

"All in all it's just another brick in the wall."Friday, 18 March 2011 - 23:43

[Publications \(http://ka-go.net/blog/feed/\)](http://ka-go.net/blog/feed/)

[Comments \(http://ka-go.net/blog/comments/feed/\)](http://ka-go.net/blog/comments/feed/)

- [Blog \(http://ka-go.net/blog/\)](http://ka-go.net/blog/)
- [AFOLville \(http://ka-go.net/blog/afolville/\)](http://ka-go.net/blog/afolville/)
- [About \(http://ka-go.net/blog/about/\)](http://ka-go.net/blog/about/)

Search

[Ka-GO \(http://ka-go.net/blog/\)](http://ka-go.net/blog/)

Bill Ward Breaks Down 2011's Bricks By The Bay

<http://ka-go.net/blog/author/ka-lego/> ka.lego (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/kalego/>) on March 18, 2011 — [Leave a Comment \(http://ka-go.net/blog/meet/bill-ward-breaks-down-2011s-bricks-by-the-bay/#comments\)](http://ka-go.net/blog/meet/bill-ward-breaks-down-2011s-bricks-by-the-bay/#comments)



In less than one week on Thursday, March 24, 2011, more than 250 FOLs will gather at Santa Clara, CA's Hyatt Regency for a late-night setup session. The event? The second [Bricks by the Bay](#)

<http://www.bricksbythebay.com>) convention celebrating all-things-LEGO. The only convention of its kind here in the Bay Area will truly kick off with its core programming on Friday, March 25 at 9am with a series of breakout sessions where fans can focus on roundtables, workshops, and presentations on the aspects of the hobby that interest them the most. Truth be told, this will be my first LEGO convention ever, so I wanted to get a better sense of what I was getting myself into. I went straight to [Bill Ward \(http://www.brickpile.com\)](http://www.brickpile.com), one of the event's co-founders and key organizers, to provide readers (and myself) with an overview of the entire Bricks by the Bay phenomenon.

Would you mind introducing yourself for our readers and explaining how your AFOL life got swept into this huge endeavor, Bricks by the Bay? What's the "Readers Digest" version of how this whole thing began?

I've been an active [LEGO builder \(http://www.flickr.com/photos/billward/\)](http://www.flickr.com/photos/billward/) and [BayLUG \(http://www.baylug.org/\)](http://www.baylug.org/) (Bay Area LEGO Users Group) member since around 2001 and attended the BricksWest conventions near LEGOLAND California in 2002 and 2003. After that experience I had the idea of having a convention here in the Bay Area. [Russell Clark \(http://www.baylug.org/russellc/index.html\)](http://www.baylug.org/russellc/index.html), BayLUG's founder and then-president, also had the same idea, and we both came up with the name "Bricks by the Bay" independently. We'd both talked and thought about it for some time over the years, after organizing the LEGO presence at the National Model Railroader Association convention in Anaheim in 2008, Russell started talking about organizing a convention for the Bay Area. I got involved with the project then, and when Russell moved to Manteca I took over the leadership role and formed a nonprofit organization along with Bruce Chamberlain and Loren Merrell; we got a hotel contract with the hotel Russell had found, and it all sort of snowballed from there.

This is actually going to be my first LEGO convention. For those of us who are unfamiliar, what can we expect from an event like this?

There are two main aspects to the event—the three-day convention for LEGO fans, hobbyists, artists, etc., and the public day on Sunday.

For the [convention on Friday and Saturday \(http://www.bricksbythebay.com/wordpress/convention/schedule/\)](http://www.bricksbythebay.com/wordpress/convention/schedule/), we will have a variety of talks, roundtables, presentations, games, and contests. Friday evening we have a keynote speaker from LEGO. Saturday we have an award ceremony where attendees get custom engraved badges, and the winners of the awards will receive special trophies made of LEGO. There are LEGO sets and other goodies being given out all three days as door prizes, and of course we will spend a lot of time setting up our models on display on the various themed tables around the convention hall in preparation for Sunday's public show. But the main benefit of

the convention is the social one – you get a chance to meet a variety of people with similar interests to your own, and hopefully be inspired to take your LEGO building in new directions and to new levels.



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/billward/4562912736/>

The **Public Expo on Sunday** (<http://www.bricksbythebay.com/wordpress/public-expo/>) gives the attendees a chance to share their creations with the masses. We'll be open from 10am to 4pm (last entry at 3pm) for \$8 per person (2 and under free). The ballroom is over 12,000 square feet featuring models in a variety of themes from spacecraft to castles, from trains to sculptures.

And attendees for both the convention and the public day get to **visit our vendors** (<http://www.bricksbythebay.com/register/roster/?type=vendor>) who will be selling LEGO sets and parts, and a variety of LEGO related products.

