

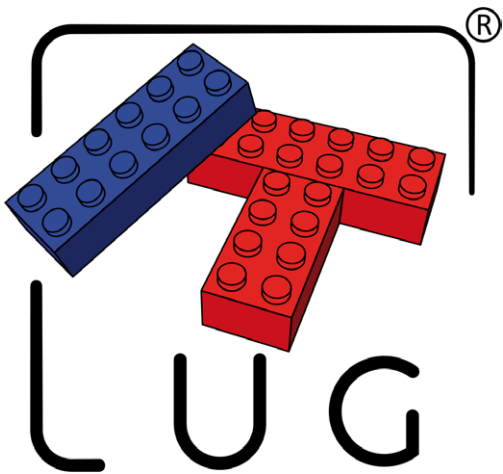


1999



2019

ItLUG compie vent'anni!
LEGO House — 24 giugno 2019



by Jetro de Château

HispaBrick Magazine has a long standing relationship with ItLUG, the Italian LEGO Users Group. That LUG name that was chosen when there were no other Italian LUGs and a national LUG was set up. That relationship is based in part on the fact that we live in the same part of Europe and have similar cultures.

The original members of ItLUG met on LUGNET in 1999. Back then LUGNET was the place to be, for AFOLs. Seeing other groups being created, it seemed natural to come up with an Italian one too, and that's how ItLUG was created. The purpose was to have an Italian community, of course, and initially it was very MINDSTORMS oriented (but the first System people arrived very quickly!) The LUG started meeting privately in what was called "LEGO Fest" (as it was still possible to use the word 'LEGO' back then), and soon these meetings became public and turned into events. Their first international event was held in 2005 held in Turin (with AFOLs coming from France and with... Jan Beyer!) In 2006 they started their event in Ballabio (now Lecco) which over time has become their main event, and always has AFOLs coming from all over Europe (a certain Lluís Gibert, editor for HispaBrick Magazine was one of the first!)

Today, ItLUG is still the Italian national LUG, even though there are many other LUGs and communities now (local or specialized) so the

original purpose of the community is still the same. Ten years ago ItLUG also became an official association and that came with an official goal: "promote the passion for the LEGO brick by facilitating exchange of information and experiences among fans, also through online resources, events and media". And they are still doing that today.

Francesco Spreafico, the current ambassador for ItLUG comments: "Right now we have about 450 members in the LUG. By law we have a board



"Io taglierei la corda", by dabol_it



ItLUG members around "Il Pirellone", a LUG community project

that's elected every three years and is composed of seven members: the president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary and three regular members. Of course not all of these 450 people are active, but many of them are. Some organize events, some participate in events, some write on the forum, and some help in other ways. We intend to continue organizing events (well, after COVID-19) and promoting the LEGO brick in any way that we can.

By the way, ItLUG wasn't always called ItLUG, and for a very brief time the founders played with the idea of calling it ILM—Italian LEGO Maniacs. Luckily, they settled for ItLUG!

When asked about the future of the LUG, Francesco says: "We've noticed that our numbers have been constant for a few years now. . . some people don't renew (being a member of ItLUG comes with a 20 € yearly fee), but the same number of people join us. It would be nice to reach more people, but 450 is not a small number, so it's probably okay. We expect to have



"Giostrina", by FiveCraft

*** itlug.org**

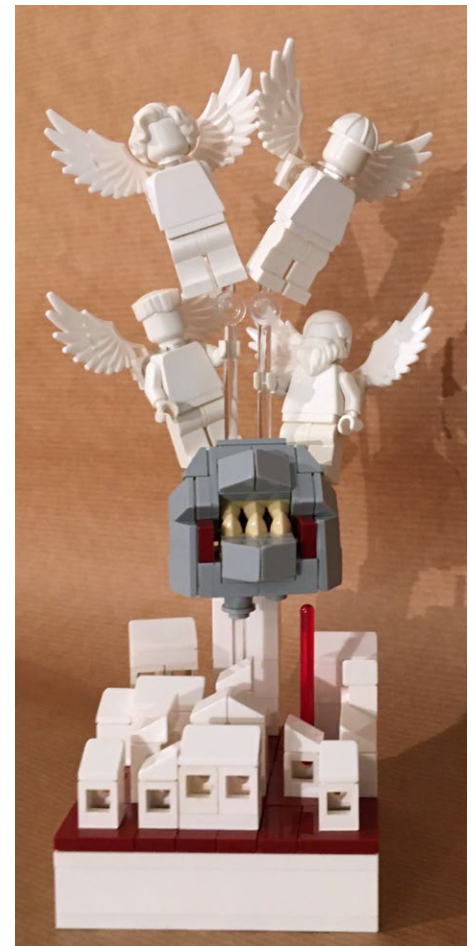
fewer members next year since now everything is cancelled and generally events are where we recruit new members. Luckily it's not going to be an economic problem for us (all our events have free admission), but it might affect the number of new members. . . it'll probably take two or three years to recover from that. But it's okay, it could have been worse.

Most of our activities normally are physical events, but we also have an online forum, so we used that to launch a few special contests related to lockdown. We generally have a few contests every year anyway, but with the first of these special ones we've had a level of participation that we'd never seen before (this was during the actual lockdown, back in April). We did consider online events and meetings, but eventually decided not to proceed (at least for now, we'll see how long this situation will go on)."

We also asked Francesco about the ItLUG logo: "Our logo was created by one of our first members, Domenico Franco, back in 2001. They had a few proposals and this was the winner, though the logo pictured is an updated version which Domenico made in 2011. You might ask: "Why is it white, red and blue and not white, red and green like the Italian flag?" It's a good question. Some people used to say that the reason was that there was no green brick in the early 1960s (a time people generally associate with the 'original' LEGO colors) but the real answer was, simply: "we liked it more this way"."

ItLUG is a Recognised LEGO User Group (RLUG), so we asked Francesco to tell us a little about their relationship with LEGO. "I think our relationship with LEGO Billund is great. Much better than when I started as an ambassador. But I'm

biased because I often go to Billund (except this year), and I can talk to everybody in person, so I understand LUGs that are based far away and can't do that and miss the personal aspect of the relationship (the LAN is great, but nothing beats meeting in person). I'm not sure something could be done about that. . . except having the AFOL Engagement Team travel more all around the world! At the moment we don't have any kind of relationship with LEGO Italy. . . this was about to change, a meeting was about to happen, when COVID-19 struck (again). So now everything's suspended there too."



"Virus", by vedosololeg0