure we had DUPLO, and the kids outgrew it much faster than I did. I would play with them and JP, who has similar issues with small pieces, and we'd build. Big.

One morning, JP woke me up at 5:30 AM. He wasn't going back to sleep, so I said it's time to play LEGO, meaning DUPLO. The two of us built a fort-like block tower, maybe a foot tall.

"I think we can go higher, Papa."

I agreed. We built another couple of feet, then stopped and got a little breakfast. "Time to go higher!" JP said as he polished off his bacon.

And back into the living room we went. We used literally every piece of DUPLO we had, building a tower unto Heaven. I think this is the moment I stopped understanding the words JP was saying...







The result was an eight-foot-tall tower of red, green, blue, and yellow. JP was amazed, and I had to hold him on my shoulders to have him put the top section on the top to top it out. It stood for roughly four minutes, looming over the entire living room like the Illinois would have stood unbelievable over Chicago if Frank Lloyd Wright had any say in it. It was giant, and then Benji woke up, came into the living room and the entire thing fell, waking up Vanessa, setting off a firestorm that could only be quenched with the addition of BLTs from Jenna Sue's.

DUPLO is fun, and it's not a trash building system. I hope that *LEGO Masters* will do a DUPLO challenge someday. I think that would challenge the builders more than anything, because you really have to step back, and build big.



Something I have enjoyed is bringing LEGO to conventions, particularly when people can be given a chance to build for themselves. One of the challenges is finding a model that's easy to provide parts for multiple people to build and creating a set of easy-to-follow instructions.

When I was going to AussieCon Four for my GUFF (Gone Under Fan Fund) trip, I came up with an elaborate idea to get people to build lots of Daleks from *Doctor Who*, and to build scenery from a story, and to try to recreate one of the missing *Doctor Who* stories in bricks. Fortunately, one of the AussieCon committee, Sue Ann Barber, was also an AFOL (Adult Fan of LEGO), and immediately realised how ridiculous the idea was, and how much of the convention it would have taken to try to execute. She sensibly suggested we focus on the part of the idea that might be achievable in an hour: building an army of Daleks.



There have been lots of LEGO Dalek models over the years, but for me, the most convincing one was by a LEGO builder known online as Captain Kobold, who used it to recreate a famous photo of Katy Manning (Jo Grant) that appeared in “Girl Illustrated” in 1978.

I made some slight tweaks to the design and made a 3D model using a program called MLCad and created instructions with another program called LPub.

I also started collecting parts, ordering on BrickLink.com. As the time drew closer, I started getting parts sent directly to Sue Ann. By the convention I think I had enough parts to make over a hundred Daleks.

We ran the Dalek building twice at AussieCon. The first time was part of the children’s program, as we wanted to ensure that there would be enough parts for the children before

the adults got to them. This was a good strategy, and the dozen or so children who wanted to build Daleks had a great time, and even built some fantastic scenes to fit the Daleks in.

I was surprised by the crowd that turned up for the adult Dalek building event. I think there were close to a hundred people crammed in the room. We had a smallish table to set out parts on, so we set up a queue for people to line up to collect an instruction page, and all the parts they needed, and then go back to their seat to build it. We put the instructions on the giant projector to help. It took the best part of the hour for everyone to get to the parts, but everyone who wanted got to build a Dalek.

I repeated the event at that year’s Octocon, and it has taken place at subsequent Worldcons, though it has generally been aimed at kids.





As new LEGO parts have come out, I have refined the design. Some official LEGO *Doctor Who* sets have since been released, and while I wasn't crazy about their Dalek designs (they had a couple of different versions, including one for the LEGO Dimensions video game that could be rebuilt in several configurations), it did include a printed dish part that I was very happy to incorporate into my version.

Someone once told me that I was 12 inside. The only thing 12-year-olds crave is more Lego.

James May





The instructions have been tweaked many times to try to make them as easy to follow as I can. It has been very helpful to get feedback from people following them at conventions (both from people telling me what they found difficult, and from observing what people were getting stuck on).

If you would like to build one, you'll have to get hold of the parts yourself, but you can find the instructions on the next page.







## My LEGO Story by Matthew Appleton

It was sometime in the late spring of 1984, on a beautiful Saturday early afternoon. A couple of my classmates were looking for me because they needed additional players for a pickup backyard baseball game, but they couldn't find me. I was in the house of a friend who was a couple years younger than us, because he had an awesome LEGO collection. According to my mom, I had a sufficient number of LEGO blocks for most of my own needs, but his parents bought him the cool, expensive sets, such as LEGO Space, that my parents couldn't really afford. His LEGO meant I could easily build things at his house I couldn't build in my own home.

When I caught up with those classmates much later, too late for me to be of any help in getting enough people for



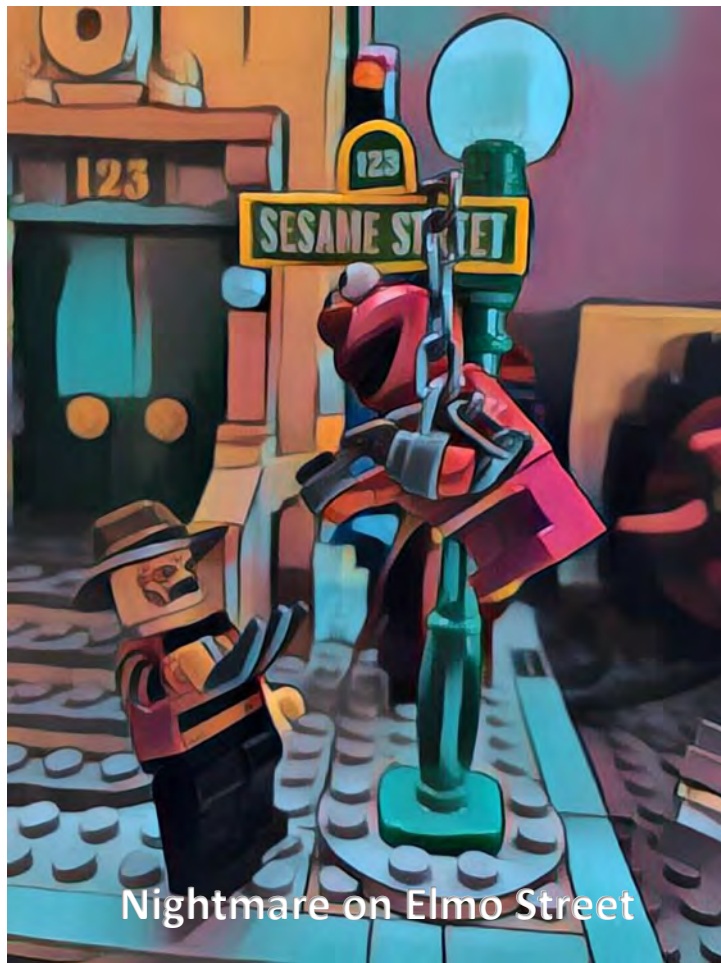
**Eerie Fountain**

the ballgame, they admonished me for still playing with a toy they deemed inappropriate for 12-year-olds. They made it clear in no uncertain terms that I needed to make a choice: I could continue playing with LEGO with the younger boy and face certain social ostracism, or I could make a full break with that part of my childhood and maintain my already rather nominal social status. Already feeling like a little too much of an outsider, the LEGO and my younger friend never stood a chance.



Part of what made the transition a little easier was my baseball card collection. Those were still an acceptable interest to my sixth-grade classmates, and they were far easier to obtain than the new LEGO sets I wanted but knew I could never ask for. In addition to being told I had a sufficient number of LEGO, but I had also been told in no uncertain terms by my parents that the LEGO Space sets were unnecessary and that I needed to be more imaginative with the standard LEGO I already owned.) Within a couple years, card collecting turned into a full-blown hobby that I pursued for the following 30 years.

Not once during that time did I ever revisit or question that decision — not even after my son, Brandon, became old enough to start playing with LEGO. Oh, I thoroughly enjoyed getting down on the carpet and playing with them with him. In fact, I may have even enjoyed it more than he did. Still, the baseball card collection was my real hobby. At that point, I likely had one of the most extensive collections of Philadelphia Phillies cards one could assemble. The hobby had become part of my self-identity and took up a large amount of my spare time. Nonetheless, my wife, seeing how much I liked playing with them with Brandon, occasionally bought me sets which I quickly assembled and put on display in my office. Beyond that, I simply lacked the resources to consider toying with LEGO in any fashion more than just assembling the occasional small set.



