

October 13, 2024

Little Yellow Emperor: the Life of Napoleon in LEGO



The Battle of Waterloo Domain hosted a LEGO exhibit called “THE LEGEND OF NAPOLEON IN LEGO BRICKS.” As a recovering LEGO addict and an eternal fan of 18th/19th-century French history, I simply *had* to go. After successfully bribing the husband with beer and fries and the children with waffles, we made the trip today.

The exhibition was smaller than I expected, but some of the builds were genuinely impressive. It traces Napoleon’s life from his birth in Corsica to his death on Saint Helena—a neat, bite-sized way to introduce his story, and a fun way of recreating history. However, one thing that did bug me a bit: while the audio guide is available in multiple languages, all the wall texts are in French. In a trilingual country, especially at such a touristy site, that feels like a bit of a miss (plus, it gave the Dutch-speaking husband an

excuse to grumble).

Gripes aside [1](#), the exhibit was a lot of fun. Here are my favourite builds.

1. The Campaign in Egypt







This recreation of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign is absolutely brilliant. The photos don't do it justice—every detail, from the Sphinx to the busy French camp, is spot on. It's also huge and apparently took close to 70 hours to build!

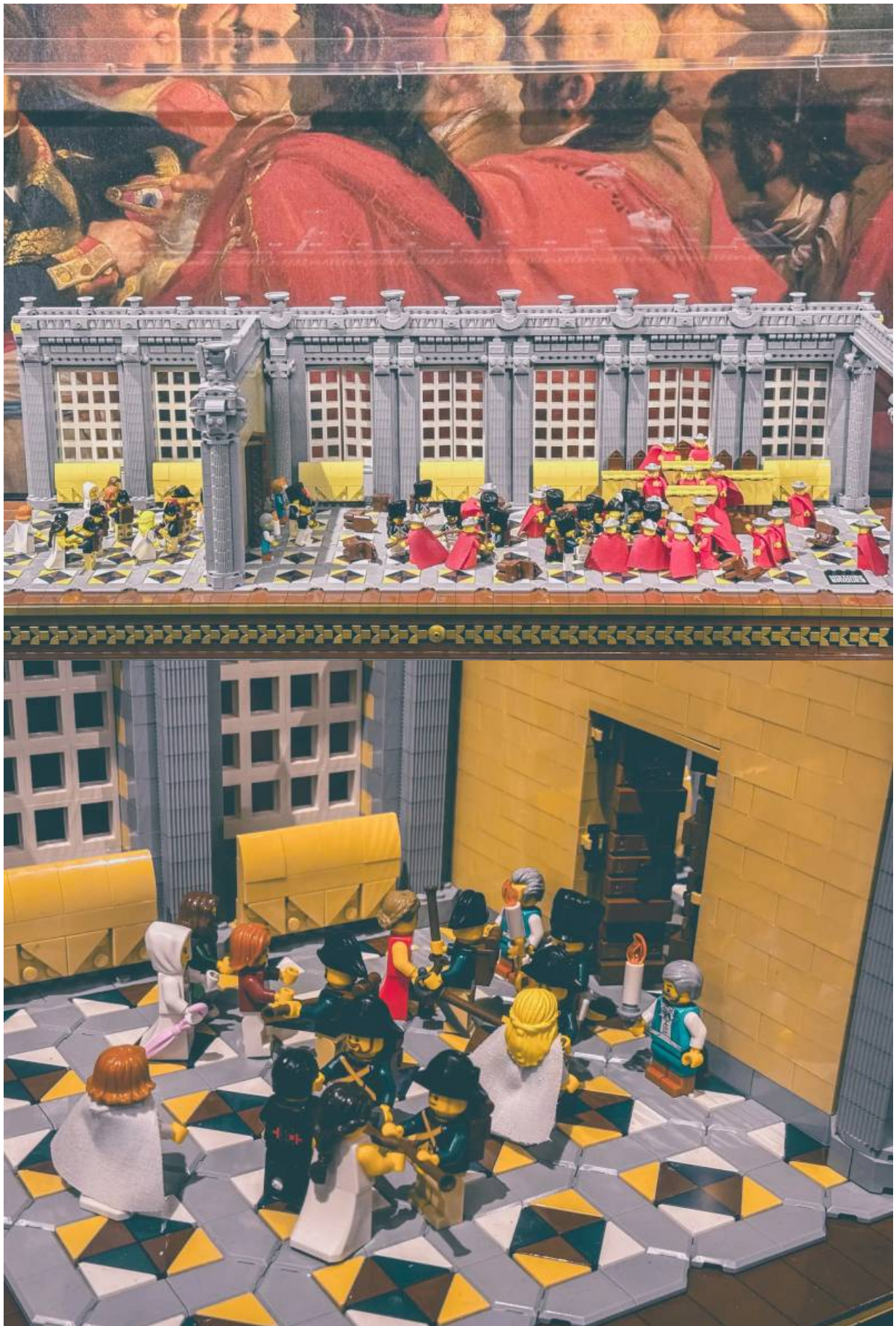
2. Napoleon's Coronation as Emperor





The second build, depicting Napoleon's coronation, may be smaller, but it's full of impressive details. I especially loved the grumpy expression on Pope Pius VII's face, along with the equally unimpressed looks from the rest of the clergy—it really adds character to the scene!

3. The Coup on 18th Brumaire





Again not a very big build but... those red capes... the hats... the outfits —need I say more?

4. Napoleon asks Josephine for a Divorce





This moment is supposed to be, by all accounts, heart-wrenching for everyone involved—Napoleon asking Josephine for a divorce. But, since it's LEGO, it ends up looking unintentionally hilarious.

5. The Crossing of the Berezina River





This is another brilliant build, capturing what was arguably Napoleon's greatest military disaster. While it's not as large as the Egypt campaign scene, it's packed with intricate details that make it just as interesting.

6. Napoleon's Civil Code



Yes. He has a GIANT parchment.

7. Daddy Napoleon and his son





Because the King of Rome has a purple teddybear and a grumpy statue of his dad in his room...

Bonus: The Battle of the Arcole Bridge



Not particularly impressive per se as a build, but this is one of my favourite moments in Napoleon's story, so... why not?



Notes

1

Yes, they recreated the siege of Toulon. No, Bonbon isn't in it. That makes me sad.

How to cite this article

Lam, Alexandra. "Little Yellow Emperor: the Life of Napoleon in LEGO." *Amateur Voltaire*. October 13, 2024.
www.amateurvolaire.com/travel-diary/napoleon-lego-at-waterloo/.

Amateur Voltaire

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