

# Silicon Valley Moms Blog

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December 18, 2009

## Silicon Valley, Lego land



Credit where credit is due. After [complaining the other week](#) about the bizarre inability of so many Silicon Valley parents to allow their kids time to just tinker around with stuff, I was happy to find myself at an event this last weekend positively swarming with would-be tinkerers, young and old.

The occasion was the [sixth annual holiday Lego exhibition](#) at Palo Alto's [Museum of American Heritage](#). Checking out this show of generally stunning inventiveness (put on by the [Bay Area Lego Users Group](#) and the Bay Area LEGO Train Club) has become an annual tradition for our family -- and many others, too, judging by the crowd that had ditched their usual weekend routines to turn up last Sunday morning.

This time I was there with just my son, which put us in the majority family grouping. I don't remember ever seeing as many young boys and their fathers all in one place and so completely in mutual agreement that what was in front of them was absolutely, unarguably super-cool. The boys were mostly elementary school kids. The dads, I'd guess, were mostly engineers and entrepreneurs -- the sort of people most responsible for the Valley's distinctive culture. There were moms and girls there too, for sure, but it was the dads I noticed. The memories the exhibit was conjuring in them of happy youths spent in endless hours of Lego construction were almost palpable. You could see in their eyes that their holiday wishlists were altering with each passing minute. "Must get Quinn more blocks and maybe a basic Lego train set," they were clearly rationalizing. "He'd really like that. No, maybe he'd like a deluxe train set. Yes, it's what he needs."

There was a distinct air of admiration emanating from the group, too -- a sense that they'd all have been pretty happy to have been the ones spending the hours it took to make these scale replicas of Ghirardelli Square, the woodland campground, the pirate battle, or the downtown being invaded by space aliens and defended by the likes of a Lego Spiderman swinging from roof to roof, their startup dreams be damned.

Of course, this was a show that took less than an hour to visit and who knows how much additional, unprogrammed time any of the kids visiting it would be getting later, either to play with their own boxes of Legos or their dads. And Legos are most easy to obtain these days in kits -- where a child's powers of inventiveness are not really exercised until he or she accepts that the model can be broken into pieces for the sake of making something new.

But you have to think that a visit to a show like this increases the likelihood of Valley families becoming more tinkering-friendly.

Only 5% of the displays we saw were built from kits, the combined Bay Area Lego enthusiasts proudly advertise. Far from trying to sell you on what's currently available in the stores, this was a display of tinkering at its best -- of creativity and invention for no purpose other than sheer delight.

Simon likes to make Lego space jets the best. His son likes to make 'peace bombs' for them to drop. You can also find Simon at [ValleyDad](#) and [SimonFirth.com](#).

This is an original Silicon Valley Moms blog post.

Lego house photo credit: Simon Firth (yes, I know it's from a kit!)

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Posted by Simon on December 18, 2009 at 03:00 AM in [Simon](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Simon Firth, Lego, Silicon Valley, fathers, tinkering

## Comments



[Rox](#) said...

My parents were the anti-hoarders, throwing out a lot of stuff I wish they'd have kept -- except for two huge boxes of my brother's Legos. My kids (ages 4 and 9) have these wonderful hand-me-downs now, and our whole family is having more fun than ever building freely, making whole cities without the branded "city" kits. I'm gifting some sets of "just" blocks for Christmas hoping that others will enjoy these timeless bricks as much as we are.

[Reply December 18, 2009 at 08:04 AM](#)



[Simon](#) said in reply to [Rox](#)...

Rox -- my Mom has gotten rid of most her toys now that her three kids have grown. But the two things she keeps are a box of bashed-up old cars and trucks and a crate of 'heirloom' Legos. The two are pretty much guaranteed to keep children of any age occupied when they visit.

[Reply December 18, 2009 at 08:20 AM](#)



[Lady M](#) said...

Thank you SO MUCH for telling me about this event. I'm going to take my Lego-mad son this weekend!

[Reply December 18, 2009 at 09:55 AM](#)



Quizman said...

Thank you Simon. I had no idea about this show. I'll definitely take my 4 year old since he has gotten into Lego recently and will no doubt, be thrilled.

Reply December 18, 2009 at 11:05 AM



pamelahornik said...

We actually have some of David's childhood lego.. we should check this out, looks great.

Reply December 18, 2009 at 02:44 PM

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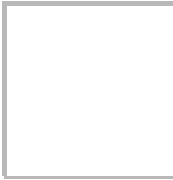
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