Nightmare on Elmo Street



### *Here There Be Dragons*

However, as I approached my mid-40s, baseball card collecting was losing its appeal. It's a story for another time but suffice it to say that a number of decisions by Topps, who had reclaimed the monopoly on fully-licensed baseball cards that it enjoyed when I was a small child, were reducing a lot of the joy I felt as a collector. In fact, collecting was beginning to produce more annoyance and aggravation than actual enjoyment. As the disenchantment grew, the call of LEGO slowly became louder. Without realizing it at the time, the key inflection point took place during December 2014. While decorating for the holidays, I decided to put together a tiny little secular Christmas display using a combina-





Crowley & Aziraphale





## Borg Carolers

time and energy that had just been freed up into building and making use of my own LEGO collection. The annual secular Christmas displays got bigger and more complex and were soon joined by Halloween displays. With my wife's encouragement, we created a display area in one of the living room bookshelves, and it now hosts a display of some sort all year around. Unfortunately, thanks to three teenagers and multiple cats, aside from that bookshelf space our home only has a few other areas where LEGO sets and displays can safely reside. So, when a bookshelf display is removed, the various elements must be dis-

tion of my and Brandon's LEGO. It probably took no more than 20 minutes of my time and it simply sat in front of a bunch of paper backs up on the bookshelf. From that very humble beginning, an annual tradition evolved.

But, before getting the opportunity to create a second holiday display, the day of reckoning involving the baseball card collection finally arrived. During the summer of 2015, I decided to use Twitter to engage with Topps regarding some of the issues I was having with their products. The person handling the Twitter account that day showed an appalling lack of care related to customer service — the brusqueness of their response was insulting. I decided I was done with the hobby. Interestingly, much like the decision to leave LEGO behind as a 12-year-old, there has never been a second thought about it. There's never been any desire to return.

It didn't take to transfer all the



Halloween 2020 Zombie Sewer



# LEGOgraphy by Sam Moore

Photography was a passion I discovered in my early teens and for the first few years my primary focus was landscapes and fauna, knowing if I was to turn this passion into a profession, in a small town, I'd have to take jobs that require working with people such as events and weddings. That's where I hit a mental block, there was no way I'd be able to confidently pose groups of people and take a flattering photo of them, any of them, grouped or singular.

One birthday, I was gifted a very accurate but counterfeit Deadpool minifigure and encourage to pose him in humorous photos, to which I tried my hardest. The resulting photo was simply Deadpool sat on a swing, the caption attached was somewhat quirky, but it was the beauty in the ease of creating a photo that can be appreciated for the subject and the background, while including my love of LEGO and Marvel. There was so much serotonin generated by creating this first photo, and I was hooked!





Working without the use of any editing software, besides the minor adjustments Instagram provided, I'd quickly begun uploading photos of every little plastic character I could get my hands on. Which is where I hit my first real wall with my new hobby, and it's one that is familiar in type of LEGO fan's relationship with the bricks, they were so expensive!

After buying full sets for the minifigures I had ideas for, I found it cheaper to buy the figures separately on auction sites. Noticing there was a potential to not only buying the sets for the figs but to then sell off the parts I didn't need to retain some money, I began trading in LEGO too.



From hobbies to side job, I had built a good reputation in both the LEGO community through my photos and the trading communities. I found myself sharing another inevitable familiarity with the communities, my life was consumed by LEGO.

It was everywhere, all over my socials, my room, my head house, my workspace, I carried figures around in my pocket, just in case a good photo op would arise. Thankfully my photos were very well received, and my trading was quite profitable once fine crafted both, it wasn't until a promotion at work forced me to side-line both that I stopped.



I no longer trade on LEGO unless it's personal sets. I've become tired, and when I do it's more to clear space than to make a profit.

My photography has led me to many different venues of the profession, from weddings to lingerie shoots, and having the confidence to interact and pose any of the people I have in those jobs came directly from playing around with the little Deadpool figure I was gifted nearly ten years ago.



LEGOgraphy still remains a passion if only as a coping mechanism for my mental health.

If there's anything to be taken away from my relationship with the little people from Denmark, is the instant portal to the peacefulness of childlike fun that can be acquired through posing and photographing my favorite miniature characters out in the world. That's just my relationship with LEGO, there are multiple forms of collectors, builders, creators, children, and adults alike all with their own way of interacting with LEGO but each receiving the same serotonin hit. Which is why LEGO will always be in front of my camera and a part of my life, just perhaps not as all-consuming as it can be.







## Adventures in LEGO by Victor D'Agostino II

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here does one begin when talking about a passion? But at what point does it become uninteresting listing everything that perpetuates that passion? So why LEGO? It allows one to build a world of imagination for real life. When you acquire a new set, you have a couple different options: build to the instructions or let your mind create your own instructions. I'm the latter. I buy the set that was already imagined then created for the theme it was designed. Over the years, I've either been gifted or bought for myself, City, early Space, Technic, the short Model Team, *Star Wars*, and shared with my wife Christmas Village. There may have been some other themes in there, but those are what I remember. I can remember many hours during my childhood, enjoying building and playing with LEGO. Christmas 1990 saw me getting the first City Monorail (Airport Shuttle) and spending the morning and afternoon building it and then integrating other sets into it to make it more playable. That's the joy of LEGO. Unlike model kits which are rigid and have little play value, LEGO provides an ever-changing world of possibilities within all themes. You can still build by instructions but still add to that set with others. At one point after my parents got divorced and my sister and I moved out with our mom, I took that Monorail set and integrate it with my toy train, the American Flyer. I spent hours watching both trains go around each other. As a fan of LEGO and model trains, I was content.

When *Star Wars* licensing was acquired by LEGO, it opened a great wealth of possibilities. I collected a lot of the first sets released. They were smaller and easier to get (when you could find them). I hunted down the ones I wanted from various Toys R Us and Target stores. Many of them were crude by today's standards; but at the time they were very LEGO -- boxy, angular, and basic in design. Over the years, I had relaxed my acquisitions of *Star Wars* sets but would dabble from time to time. When they started to really put time and energy into set design the sets got bigger and more expensive. Many sets I had to pass up due to lack of funds. However, when they released The Executer set, the largest LEGO set at the time, I had to get it. It was quite pricey, \$400 USD, but a great model to collect. Naturally, LEGO wouldn't stop there and would keep making bigger and more expensive sets, which I had to pass up. Until the second Millennium Falcon set



under the Expert series (Ultimate Collectors Series UCS) was created. Again, LEGO created the “largest set ever” and I would have to acquire it this time after passing up the first some years earlier. Naturally the price point would reflect how massive this was and of course Lucas Film’s cut of the licensing helped drive the price up to \$800 USD. Naturally, you’d not expect anything as pricey, and to this date it’s still the most expensive set created.

It’s really a giant model with little playability as it’s so massive. Many people have built glass-top dioramas for there’s to sit on, the most popular being a wintery Hoth setting, a dusty Tatooine docking bay and even a space-cold Death Star docking bay. When I get around to building mine, it’ll be the Tatooine option. LEGO keeps on designing, and though I skip lots of sets now due to lack of display space, recently they released an Expert model sized Tatooine Cantina. It’s a great set to have for playability, especially for older kids who can appreciate its essence and not be destructive. The biggest issue of the *Star Wars* line is, as I mentioned before, the Lucas Film license. In LEGO circles, there’s an equation for price per part: divide the number of parts into the cost of the set. The *Star Wars* sets are the highest whereas comparable sets from the Town themes are much lower. Even other properties like *Harry Potter* are much lower.



The LEGO world is always expanding, one has to appreciate the Master Builders back in Denmark and their cooperative drive toward making sure that all pieces created will interchange with every piece ever created. At the beginning of LEGO’s building block empire, it was known as “The System,” a great tool that is unlike any other toy, model, or building kit ever. LEGO has provided me with countless hours/days of immersive fun and enjoyment that’s far beyond the initial market cost. I can’t imagine not ever collecting them, if not for me but for our daughters as well, to share in the joy of building with them.