Last year was quite successful. I heard about it late and considered attending the public day. I'd heard that the response was overwhelming. It sounds like this year, you're taking this into consideration. What's been done to try and accommodate the larger crowds? Why do you think that this sort of event piques the interest of the general public so much?

The hotel we were at last year was a lot smaller, and we outgrew it before we even opened the door to the public. But an event like this has to grow in stages, since there are a lot of upfront costs in staging it. We were conservative in our budgeting for the 2010 event, and were overwhelmed by the response as you say, both on the convention side (we really didn't have enough space in the ballroom for everything we were showing) and from the public (people standing in line for hours in the rain just to get in). This year, we're at a **much, much larger facility** (<http://www.bricksbythebay.com/wordpress/getting-there/>), in a ballroom shared with a large convention center, so we are hopeful that we won't have so much of a challenge accommodating everyone. Our exhibit hall layout has 15 foot aisles between tables, and the convention center has a large parking garage, and plenty of indoor space where people standing in line can wait comfortably. We're also hiring the services of a security firm to help with the crowds, rather than running our volunteers and hotel staff ragged to manage the lines and crowds.

I think LEGO is a universal draw for kids, because it's a favorite toy for them and to see the large exhibits shows them just how far their toys can be taken as a hobby or art form. I think it inspires a lot of kids to build things that are far more ambitious than they ever thought possible. The bright colors and cute minifigs are a big help of course. And for adults, they can appreciate the artistic and humorous sides of our creations, and it often builds a nostalgia for their own childhood fascination with LEGO. And as with the kids, we hope to inspire the adults to take up the bricks themselves and get involved in LEGO as an art form or hobby.

You've got a great team of folks working on this huge event. Can you give us outsiders a sense of all the work that goes on behind the scenes and how one goes about getting such a huge undertaking off the ground?

We've drawn from the ranks of the local LEGO community, mainly members of [BayLUG \(http://www.baylug.org/\)](http://www.baylug.org/), to make the job easier by spreading it around—*"many hands make light work."* We've been having planning meetings every two weeks for the past few months, with each person reporting on the progress of the areas for which they are responsible. Each of the theme areas (e.g. Space, Town/Train, Art, Robotics/Technic) has one or more coordinators who plan out the display space and awards for that theme. We also have people in charge of audio/visual and logistics



[\(http://www.flickr.com/photos/billward/5046088780/in/photostream/\)](http://www.flickr.com/photos/billward/5046088780/in/photostream/)

What do you think are some of the highlights of this year's program?

It's hard to say what people will bring. We had several large, impressive models last year, and I'm sure the same will be true this year. I know we're going to have Marcello de Cicco's [Japanese Navy WWII ships \(http://www.flickr.com/photos/billward/5046088780/in/photostream/\)](http://www.flickr.com/photos/billward/5046088780/in/photostream/) (Yamato and Yukikaze) again (last year's Public Choice winner), and some of Mark Benz's models that were stolen and recovered just in time for the convention last year. The Bricks of Character theme will be there again, with some creative interpretations of famous people and elements of pop culture, which was a big hit last year. I'm sure there are a lot of other impressive models both large and small—you'll just have to come and see!

But I think the biggest highlight is the critical mass that happens when you fill a large space with creative people and their creations.

Any hint as to what the event kit will be?

A flying cable car. The theme is "Creative Combinations" so we decided to take something that's a local landmark and mash it up with a futuristic rocket ship, drawing inspiration from my [Lunar School Bus \(http://www.flickr.com/photos/billward/2853612605/\)](http://www.flickr.com/photos/billward/2853612605/) model. And we're having a special "Pimp Your Event Kit" contest, for people who make a custom version of the event kit.

What's your take on the general state of the hobby and the FOL community? Any indication of particular growth areas? For example, are there any themes or new aspects of the hobby (eg. LEGO Universe) that seem to signal any changes?

It's growing like crazy. The only downside is that I think things are really fragmented, but I suppose that's a natural side effect of the massive growth we've had in the community. There are one or two new conventions every year and it never seems to adversely affect the existing ones.

As the convention rounds the corner and you're in the midst of what I imagine is a stressful yet fun workload, any reflections on how big you'd like this event to get in the future? I'm thinking about things like Comic-Con that started out really tiny and have become something completely unrecognizable in terms of scale and would love to get your thoughts. Where would you like to see Bricks by the Bay in, say, the next 10 years?

I actually am pretty happy with it the size that it is. I would be happy to double the size, but beyond that would require a lot more work and our all-volunteer system would probably not scale beyond that. As it is, it's taking up almost all of my spare time, and some time that isn't really spare to be honest. Since there are LEGO conventions in so many parts of the country, and more every year, I would expect most of the growth to be in that direction, rather than in each convention becoming huge. There's only one Comic-Con, by contrast. Once an event grows beyond a certain size, it becomes very difficult to take it all in.

