

Modular Integrated Landscaping System (VI)

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It has been a few years since we published the first article on MILS. Now that we have built several hundred modules that cover an area of over 10m2, it is time to add certain complements that make it look even better.



Decorative trim

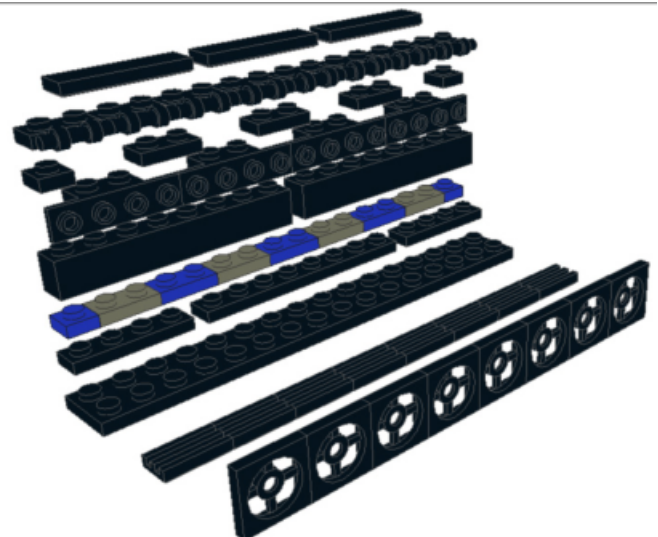
One of the main problems when setting up displays is the variety of colours that can be seen on the sides of the MILS modules - on the one hand the identifiers and on the other hand the colours of the pieces used for the sides.

The visual effect is that of a veritable rainbow of colours that contrasts with the harmony of the terrain and the scenes of the display and, quite honestly, don't look very good, so we decided to build some elements to improve the overall look of the displays we build.

Since there are many different ways these frontal elements can be built and creating a standard would be tedious and complex, we simply decided on a common model we all could build to get a homogeneous look. So rather than setting a standard we will show you the model we have decided on for our displays and we hope it may serve as a guide for those who are building their displays with the MILS system.

The idea was to take a colour that stands out, but can be used for any kind of display, be it sand, grass or snow. So we decided on black. Each section is 16 studs long and high enough to cover the base of the modules. The sections need to connect to each other in a simple way and are placed in front of the modules without any kind of connection to the latter.

We chose the design you can see in image 1 and we have replicated it until we obtained the necessary number to cover the front of the displays. We have also built a special section that allows us to include the title of the display, but still follows the design of the other sections.



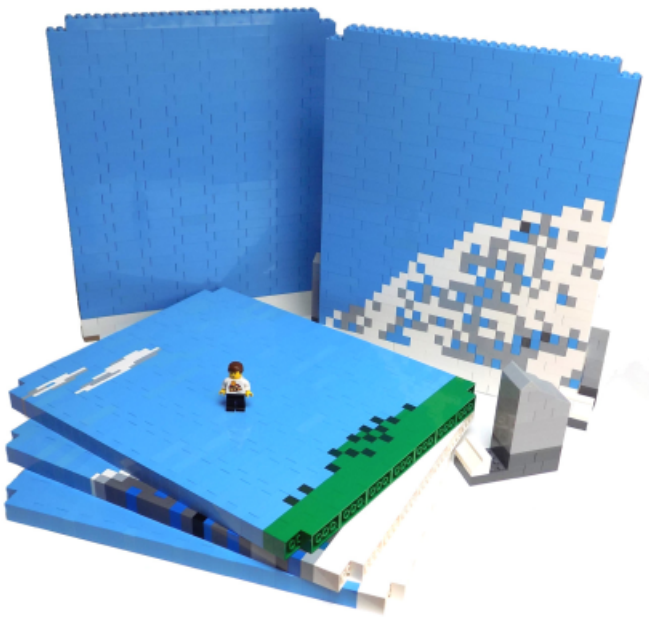
Graphic 1: frontal decorative trim scheme.

Background panels

Another complement we have built to improve our displays are background panels.

During the many exhibitions we have done with the MILS system, one of the recurring suggestions we received from visitors was that of creating some kind of background, which would also especially improve the quality of the pictures taken of those displays. In general, unless the display was placed against a wall, the backdrop of the scenes used to be us sitting or standing behind them, which did not particularly enhance the pictures taken ;-)

Although originally the idea was to make panels from cardboard or some similar material, in the end we decided to try to make a modular panel system, built with LEGO bricks, that would allow us to grow as the size of the displays increase. It would be interchangeable so it could be set up with a different configuration each time we set up a display.



Our starting point were 32 stud wide panels in which we used mosaic techniques to include some landscape details in such a way as to maintain modularity. Since 32 studs is also the width of a standard MILS module it would fit perfectly with any layout and in smaller layouts we could choose what background design to use. Making them 1 stud thick resulted in very fragile panels, especially towards the top. The panels were not heavy enough to stay up in the supports, so we decided to go for 2 stud thick panels.

The next issue was deciding their height. The first panels we built were 48 bricks tall, but they required a lot of material. An even more important consideration was the fact that it was hard to make the panels align at the top since often the tables on which the displays are built are not perfectly horizontal. Add to this the "sail effect" - panels swaying because of drafts - and it became clear the modules needed to be lower. We tried 40, 30, 32 bricks tall... after much trial and error, the height we were most satisfied with was 34, leaving the lower 3 as the limit for the horizon. Why 34 bricks high? Well, that was a perfect fit with the boxes we use for transporting them. An important consideration! And since they are LEGO elements the height can easily be adapted later on.

By carefully planning the mosaic details in each panel so they don't affect the panels next to it, panels become completely interchangeable and can even be placed facing either forwards or backwards, so you can create a different landscape for each exhibition without any effort. A dozen panels could result in many different combinations of landscapes.



Panels supports. Each panel is held by two supports, one in each extreme. And each support is used by two adjacent panels.

We chose the Hoth display to test our panels at the HispaBrick Magazine Event 2015 and the result was very good. Although the tables were very irregular, the panels stayed upright during the whole events.

At the last minute we incorporated an additional row of modules in the display and so we were 1 panel short for the background. We simply took off the top two

rows of bricks from the existing modules and quickly built an additional panel. As soon as we get more blue bricks the panels will regain their original height of 34 bricks!

The result was satisfactory, and in time we hope to add more similar panels to the rest of our displays.
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