# Imperial Walkers on the North Ridge: Recreating the Battle of Hoth in LEGO

by James Shields

It all started at the 2005 Glasgow Worldcon. I was chatting with James Bacon, and a couple of other LEGO fans whose names have long since escaped me. We were chatting about our favourite brick creations, and the topic came around to what a great place the Worldcon would be for a display of science fiction themed LEGO models.

That might have been the end of it, but James was doing stuff for the next year's Eastercon, and he managed to convince the committee that a LEGO display would be a good idea. This was probably helped by the hotel that year, which was in Hinckley, having a lot of small rooms and only so many of them were needed for program streams.

Various members of the community came forward with LEGO models, and I must give special mention to David Mackenzie, who recreated a portion of the Village (Portmeirion) and some scenes from *The Prisoner* in fantastic detail.

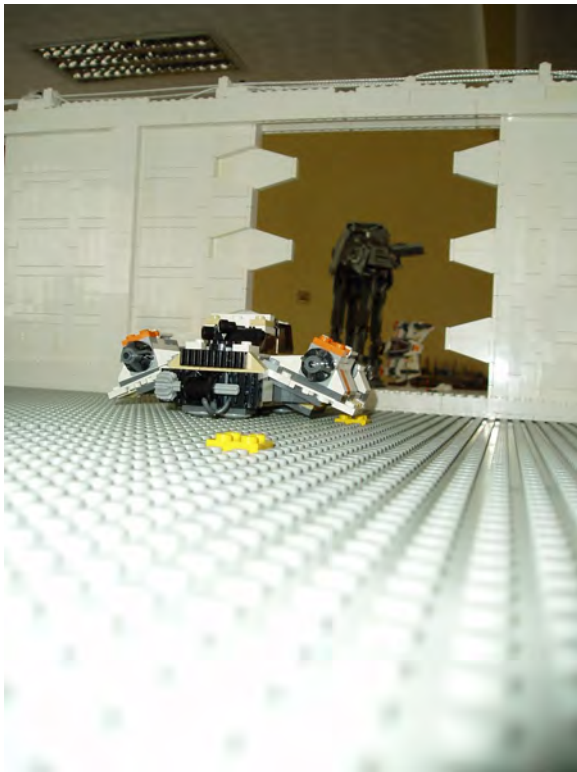




For the centerpiece of the display, James wanted to create a scene from *Star Wars*, and after some deliberation we settled on the Battle of Hoth. This could be created mostly from sets from the still new LEGO *Star Wars* line. The plan was to build the rebel hangar, filled with rebel ships, and under attack by Imperial walkers.



At the time I was a recently new AFOL, and had no idea how to get hold of bulk quantities of LEGO bricks, so was not really positioned to contribute to the structure of the base, so my contribution was mainly limited to bringing some of the ships that populated it. I had just got a Millennium Falcon set, and hadn't had a chance to build it, so one of the teen fans helping out was delighted to take on that task while we set up the rest of the display. We were a bit short of X-Wings and some of the craft that appeared in the movie, so we filled the hangar with any rebel ships we could find. I brought one AT-AT, and Richard James (AKA Bazooka) brought the other.



But the crown jewel of the display was the front wall and doors of the hangar, which were designed and built by Richard. He even came up with a clever pull-string mechanism for opening and closing the doors. The doors of this version were very nice, but unfortunately, we hadn't been able to add any landscaping to them.

After that event, we all took our respective models home, and I have no idea if Richard kept his blast doors or not.

A few years later, in 2010, James had got involved in Wexworld, a science fiction festival taking over the town of Wexford, in the south-west corner of Ireland.

The Wexworld display:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lostcarpark/5224308629/in/album-72157654944986256/>

For this, James was tasked with filling an entire community hall with a science fiction display, and he decided to theme it around the Battle of Hoth. He persuaded some local craftspeople to construct a life-sized snow speeder, and once again proposed to recreate the battle in LEGO. This time, the LEGO display was down to the two of us, but I had at least got involved in LEGO fan groups and had learned methods of getting bulk bricks. I built a much more complex rebel base with control rooms. We were also a bit more accurate about the ships we included, though we were short of accurate Hoth equipped troopers on both sides, so the rebels were augmented with Alderaan style soldiers, while the empire had regular stormtroopers in addition to snow troopers.

*The control room at Wexworld:*



Perhaps the Battle of Hoth theme was prophetic, because as I was walking back to my hotel after setting up the display, I noticed a few flakes of snow falling. We laughed about it, but in the morning, the town was completely snowed under, and unfortunately very few people managed to get to the display or any of the Wexworld events.



The Wexworld display was mostly built on site, and not designed to be reused -- which wasn't a problem, since I had no plans to display it again -- and most of it got broken up after the display. I was quite attached to the blast doors, and they didn't take much space, so I kept them on a shelf.

That might have been the end of the story, except in 2015 I got asked to display in a small library show at short notice. I wasn't sure what to bring, but then I remembered I still had the blast doors on the shelf. So, I quickly put together a front wall to match the blast doors, and filled the rest of the table with models from LEGO sets. Because of the short notice, it was a lot simpler than the previous iteration, but it was very popular and received a lot of praise.

Ashbourne Library display:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lostcarpark/15447508684/in/album-72157654944986256/>



I then decided that if I was going to keep displaying the Battle of Hoth, I ought to do it properly, and decided I would start creating scenes from the battle as accurately as I could manage. I started by building the medical bay, with Luke in the Bacta tank, adding details like the medical droids and Princess Leia anxiously watching.

Medical Bay:

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I then moved on to the command center, which was a lot closer to the movie than the Wexworld version. I added lighting to the scenes to really make them look the part.

Command Center:

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While building this, I was going through several iterations of interior hangar details. I brought it to several shows around Ireland during this time. The medical bay and command center used around 1,000 parts each. The interior of the hangar used several thousand more bricks, not counting the rebel ships, which included a 5,000-part model of the Millennium Falcon.

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**"Hey, can I ask you something? This is unrelated. As someone who just spent the majority of his life in prison, what happened with Legos? They used to be simple. Oh come on, I know you know what I'm talking about. Legos were simple? Something happened out here while I was inside. Harry Potter Legos. Star Wars Legos. Complicated kids, tiny little blocks? I mean, I'm not saying it's bad, I just want to know what happened."**

**— Professor Kane, Community**

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*Hangars under construction:*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lostcarpark/20569331518/in/album-72157654944986256/>

After almost a year of building, I applied to display at the BRICK show in London's ExCeL Centre, and was accepted. For this show I collaborated with some UK fans, and instead of using LEGO sets for AT-AT walkers, we displayed some gigantic custom-built ones.



*AT-ATs attack:*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lostcarpark/23676282095/in/album-72157654944986256/>

For this show I decided to again rebuild the front wall of the base, and while doing this I added motorization to the door opening mechanism. I was very happy with the door opening mechanism, though unfortunately the rebel trench wasn't quite as finished as I'd have liked at this point. I used a technique for curving sections of landscape on hinges to give it a rugged landscape appearance. I think the initial version was a bit too regular, but I've reworked it over a few revisions to give it a more natural look. In total, the front wall section used over ten thousand parts.

*Blast doors and rebel trench:*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lostcarpark/23048936363/in/album-72157654944986256/>



Since BRICK, the front wall has been subject to continuous tinkering, as I've always been looking for ways to improve the design. The latest iteration has improved the landscape, and also upgraded the motorization using a LEGO Mindstorm Robotic Control Brick to control the motorization functions and ensure that it stops in the correct place. It now repeats the open/close operation at random intervals, generally to the delight of children watching.





*Latest version of the rebel defenses:*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lostcarpark/48812505471/in/album-72157710533821041/>

But back to BRICK, I was working to complete other interior rooms, and I added a rebel briefing room and canteen. As I was running out of time, my partner, Fionna, helped



with some of the building, working on several sections, including the wampa cave, and one of my favorites, Princess Leia's bedchamber. In the movie C-3PO tells Artoo off for turning on the heater and ruining the princess's wardrobe, so Fiona decided to create that scene.

