



LEGO® Idea House

The LEGO Museum, a walk through the history of the company

Text and pictures by lluisgib

Behind this evocative name we can find what is considered the Museum of the LEGO® Company. Situated in the middle of Billund, this building reflects the company's history, and also you can find inside some rooms where different creative activities are taking place. This museum is reserved for visitors to the company, so it is not open to the general public.

We enter a series of rooms which offer, in a retrospective way, an overview of the evolution of the company. The explanations are shown on information panels that make up the walls of museum, as well as audiovisual media and LEGO products.

There are three main areas, one for each of the three owners the company has had until today.

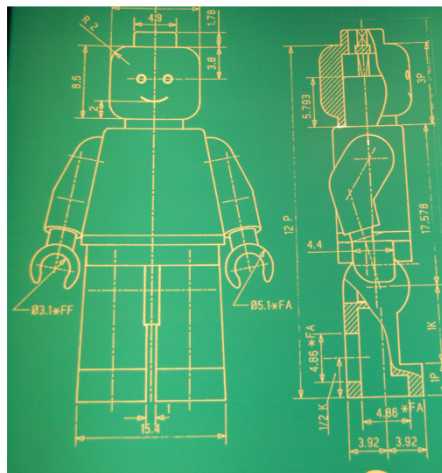
Ole Kirk Kristiansen - Founder of the LEGO ® Company.

Godtfred Kirk Christiansen - The visionary who bet for plastic bricks.

Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen - Current owner and who has led the company to modern times.

The Kjeld Kirk area is the most recent one and it is where I could recognize more sets. The lighting comes from many backlit panels that offer a cosy atmosphere. In this great hall you can find a description of the evolution of the toy and the different lines, like City, Castle, Star Wars ... As important facts in this period, some drawings are shown with the Minifig design or different models of the MINDSTORMS world. There is also information about the Community of LEGO Fans in the world. It is filled with artwork, shelves and tables full of models and displays. Someone might have palpitations seeing a MISB Monorail 6399 ... There are some walls with a "secret". You can open them and find some outstanding sculptures that artists have made especially for the company. The audiovisual media shows production processes, images of events or TV ads from different eras.

We leave the "Today" and enter the time tunnel to



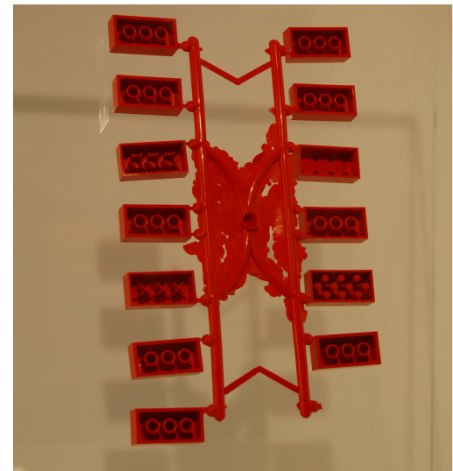
get to the Godtfred area. Here you can find the models with which the brick was born and raised. For example, there is a city fitted with 50's and 60's models, with the typical one piece car and flat trees. Also, we can see the evolution from these models to constructions made with bricks, the arrival of the first figures (from the Homemaker line), the first trains, ships ... Some photographs show the production processes from that time. In a glass display case you can see the famous patent for the Brick, which celebrated its 50th anniversary last year and was the corner stone of the expansion and consolidation of the company.

At the end of Godtfred area, you can find one of the first injection machines that were used by the company, along with an old cast and some "recent" demoulded parts. It is a clear example of the inflection point of the company, which before this

time produced mainly wooden toys. That is the time we will dive into next.

We are now in the early 30s, in the house where Ole Kirk founded the company. Yes, the Idea House includes a modern building, which connects to the birthplace of LEGO®. We find an office, where Ole Kirk founded and took the reins of the company in the early years. Just in front of it, a showcase which displays some of the wooden LEGO toys manufactured in the companies early stages and also other types of toys like a precursor of a GBC made of wood. We find, of course, the famous duck which, although it is not the first toy LEGO launched, has become a symbol of that period. Some of the tools used to make those old toys are exhibited as well.

After this tour through the history of LEGO, there are



still some interesting things to visit. First we entered into a small room where imitation models that other brands have made are exhibited. It's funny to find very old reproductions as well as boxes that really are the original ones with just a different logo and reference, although the contents are not quite the same...

After this room there is a small area with some sculptures and a guestbook, which I was honoured to sign as a witness to my visit.

Finally, when I think the visit is over, another door opens and I see some stairs that descend into a basement, where there is a door with an encrypted security lock. Behind that door you can find a room full of sliding shelves. At the top of each shelf there is a figure showing one or more years. By moving one of the shelves, the world opens before my eyes. It's

the Vault! The famous warehouse which contains one unit of each LEGO® set that has come on the market (actually it contains 98% of the sets). I'm fascinated with everything that I find there; sets that I have never known, sets of my childhood which I had and played with when I was a boy of 7 or 8, promotions, special boxes, posters ... Paradise. No more, no less.

Unfortunately we have to leave the Vault, but my retina (and in my camera) retain the impressive image of all those mythical sets together.

Now the visit ends. We walk through the museum in the opposite direction (chronologically this time), leaving behind this building full of history. In just over half an hour, we have travelled through 76-year history. The story of perhaps the most famous, and for sure, the most creative toy in the world. ■