For more information about the upcoming [Bricks by the Bay \(http://www.bricksbythebay.com\)](http://www.bricksbythebay.com) convention, including online registration or to buy a ticket for the Public Day, please visit the [official website \(http://www.bricksbythebay.com\)](http://www.bricksbythebay.com). If you do attend, please be sure to stop by the [Ka-GO \(http://www.ka-go.net/blog\)](http://www.ka-go.net/blog) vendor table and say, "Hello." to receive a free gift.

Posted in [Meet \(http://ka-go.net/blog/section/meet/\)](http://ka-go.net/blog/section/meet/) | Tagged [AFOL \(http://ka-go.net/blog/tag/afol/\)](http://ka-go.net/blog/tag/afol/), [Bay Area \(http://ka-go.net/blog/tag/bay-area/\)](http://ka-go.net/blog/tag/bay-area/), [BAYLUG \(http://ka-go.net/blog/tag/baylug/\)](http://ka-go.net/blog/tag/baylug/), [Bricks by the Bay \(http://ka-go.net/blog/tag/bricks-by-the-bay/\)](http://ka-go.net/blog/tag/bricks-by-the-bay/), [community \(http://ka-go.net/blog/tag/community/\)](http://ka-go.net/blog/tag/community/), [convention \(http://ka-](http://ka-go.net/blog/tag/convention/)

Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Email (required)

Website

« [You'd Have Me Down On My Knees Wouldn't You, Baracuda?](http://ka-go.net/blog/seen/you-d-have-me-down-on-my-knees-wouldnt-you-baracuda/) (<http://ka-go.net/blog/seen/you-d-have-me-down-on-my-knees-wouldnt-you-baracuda/>)

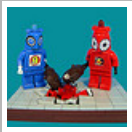
Ka-GO Flickr Group



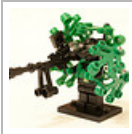
(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5300/5534384292_5fce26a640.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5012/5533802033_52b601ef12.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5295/5534300700_8be326c338.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5091/5534256400_2ab9f5536e.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5140/5531254122_9e12ab458d.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5132/5531214708_c6ca2da03b.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5140/5530410298_e5cd919936.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5177/5529568553_0a94a4d372.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5260/5527932144_1fe5e299d9.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5297/5527929350_7be579ef18.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5131/5527748092_78770b7a08.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5135/5525086097_c5b5b5a80b.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5217/5525085675_853b6227e5.jpg)



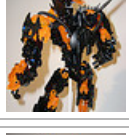
(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5131/5524979318_1f7b786ee2.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5099/5524386793_074330463f.jpg)



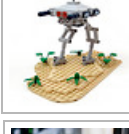
(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5296/5524618962_7fa2542450.jpg)



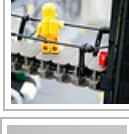
(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5217/5523593833_2d01d95eb2.jpg)



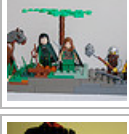
(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5092/5524178732_c6b73cccec.jpg)



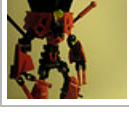
(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5298/5524082694_9afa2ec643.jpg)



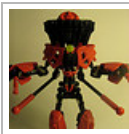
(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5297/5523112888_75c77f897c.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5099/5522275401_729913abc7.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5178/5521039315_839423d981.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5220/5521628578_92aceaf02e.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5052/5521004092_58c1b5217c.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5058/5520414189_bfa87d6a57.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5100/5515980913_0a375d6e2e.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5292/5510369216_68cc90cf6d.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5294/5509768387_28e053b451.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5015/5508928530_88c1c7ca9f.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5058/5506785071_1a974b6bda.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5138/5503444110_c69a07660e.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5291/5502808050_eb935a25f3.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5095/5501581514_1ed363345e.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5214/5500986903_b5465940c9.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5013/5500668616_9c0e2a125e.jpg)



(http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5137/5500660006_05366a76a3.jpg)

Want to see your MOCs displayed above? Please consider adding them to the [Ka-GO Flickr Group](http://www.flickr.com/groups/ka-go/) (<http://www.flickr.com/groups/ka-go/>). This is also one of my go-to places to find projects to post in "[Seen](http://ka-go.net/blog/section/seen/) (<http://ka-go.net/blog/section/seen/>)"; if you have something might want to see blogged about here, this is a great place to start.

Tags

Select Tag

Monthly Archives

Select Month

© 2011 [Ka-GO](http://ka-go.net/blog/) (<http://ka-go.net/blog/>). | Powered by WordPress. | Based on redline theme by [yul.yordanov](http://post-scriptum.info/) (<http://post-scriptum.info/>).

This site is in no way sponsored or endorsed by The LEGO Company (TLC)