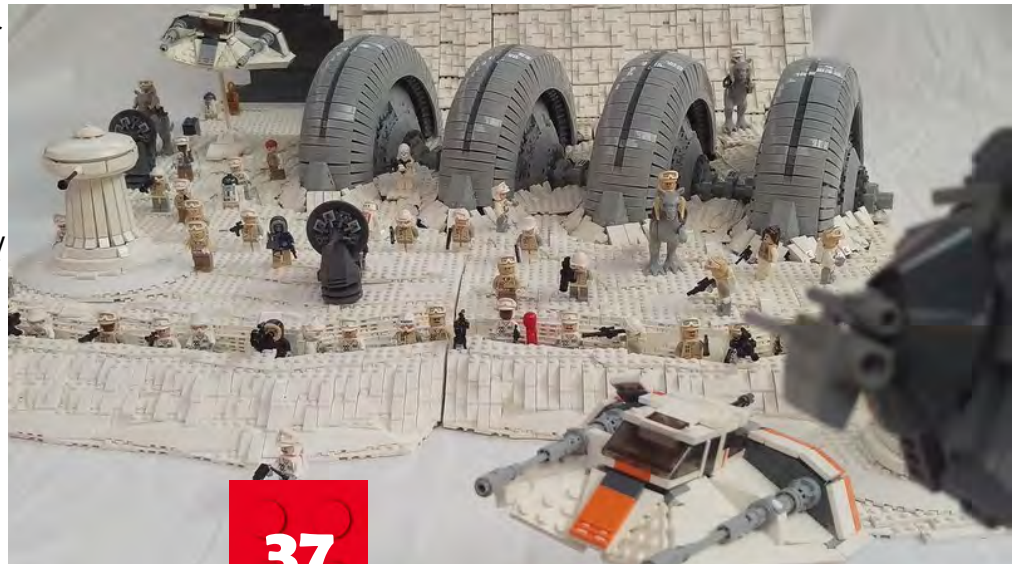
*Leia's bedchamber:*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lostcarpark/48616043896/in/album-72157654944986256/>

After the amazing spectacle of BRICK, it was back to Ireland for the next few shows. I wanted to rework the rebel trenches, and I particularly wanted to have a go at the shield generator, which I felt had never really been fully captured in LEGO. I tried a number of methods to build it, but each time wasn't satisfied with the result until I hit upon a method for creating a smooth curve. This was a very part-intensive method of construction, and each ring of the generator used over 800 parts, making about 3,200 parts for the generator. I've gradually built up the landscape in front of the base with the rebel trenches, using several thousand more parts.

*Shield generator and rebel trench:*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lostcarpark/35231877902/in/album-72157654944986256/>



The rebel base was now looking impressive, but most of the vehicles were still standard LEGO sets. These tend to be designed with play value prioritized over movie accuracy, so I was really feeling it was time for an upgrade. The first item on the agenda was the Imperial AT-ATs. There have been multiple versions of this from LEGO, but they've all been a little undersized for minifig scale, and all of the LEGO versions consist of approximately a thousand pieces. Budgetary constraints meant I couldn't go quite as big as the giant walkers we had at the BRICK show, but I found a fan-designed AT-AT consisting of 2,500 parts that was a significant improvement. I built three of these, and then reworked one into a crashed version, felled by a rebel tow cable.



I also had to build my own version of the snow speeder. There have been lots of fan built speeders over the years, and I stole ideas from many of them. I ended up with



something I'm very happy with. They are reasonably compact, consisting of around 250 LEGO parts each. Oh, and like the AT-ATs, I built one crashed into the ground after being shot down by an AT-AT, with a cloud of smoke from its engine.



*Snow Speeder production line:*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lostcarpark/34971750170/in/album-72157654944986256/>

Another model I felt the need to customize was the speeder bike. This didn't actually appear on screen in *The Empire Strikes Back*, but they are in some canon-ish sources like DK books, and, critically, a bunch of LEGO sets. At one point I had about five speeders from various sets on the display. However, I realized the LEGO models were a bit rubbish and didn't really add to the display. I decided I would design my own speeder and allow just a couple on the diorama, so set about designing the most detailed speeder I could. I'm very pleased how it worked out. I still don't know if the Empire used speeders in the Battle of Hoth, but I would like to feel that if they did, I have done them justice.



*Hoth scouts:*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lostcarpark/34808106221/in/album-72157654944986256/>

The final addition is to replace the X-Wings, which were from sets released between 2005 and 2012 with new custom designs. With these I've gone as far as getting the correct squadron markings replicating the battle damage on each individual ship. Each X-Wing contains over a thousand parts, and thanks to COVID, I haven't had a chance to display them in the Hoth diorama yet, though I've set them up as a display on their own.



*X-Wing Starfighters:*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lostcarpark/49440323068/in/album-72157712834748858/>

This brings us to the current iteration of the diorama. The last time I displayed it was at the Dublin Worldcon in 2019, where I was really happy to show it off to science fiction fans who might not have been aware of what could be achieved with LEGO.



*Inside the rebel hangar:*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lostcarpark/48616045181/in/album-72157710533821041>





# The Joy of LEGO by James Bacon

*I: A Great Kids' Toy*

It is unclear to me whether I was 3 or 4 when LEGO arrived into my life, a gift, at Christmas, and it was fun. It may have been earlier, for at some stage I was aware I had new sets, and the older ones were mere parts, to be identified by particular white bricks with “POLICE” on it, the broken fire engine ladder, the windscreen that was more solid and the painted-on headlights and radiator grill. The wonderful faceless armless and indeed, slightly legless block mini figures in their flat caps, hung around well into memory but were used always. As an adult with the Internet, it was so easy to figure out. ( 659 Police Patrol, 615 Forklift 693 Fire Engine 1976/1977)



LEGO changed at some point from random gifts into a desired present, and at some stage competed with die cast cars, plastic soldiers, and edged into further conscious desire, and proper minifigures arrived, so it must have been 1978, and I was 4. This was pretty awesome, articulated arms and legs and lots of fun sets. This was an odd time, as there was a phasing between what had been before and the development of the Mini City, with road plates, which were fully integrated with some large sets. Distinctive bricks and parts appeared, the constructor Hard Hat and Hi Vi, which were great fun, the open windcreens, and small sets abounded, although they were



an expensive toy. (641 Excavator, 623 Red Cross, 621 Police Car)

There was the added randomness of relations who would get a set like the middle-figure sized nursery, and 146 level crossing. I was aware of the train elements, but that seemed so far and so big and just unlikely. That was okay though because there were two important things that LEGO did. The first was that there were catalogs. While I am certain that most children use catalogs to create a want list of toys, I wanted them all, and knew I could not have them, small sets were fine as especial gifts, and also there were challenges, such as all the other toys I wanted. The catalog in 1979 offered castles and spaceships, a huge development and they all looked great. What was even better was that some children of my mom's friends had some of these sets, and therefore got to see the 928 Space Cruiser and Moonbase, play with it and decide, it was awesome, but I wanted to focus on LEGOLAND. Likewise the castle that opened, was awesome, but again, I liked LEGOLAND. The joy of catalogs could never be taken away, and I got much pleasure from them, imagining what they would be like.





The second was that my dad worked for Arnotts, a department store in Dublin's city center, as had my mom, although my father worked in their wholesale division in sales and was only ever in Henry Street on a Friday afternoon, and later worked at the distribution center on the Naas Road, Arnott's had a LEGOLAND exhibition for many Christmases, and there would be a special staff night. This was terrific.

I think Aiden Kelly in Arnotts would organize this, and this would be a big night out, a Santa chat, LEGO present, and it would cause an occasion for a trip to McDonalds, a bumper expedition. Dad often could not make it as he was away working during weeknights, and we generally went with Mom and would meet other children of co-workers. These were great nights out, and LEGO and Arnotts did a terrific job, it was quite inspired, brilliant

sales technique. Seeing all the magnificent models and the huge toys.

1983 was a big LEGO year, as I opted for LEGO as a main present, and accumulated what I thought was a huge amount. I got the largest set I had as a child, 6384 Police Station, and a host of smaller sets and importantly, roads.

I later got 6374, Holiday Home, which was an amazing, detached home with its own 6362 Post Office was a favorite, I loved the letters and post boxes, while 6681 Police Van worked very well with the station. At some stage, Andrew my brothers imagination was captured by the Space LEGO, and so red, yellow, and white space men started showing up along with grey vehicles.

