

Philo em entrevista

Contributed by pedroagnelo
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The well known RCX and NXT robot builder has granted us an interview. Read all about it below!

Hello Philo!

Let's talk a bit about yourself first: who are you? What do you do, where do you come from?

Born in 1956, I live in France near Paris. Electronics engineer, I design communication boards in a small company based in Paris. "Philo" is the nickname given by my classmates when I was 14...

How did you first made contact with LEGO? Do you remember your first LEGO set?

I had few LEGO sets when I was young, and though I played a lot with them, I was not a great builder. My very first set had mostly red and white 2x4 bricks, at a time where they were not moulded with ABS, but some lower grade plastic! Later I got a big 060 box.

What is your favourite LEGO theme and what do you enjoy building the most?

Technic/MINDSTORMS (I can't really separate them). The things I prefer to build are simple but – hopefully – clever mechanisms. GBC modules exemplifies this. Most have only one motor and few parts, yet they perform their task flawlessly (anyone who tried to assemble a large GBC loop knows the paramount importance of reliability in each module!).

Did you go through a dark age?

In fact I got into two dark ages periods… The first occurred while I was a teenager. I tried to build simple mechanism out of plates and studded wheels, but couldn't go very far as Technic didn't exist at that time… So chemistry and electronics soon absorbed all my spare time. In the late 80's I discovered Technic. But even the Control Center that I bought at that time was not enough for my taste (painful to teach it movements, no input feedback), and I had no time to create my own controller. So I lost interest and had a second dark ages period, enlightened only by my daughter's LEGO! Then in 1999 I bought a MINDSTORMS kit for my daughter's birthday, and soon played with it a lot more than she did (she still insists to say that it is HER RIS!!!). Since then I have been addicted to LEGO again... But it is no longer a solitary activity. I discovered the great LEGO fan Internet community and I can share ideas and show them creations.

What attracts you most about LEGO so that you chose it as your hobby?

There are many little things that got me hooked:

- the modular system that allows testing ideas in no time
- the simple pleasure of handling high quality parts
- the huge and friendly community

Could you tell us something about the AFOL community in France?

FreeLUG association was created in 2003, and I am one of its first members. We are now about 150 people, including some Canadian and Belgian members. Unfortunately relatively few members are MINDSTORMS fans… Nonetheless I enjoy FreeLUG meetings, since I am always stunned by the ingenuity of town/train constructions. My own aesthetic sense is not good enough to get interesting results there…

Where do you go for inspiration for your MOCs?

I may get inspiration from "real life" problems that can find a LEGO solution, e.g. my photographer series (Panobot, turntable, sky shooter). It may also come from contests that I attempted – and sometimes won (Hammerhead, the CD thrower, Pimousse the heavy weight lifter). Some are born as an application for sensors I devise, for example my laser target sensor is at the origin of a barrel collecting robot and the brick sorter was created for my colour sensor. Sometimes I imagine a cool mechanism (Pneumawheel) or I simply copy/modify/improve other's MOCs, e.g. the rolling ball clock, inspired by Bob Kojima or my recent Theo Jansen's style walker that Chris Magno's work urged me to build…

And who do you have under the "Bookmarks" tab?

I don't have bookmarks! But I often check FreeLUG and Lugnet to get news from French and worldwide communities. I also subscribed to Technic and NXT blogs RSS feeds (The NXT Step, NXTasy) and often have a look at LEGO own NXTlog.

Could you tell us which is your favourite creation of all time? Why?

The most stunning thing I saw (and played with) is probably the playable, true size pinball, built by Gerrit Bronsveld and Martijn Boogaarts... As for my own creations, I have fond memories for my PanoBot, that interested not only LEGO fans but also some photographers...

Which is your favourite LEGO Brick?

The NXT!

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