

PSLTC Backdrops

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Purpose

Model railroads frequently employ backdrops, printed or painted, behind modules or layouts. These backdrops provide a visual block separating the layout from whatever is behind it while helping create the scene within the layout as its own world. Of course, for a Lego train layout such backdrops should themselves be constructed with Lego, and in a club context need to be modular and flexible so many members can contribute and adapt them to different layouts.



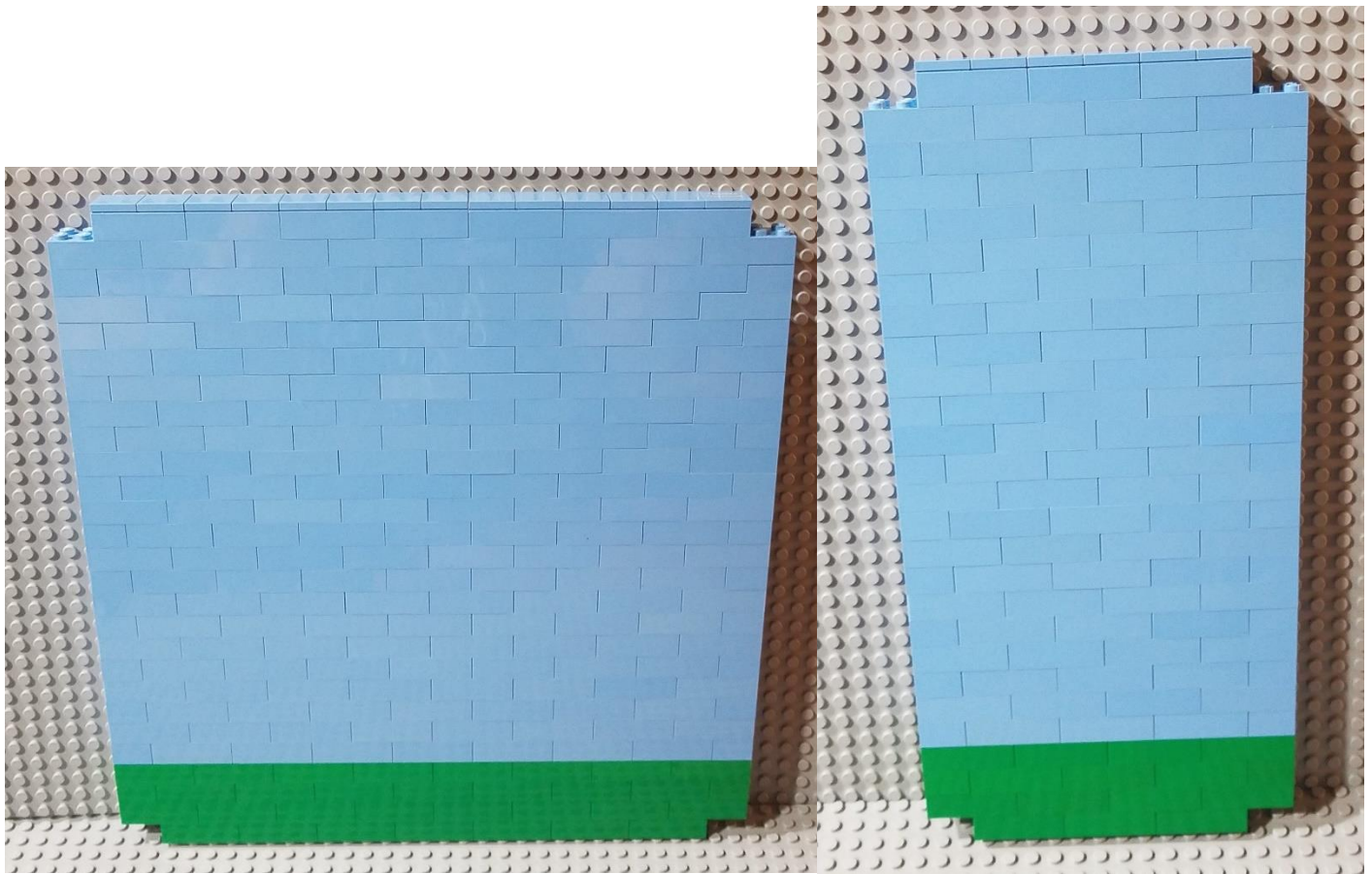
Derek Schin photo

Standards

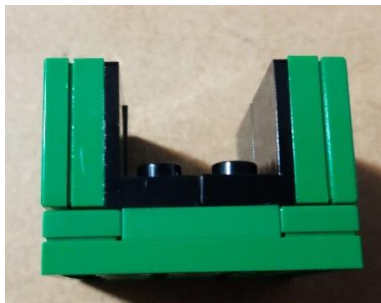
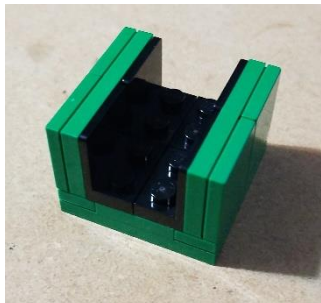
The idea behind PSLTC backdrops is that the layout will have a backdrop (usually occupying no more than the back two studs of the layout) rising to a height of 27 bricks and one tile with a smooth Medium Blue sky. This is typically implemented via a collection of panels, supports, and joiners. All panels, supports, and joiners must be discreetly but clearly labeled as to their owners, on the top in the case of panels and joiners and on the back or side in the case of supports.

Panels

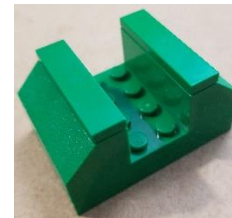
Panels are generally multiples of sixteen studs wide, two studs deep, and twenty-seven bricks and one tile tall. Countryside panels consist of a horizon of “ground color” (by default green) that is four bricks tall at the edges (and should vary across the panels) and Medium Blue sky at the twenty-seven brick (ten-inch) height, topped with tiles. Panels should have two-stud notches top and bottom; at the bottom this notch allows a support to join and support the panels, while at the top the notch allows panels to be joined with a joiner.



Supports



Panel supports usually have at least a 4x4 stud base and 2x4 stud area at the one brick height to support and join two panels. They should be “ground color” for the panels they support so they do not stand out. They may have a larger than 4x4 stud footprint as space allows, as this permits