LEGO would be put away and taken back out. That was the deal. Mom had a board that would fit eight road plates, and as space was tight, she would put that on her bed, and I could build all day and would do so. I was very much so into following instructions and building as instructed. Imagination was not manifesting in my own buildings or creations, per se. Road plates were asked for and showed up, and so much could occur. Older bricks would be repurposed, but of course, LEGO were genius, and had some something else that was brilliant.



The *Ideas Book*: now I loved books with pictures and the idea book was even better than the catalogue. At this stage I had “loads” of LEGO. Now, in retrospect a Roses tin of LEGO is not exactly loads in today’s understanding, but there was a lot there to play with, and importantly, there were instructions. I like that. I often think that I am not built for the cryptic or pure imagination, but give me an idea, or a spark and I can run with it. Initially, I had a problem with the ideas book, as I would not have the right bricks, and I recall my dad helping me figure through that frustration, and share understanding that although I wanted a building all one colour, we did not have the bricks for that, but that was okay, and so it was.

The *1980 Ideas Book* (6000) was handed over and was inspirational. Apart from the ease with which I could follow the adventure of the two minifigs, in a vehicle like I could build, it was a wondrous mix of what one could do, and one might build.

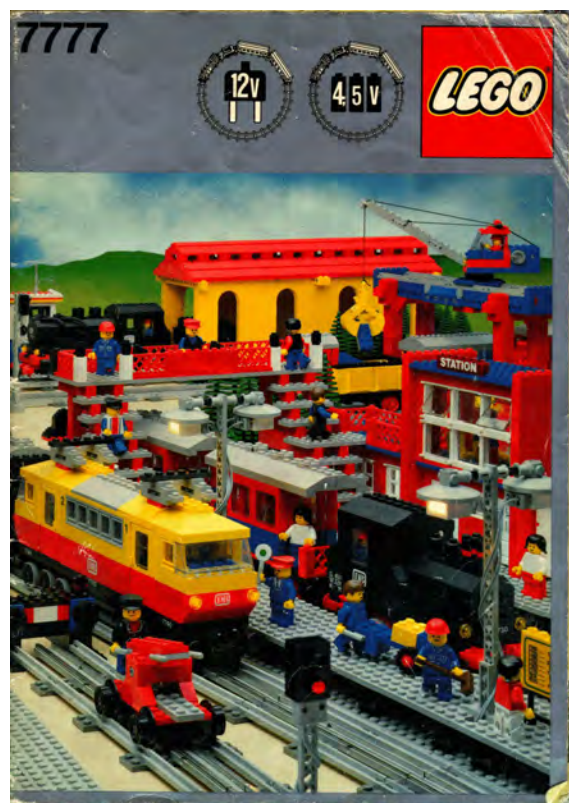


The police station on page 18, was cool, although I thought it would be better as an industrial building and one I could manage, and then we hit pay dirt with the articulated lorry on page 38 and the pallet system. And suddenly I was seeing this system everywhere, and it worked with the lift truck. The concept of pallets or loads that could go onto the trailers of trucks, and then be moved about, and on other vehicles, using a central piece to keep it in place and utilizing what were old parts, that I had, so much so that I started building articulated lorries with multiple trailers and dozens of these little 2x4 loads! Hours of fun and trailer combinations, and I had all the bricks!

So much fun.

Hundreds of hours were spent on LEGO. I made my LEGOLAND dozens of times, and there was great rewards, milk and biscuits usually around midday, and a nice lunch when I would be busy, I often felt my mother was proud of the productivity and ability to take lots of bricks and turn them into a functioning town. And then all broken up, and instructions placed into a folder in the box, and latterly then the case.

I also got the *7777 Trains Idea Book* from 1981, again the vagaries of relatives, or something labelled LEGO and therefore suitable, but that was okay, I was good with not having a train. Now and again, I would say ask about getting the LEGO Train, gosh the yellow and red beauty of the Electric Inter-City Train, and then the mail van and sleeping coach, my goodness you could build a real train. Yet other things completed for the list, be it Santa or birthday, and models, trainsets, the BMX all competed, and interested drifted around like the wind, and soon LEGO was something the younger brothers played with, and we got the stage where we had a Dark Horse Jeans hard case of LEGO, and it was out less and less for me. LEGO things came up, Cousin Stephen got a battery train set for



Christmas, but it was desired built on the day, and so, I did along with the train station, an enjoyable build for me, and that was nice. The catalogs would get a glance, there was a knowledge of it a bit as it developed, and then other priorities were pressing.



## *II: Seek and Ye Shall Find*

LEGO was a thing of my past, and I was not THAT interested in it. Comics then the science-fiction community came along in the same decade, and 1989 was crucial, as I met Mick O'Connor and then so many others, Pádraig Ó Méalóid, James Mason, Rory Lennon, Anna Casey, Phil O'Connor, Helen and Pippa Ryder, the list goes on and on, and so did bars and good times. In the 1990s I had opened a second-hand bookshop and a science-fiction toy shop, and that was interesting as initially I gave away many of my books, regretted this, and then rebuilt my collection, but I would also acquire cool things. LEGO did not feature.

Two things happened, and I must admit the exact dates are not all that clear, but it must have been late 2000 or early 2001, or both, and I know I had moved from my lovely duplex flat with my fiancée back into my parents to save for a house, and so we were living in the room which once was my parents' bedroom, although instead of three generations, it was now down to two, and so the two rooms and two bedrooms which was my family space was now a four-bedroom affair. Anyhow, I was working as a driving instructor at this stage, and that was a terrific job, with lots of flexibility. I would call into a variety of places, including Christy Floods Modellers nook on Berkley Road., behind a shop. Now I met Christy at an Octocon in 1991, had sold him dealers tables at later ones and done much work with him, and he was a huge supporter of science-fiction activities, always welcoming posters and flyers. A nice man. The shop was a vast number of models, sets, boxes unusual things abound, while he was always working on a build, and it was more like a workshop than a retail shop. A real Dubliner. Anyhow, I was in and poking about wasting some time, and I saw a box with some LEGO poking out, a big enough box, and I was impressed, but it was unclear what the price was, I saw more train track and train doors, and it was in total bits, but it was a very full box, and it was up high, and I replaced it. I was in again and I poked about, and must have looked half interested, and Christy suggested a tenner would see him happy. I was not shy and had a tenner out in quick order, but was a bit unsure, but had time.



Back at base, I took the bricks out, and just like I would as a child, but now 26, sorted the bricks out into colors and type, and there were a lot of bricks. There were 146 pieces of railway track. I felt this was substantial. There were grey doors with red, blue, and white stripes on them, and there were a pair of red-and-yellow doors, with a British Rail symbol and 7735 on them. This looked like more LEGO than I had anticipated

The desktop computer was in the corner of the room, and so I started to investigate. Soon it became clear that there was a huge world of LEGO online and I was able to identify that the track was 9v and that the 7735 was potentially an older 12v goods train set and that indeed, the red, white, and blue striped doors could only be from the metro-liner set, along with the distinctive black windscreens, and that instructions were online. I soon got to work. It became clear that nearly all the bricks were here, and indeed, I was soon faced with a passenger train set, except for two crucial parts. The grey streamlined nose of the train, containing headlights were not in the box. A push-pull type operation, it required two and so, I quickly fashioned a replacement. Then onto 7735, and the locomotive was all here, although I was not that keen on the 12v motor, and much of the goods wagons were also here. This was amazing. I had quite a bit of LEGO here, and going by the prices of track and sets, I had scored very well indeed. Other items were in the box, and I got to building.



I reached out to an English pal, Bazooka, a really lovely fellow, who I had met at Incon 2 in 1994, and whom I had met and had good times with at Eastercons. He was hugely supportive, and at the time had four train sets and shared LEGO websites and connections with me, and this was beneficial intel, and I was especially pleased when I found that I could buy LEGO bricks from other fans, my metro liner was fixed. He was a phenomenal source of knowledge, and really generous with his time, and we would work on a few crazy projects together. While I was at this early stage I was new to being an adult fan of LEGO, he was someone whom I knew who was and was good with it. By 2001, I had connected with Ronan Webb, an Irish collector and fan, as well as reaching out to Dutch fans and learning about gatherings and events. I moved into my own home in September 2001, and this was a huge opportunity for space.

A number of fun things transpired, the first was that I was able to come by parts and I realized that Irish trains would be really fun to make, and so I started to research Irish Railways, or rather, just went to my shelves with my books.

I started seeking out suitable bricks and had a go at some of the more modest Deutz locomotives and started on a General Motors Class 121. I also was able to start to collect sets that I had dreamed about and had seemed well beyond my means as a youth, and so I was looking for 7740.

I had not been aware, but James Shields had been a big LEGO train builder as a child, and so at some stage, I became aware that this aspect of him had on hiatus, I suppose rather like it was for me, and he really came back into it, by 2003, with gusto. I was able to acquire parts off other collectors, and it soon became apparent that there was a larger, broader group of fans. Time became more available as my engagement fell apart and work was good.

The second thing that had happened, was the LEGO *Star Wars* X-Wing 7140, and that was something I noticed, but I cannot recall if I got that before or after the train find. I know I got the set, as well as Y-Wing and Vader's TIE Fighter, and then subsequently the Millennium Falcon 7190, although I know I got that later when I had moved into my house. LEGO now became a Christmas thing at Black Horse Avenue. I would get a set for Christ-

mas, and after dinner we would build it, the X-wing was one such case, and soon I had other sets, such as the Christmas LEGO train. LEGO had moved into properties that were popular, 4708 Hogwarts Express was a 2003 set, and *Harry Potter* was huge, but the train set was not as popular as one thought, and I recall it being on sale in Smyths Toys, and picking up a couple, very cheap, and given it was a bit lame as a train, my intention was that I would build decent one from a number of sets, likewise, Spider-Man's Train Rescue 4855, rather like the film itself, looked mediocre, but I again, after a while, sets would need to be cleared and I bought a few at a ludicrous price, in order to change it into a proper subway train, that could run on tracks. These little expansions on a theme were entertaining and fun.





### *III: Bringing It to the Masses*

I combined LEGO into some SF fan activity elements, and I soon had James Shields helping involved in some LEGO projects. We had a “building session” at the science-fiction club one night, and we had battling robots utilizing LEGO at Octocon and incorporating it into what I was doing in science-fiction fandom more broadly where it fitted. Did this spur him on, I am not sure, but he confirmed that World City Cargo Train 4512 was his first purchase of this new era, soon his interest and passion would overtake mine, his dedication to the brick was huge, and he amassed a considerable amount of LEGO.

I had been asked to help with Paragon II, the 2005 Eastercon, at committee level at the end of 2002, which was kind of Fran Dowd to welcome me, and while LEGO was not a thing at the UK cons I had run at that stage, I got some LEGO elements together for Paragon.

One aspect was that there was the search for a children's program head for Glasgow 2005, and Stef and I were suggested, and sometime in 2004 we were recruited. This would be known as Young Adult Fun Activities, or YAFA and we had a ball. I had won the TAFF trip in 2004 to go to Boston, my first ever trip to the USA which was wonderful, despite my confluence of errors and lack of knowledge. I ended up helping the children's program with Persis Thorndike and Inger Myers at Noreastcon 4, and that was wonderful.

Stef and I were no doubt excitable, crazy, heavy drinking party people, and there was generally a murmur of amazement that parents would leave their children with us, but those who knew us, also knew we were professional in our crazy, and of course, LEGO featured. But first the chaos. I had been demanding a cyclotron for some time, a particle accelerator, to no avail and my requests to look at building a ram jet also had raised concerns, but this meant that things such as liquid-nitrogen ice cream and chopping up a real car with angle grinders and rollerblade quidditch had an easier time. As I sat thinking up crazy, I thought what would be great would be a centrifuge.

So the Harris Centrifuge was born. We decided to demonstrate the potential for this at Paragon II with two examples, a human-powered centrifuge with a child's bicycle and rope, which, to be blunt, went badly astray and proved very little, and I had built a model centrifuge using a circle of railway track, a train motor and LEGO. This went astray in a different way, as although it worked perfectly, the little mini-figuring rising on demonstrating the concept, the speed was too much and suddenly the cock pit as one might say, came off and went flying over everyone's head into the distance . . . I watched on some were horrified while the room was full of laughter. We adjusted our plans at this stage and entitled the project the Harris (memorial) centrifuge, basically laying blame at a co-chair for any unfortunate outcomes. It, like many of our ideas, did not fly, but minifigures did.

Bazooka and James Shields were huge help with YAFA along with my engineer fiancée Simoné, and so we had a LEGO train item. This involved a contrived layout that was a set of single track which was known as LEGO Train Devil's Crack, and we had a selection of train bases, upon which your WAR TRAINZ can be built and battled, while scientists Carolyn Daugherty and Emma J. King talked about the future scientific side of trains!

Equipment included: one track, lighter fluid, and a fire extinguisher. Trains sped at one another, destined to survive or be destroyed, goggles on, electricity to level 11.

LEGO went on to feature at the LA Con IV, where we built a massive board game on a tarpaulin, (a vital component of all cons) that had a mixture of dice, stats for vehicles and physical weapons in the spring-loaded catapult darts that at this stage LEGO had made. We had robots on one side and pirate ships on the other, and Steve Jackson himself came along to help and watch the large LEGO dice get rolled. Initially he made some adjustments, we all looked on as his mind figured out some unfairnesses and fixed them. This was a lot of fun, an ingenious idea.

I had moved to England in the Autumn of 2005 and into a room with Simoné and so, my LEGO stayed in Dublin. Eventually some of it would move to Croydon and my home, but not all, and I was busy with a new career, going through roles in the railway until I was a train driver, and then a little bit of college, buying a home, and getting married. It was wonderfully hectic, and there was no time really within all the good stuff for

LEGO, which I focused on at cons. Then life turned again, and I was living in a room, and then another, for nearly seven years.

LEGO featured then in Reno and especially in Chicago, again at the children's program which I was busy running and a favourite item as well as just letting the kids play with the LEGO was kids building LEGO sets that astronaut Story Musgrave then came along and graded individually, everyone was graded GOOD, and all got the prize of a NASA badge, and a photo with Story. he was delightful and had worked with LEGO previously, professionally. Dave McCarty had helped us out, and with only six weeks to go to the con, apart from resolving an error in the budget, he had extra cash, and our disposition was dynamic and pestering, so we got an increase and bought 90lbs of LEGO for \$900. And if you know anything about LEGO, you will know that is a steal.

My favourite moment was Story for sure, but not just him complementing the fact that someone had built a lifeboat into their space ship that could also store dead astronauts, but that as we zip locked the LEGO, the kids realized that they could take home their build, such excitement, and we even had to explain to parents, that YES, Chicon 7 was really letting their child take home the meager bag of LEGO, which happened to be the space ship or station that they built and that was judged as successful by astronaut Story Musgrave.

The Chicon LEGO got used in Texas and London, and some went back across the Atlantic to be used stateside, some went to Dublin 2019, the most travelled LEGO ever, the 90/lbs decreasing, and poor Steve Cooper lugging a 23kg bag of LEGO transatlantic style.



#### *IV: Steady as She Goes*

James Shields had skillfully built a class 332 train for me as a wedding present, in 2011, and this always took pride of place, no matter how little else I might be able to display. I had occasions where a set was found cheaply, or it was something that I could not resist, such as 10194: Emerald Night, a beautiful green steam train. I also picked up some. Trevor and Sue Ann in Melbourne had welcomed me to their home in 2009 and oh my goodness, was there some wondrousness there. LEGO appeared of course, I got a wonderful moving AT-AT as a wedding gift also, and those who knew me would point out the occasional set, but I was reluctant generally. My nephew and nieces were good recipients, with Duplo and then LEGO itself appearing, most recently it has been *Frozen*.