greater stability. On the other hand, a reduced or stepped footprint may be advisable in some circumstances, such as for use on the edge of baseplates with PSLTC ballasted track where only the back two studs are clear and the third stud from the back may have one plate of material on it.

Joiners

Panel joiners consist of a 2x4 brick topped with tiles in Medium Blue. They join and stabilize two adjacent panels at the top.



Variations

There are many possible variations in backdrop needs depending on what is happening on the layout. “Ground color” will vary (often tan in the desert and blue on water), driving different colors for the panels and supports. Where the table surface drops below normal table height (for example, a harbor) panels must be taller to bring the tops of the panels into alignment with panels at the baseline height and there must be transition panels that conform to the landscape as it drops. When PSLTC modular hills line the back of the layout, the ground is already raised sixteen bricks and the backdrop need only be eleven bricks tall, but if there is no horizon then the supports must be Medium Blue. In urban areas, instead of a horizon panels may be two-stud-deep “flat” buildings topped by Medium Blue sky to the height of twenty-seven bricks (and one tile) that can live perfectly well on standard PSLTC seven-stud sidewalks---keeping in mind that the sidewalks themselves add two plates of height---but the supports for those panels must be disguised as dumpsters, parts of buildings, or other urban features.



Inspiration

PSLTC backdrops were directly inspired by the MILS standard; particularly, by the most fascinating at applicable part of the standard, Background Panels, as detailed on pages 32 & 33 of Hispabrick Magazine

#24 (https://www.hispabrickmagazine.com/pdfs/HBM024_EN/HBM024_EN-31-33.pdf) and pages 49 & 50 of Hispabrick Magazine #26 (https://www.hispabrickmagazine.com/pdfs/HBM026_EN/HBM026_EN-48-50.pdf).