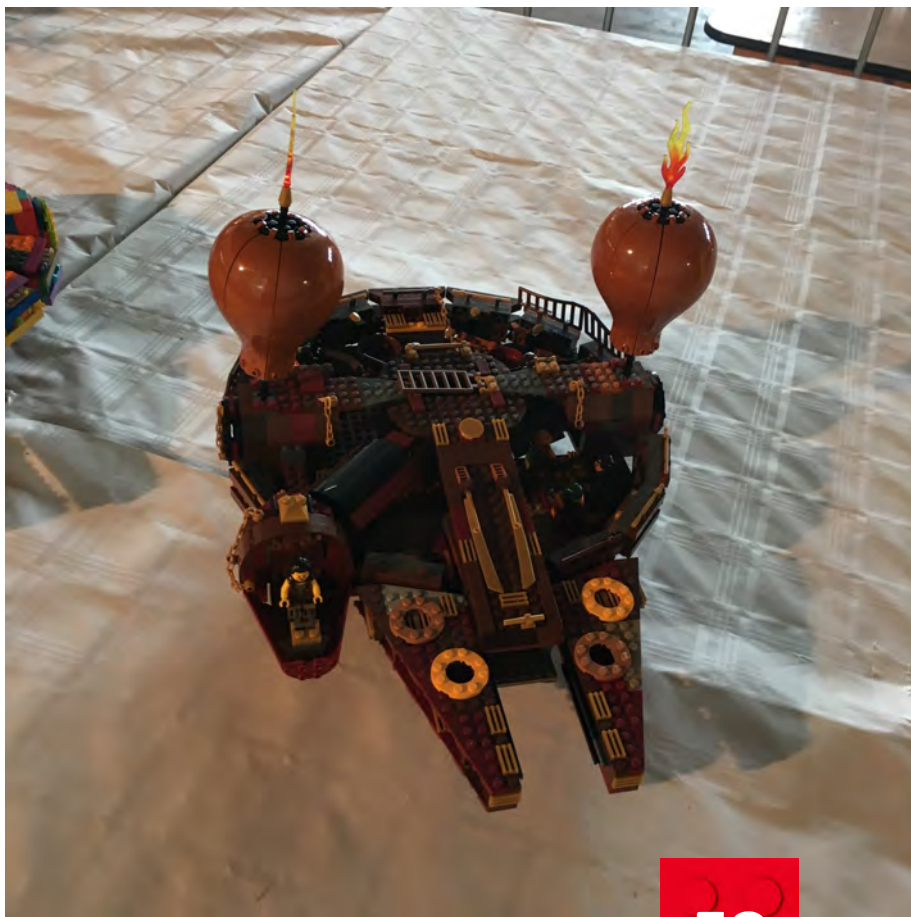
I had some busy years while living in bedrooms, and that did not end, as I moved

into the apartment with Dublin 2019 on the horizon. Of course, there would be and was LEGO at Dublin 2019, but James Shields surpassed himself, working very hard and vanning some incredibly massive Irish built dioramas to Worldcon. I spend a quiet moment looking at them, thoughtfully. Where was my time to build such wonderful imaginations or create the reality into miniature, as I stepped back so pleased to see this but back into the maelstrom all around me. I, of course, answered myself.



Timings worked well, and I moved into an apartment at the same time as I started to watch *Star Wars Rebels*. While I had bought a number of Millennium Falcons, mostly as gifts, I had not been buying all the LEGO *Star Wars* at all, indeed, I think considering how much was available, I was super restrained. Yet the *Rebels* story was so good, and I was inclined to track down some of the set. I should get some *Rogue One* sets as that is a real favorite, and probably more from the sequels, but I did not. I was always so very pleased with the 332, and well, even the *Solo* Millennium Falcon was the Millennium Falcon.

I had quite badly envied James and others with the collector's edition of the Millennium Falcon, 10179, and it was a beautiful set, 75192 had come out in more recent times, and the occasion of a second marriage meant that a little LEGO was forthcoming and indeed, this was my wedding present. Quite astonishing.



James had started making his own creations, or MOCs in 2006, and while aiding me to find trains that I still secretly desired, such as 7740, he was building models to a professional standard, his post office, Drogheda viaduct, and trains were so impressive. As the train I was now teaching on had changed from a 332 to a 387, James agreed to build one as a unique and highly time-consuming task, for which I am grateful and this is an ongoing MOC project, which is going really well. In the interim he built a beautiful GNRi Class S class steam locomotive, which sits nicely with the Emerald Night. A wonderful gift.



*The Mandalorian* blew me away, and so for Christmas 2020, the Razor Crest was the Christmas build and that was really nice.

Catching up with LEGO has given me pause for thought. I flirt and dally with it, I enjoyed attending some events, and must get to the next Steam LEGO Show, which is in Swindon in a railway museum. I was super impressed with Ed Dimant's USS Intrepid which I saw while visiting said ship in New York and missed out on a Class 800 Hitachi model and the Maersk, but such is the way, and really how can they compare to the 332. I enjoy it, and like to share it, and admit that I may not have the time or patience for a big build, but if I get time, I think I shall get the trains I do have, running at least, albeit on 9v.

# 7740



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## It's a Start by Chuck Serface

**M**y childhood hobbies included watching cartoons and superhero shows, with a side of horror movies during weekends. When feeling energetic, I'd hit my oldest brother up for rides to Bob Sidebottom's Comic Collector Shop where I'd stock up for what I was doing when not watching cartoons, superhero shows, or horror movies – reading comics. Sports? Boy Scouts? Models? LEGO? Had I been I born a decade and a half later, I would have been Arnold Schwarzenegger's worst nightmare: the lazy kid who couldn't give a thin runny stool sample about fitness campaigns. My attitude toward hobbies almost mirrors *Say Anything* protagonist Lloyd Dobler's attitude toward choosing a career, since even if I never sold, repaired, processed comics, I did buy them:

I don't want to sell anything, buy anything, or process anything as a career. I don't want to sell anything bought or processed, or buy anything sold or processed, or process anything sold, bought, or processed, or repair anything sold, bought, or processed. You know, as a career, I don't want to do that.

At 56, however, I'm more industrious, well-traveled, and loving new pursuits. I've grown curious about LEGO, for example, a phenomenon that has evolved over decades from boxes of odd bricks haunting toy closets into elaborately designed sets, reality-television competitions, and theme parks. Hell, yes, online retailer, show me what's available! I selected a 7380-piece Notre Dame model, not LEGO but developed and marketed by KLMEi, a Chinese outfit that focuses on architectural wonders and cityscapes. Other than Notre Dame, they offer the Taj Mahal, Big Ben, the United States Capitol, the Tokyo Skyline, the San Francisco Skyline, and for a twist, the Titanic. But my empathy for Quasimodo won out, and Notre Dame rang my bells more loudly than all other choices.



Within days, my kit arrived, and upon opening the box I discovered many bags filled with very tiny, LEGO-esque bricks, what KLMEi calls “micro-bricks.” I could see that this task would require patience, since I’d be sorting tiny pieces out of these bags step by



step, and this what I'll call a three-dimensional puzzle was laid out in 75 steps, so . . . patience. To facilitate that process, I added my first piece of equipment, a measuring cup to help me sift through different blocks of the same color . . . lots of tiny blocks the same color . . . where did I lay my specs?

After sorting out the first few steps, I finally began building, next adding to my builder's arsenal tweezers for positioning blocks into their correct crevices and scissors for prying up said blocks when placed incorrectly. Friends, my hands were made possibly for LEGO, most certainly for DUPLO, not micro-bricks. I possess no fine-motor skills. When dining with me, note how I hold cutlery, or maybe observe how I handle writing implements when signing documents. And these micro-bricks are DELICATE, wafer-thin entities, lending this process an intricate, ship-in-a-bottle feel. Add precision to the patience to the list of attributes necessary for KLMEi constructions.



**“For me, stories are like Lego blocks. If I don't put one down, I can't put the next one down.”**

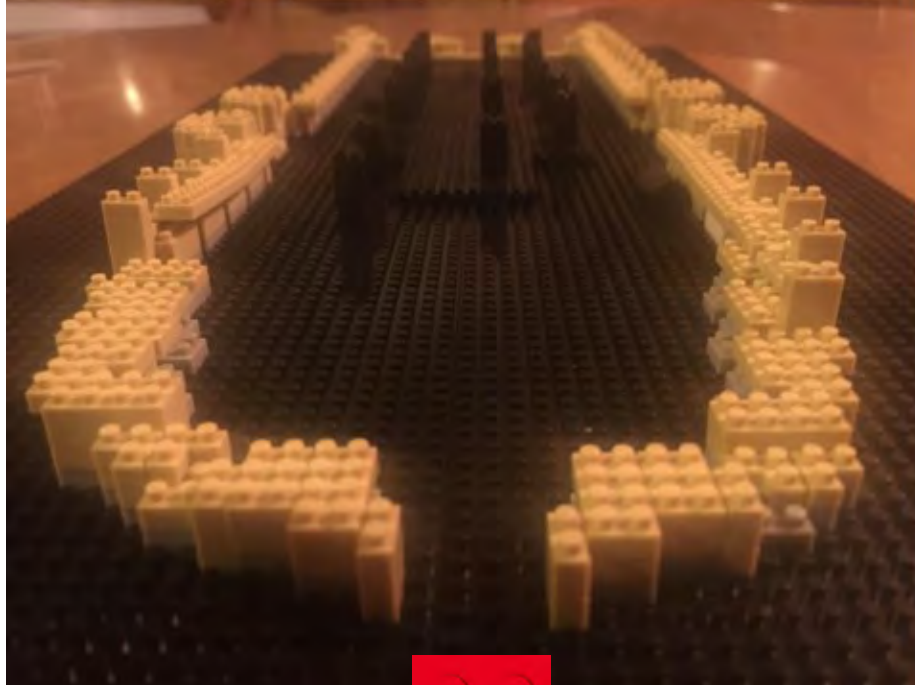
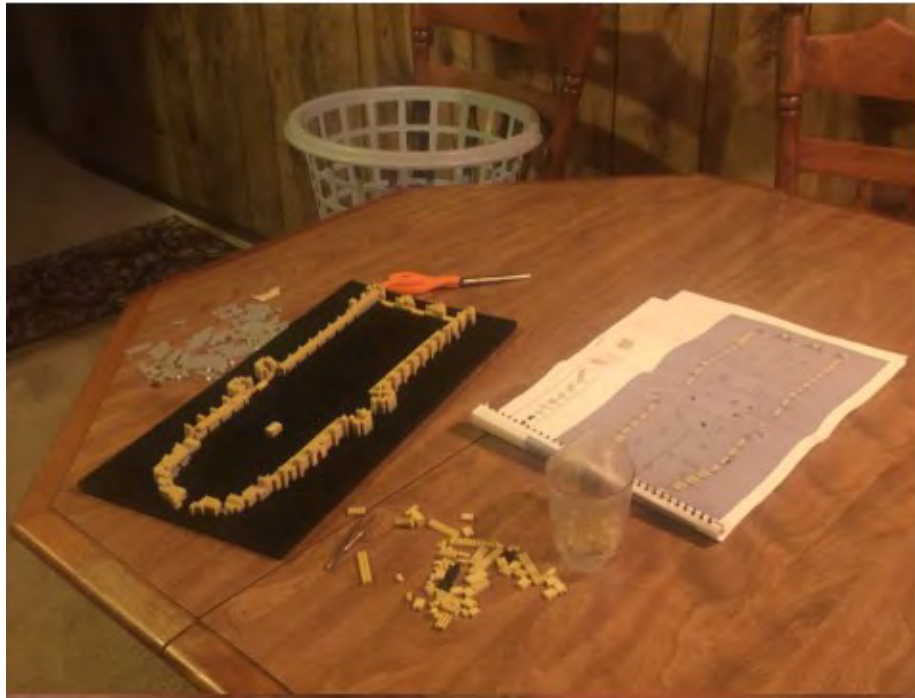
**Om Malik**



So far, I've completed five out of seventy-five steps. The instructions are color coded, layer by layer, and once progress occurs the diagrams become slightly confusing. I'm underway, however. Do I feel enthusiastic? Not really. Do I feel dissuaded or defeated? Also, not really. This project is something I'll pull out when motivated. One serious issue involves ergonomics. After a five-hour session hunched above my dining room table, my back was wrecked. Hello, my screaming latissimus dorsi. I'll have to formulate a work area that doesn't challenge my mobility.

It took architects, masons, and laborers 182 years to finish the real Notre Dame. I'd love to feel the accomplishment from completing such a task, albeit on a miniature scale. Indeed, I'm a bit envious of my LEGO-obsessed friends and really any maker who achieves such creative victories. But knowing myself, a reasonable and merciful goal for finishing this KLMEi scale knockoff is any time before I'm headlining séances

or Ouija planchettes. I might fail that, so I'll will it to a deserving heir, the one who decides decorative plates or jam-of-the-month clubs make fabulous holiday gifts. I am taking notes.





# What *LEGO Masters* Does Right. So Very Right.

by Christopher J. Garcia

**T**he power of LEGO is that it has little to no bounds. Kids of all kinds, and grownups of several kinds, love LEGO, either as a plaything or as an art medium. That latter is a big thing, as LEGO is naturally sculptural, and when the need for “play” ends, the need for artistic expression increases, right?

(Note: maybe I’m the only one, but I still “play” with LEGO)

So, whoever conceived of *LEGO Masters*, a reality show along the lines of *Top Chef* or maybe *The Great British Bake-off*, is a freakin’ genius. It’s a show that kids can get into because it’s a show that grownups playing with LEGOs. It’s a show adults who are reality fans can latch on to because it’s got that same structure, along with a brilliant host, and wonderful artistic creations. It’s something I can get into because Will Arnett is hilarious.

It’s also perfectly structured with the most cutting-edge form of television representation.

Let’s look at the teams of the first season!

**Tyler and Amy:** An adorable Midwestern married couple.

**Boone and Mark:** Bearded friends from Oregon.

**Samuel and Jessica:** Artists friends who are VERY Portland, and oddly neither of them is from Portland.

**Christian and Aaron:** Friends, who are of the jock-nerd type.

**Flynn and Richard:** Married and from the great state of Oakland!!!

**Mel and Jermaine:** A pair of African-American friends.

**Krystle and Amie:** Cosplayers who are friends.

**Manny and Nestor:** Puerto Rican father and son.

**Travis and Corey:** African-American brothers.

**Jessie and Kara:** Friends who both are walking definitions of the “Karen.”

That’s a diverse cast, but more importantly it has the elements that you want for a feel-good show. A same-sex couple who are underdogs (they’re wonderfully neurotic), and a married couple who are just every kind of endearing. There’s Boone and Mark, who have the kind of genial jolliness that I have been known to trade in. There’s Samuel and Jessica, who are the hippies, and it’s fairly certain that Jessica ended up as the first crush for many of the young viewers. There’s Manny and Nestor, who are wonderful, and though they weren’t around for long, they were the ones that got to be the heart in the first few episodes. There’s the team of the hunk and nebbish young guy who are available to make all the young women swoon. Then there’s Krystle and Amie. They’re the dreamy cosplay girls who are clearly Instagram starlets. They’re awe-

some, though they bounced too early, and Amie is absolutely dreamy. She's an amazing builder, but I don't think the judges and or producers got the style the pair of them presented as much as I did.

That idea, that you have to have a cast that cuts across demographics is important to the success of a show with audiences, and with critics, you have to have good writing and even better editing. The idea of crushing a twelve-hour build into a fifty-two-minute episode, but then you have to allot time to judging and host-vamping. This is much harder than you'd think, and more importantly, it means you have to build your challenges to be crunchable.

The smartest ones they did first season were the destruction challenge, where you had to build a space-themed design that broke apart in a fascinating way. The breaking part made for a simple to present reveal, all you really had to do was present the breaking part, you didn't need nearly as much context talking. There was the episode where they had to build a bridge and then they put weight on it until it broke, That's an easy-to-grasp concept, and visually appealing.

And maybe that's what the show gets best - it has to be dynamic. The idea of destroying a build is strange, but it's also fun and dynamic, whereas traditional builds are more-or-less static. Taking LEGO to movement, even in the way of destruction, adds to the watchability, and re-watchability, of *LEGO Masters*.





The Art in this issue? There's a lot of it, right?

The Cover is by Karl Applegate and Benji Applegate, age 6.

Andrew Wales provided the art on pages 2, 10, 22, 24, 43, and 68.

Chris Garcia took the pics on the cover, 57, and 58.

Anne Packard gave us the fine piece on page 60.

Mathew Appleton, Chuck Serface, and James Shields send along the photos and work they've done with their articles.

The next Drink Tank will be... The Occult issue!!! Deadline is December 1 if you've got anything for it!

Comments?

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