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Shelf Life – building the no-doubt-symbolic shelves in the Abode of Stones

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2. Box Room

Books, they say, do furnish a room. Well, they also do clutter a corridor and, packed in piled-up boxes, do so somewhat uselessly. For our first eight months in residence here in Scotland I had to scabble around through piles of cartons whenever I needed to prove a point.

But, until recently at least, the shelves have been made of the substance which paves the road to Hell. Well, there were just so many other things to do.

Having said that and sitting here right now, I'm bugged if I can remember what. The mind goes blank rather than dredge up details of the few small things that would have the reader exclaiming, "What?! That took you eight months?"

It's not as if it's our own place, in need of decoration, fumigation or the attentions of Laurence Llewellyn-Boring. It's not as if we've had to buy bed linen, towels, or furniture. Most of all it's not as if I have a job. No job occupying me from nine to five or whatever ludicrous hours 'normal' Brits work in offices these days. No job leaving me too knackered at the end of the day to do those DIY chores. No job, let's face it, bringing me any income to spend on sybaritic distractions.

Of course, it would be easier without the little setbacks that plague any settling-in process. For instance, *La Ninfa Celestial*, for the love of whom I am translated to these Arctic climes, managed to pull down the hanging rail in my Ikea *Rakke* wardrobe. The few 'bookshelves' that were already in place were cantilevered (*La Ninfa* is studying architecture; expect technical terms to creep in: have a dictionary handy) and thus more decorative than functional, as I found when I put books on one, only for it to crash down onto the landlord's outsize tv (no damage done and nothing a few more holes and rawlplugs in the support bracket wouldn't fix).

Among those things not directly impinging on the present author's time was said *Ninfa's* project, carried over from her previous term, when illness had prevented her giving a full eight hours a week to her studies at edinburgh college of art (you can tell it's an arty institution by their disdain for the upper case). It's always so much more tempting to help someone construct a cardboard model of an abbatoir than it is to do your own work.

So that was how we lived for some time. But now things have changed ... pics will follow to prove it.

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4. Shelf Life

According to Roland Barthes (yes, let's get real highbrow on here), the Author is dead. Like some others I (less of a highbrow icon, let's not deny it) think the novel has been dead since about 1940. The plethora of identical magazines, some even desperately calling themselves things like Not Another Magazine, suggests another format whose post-post-modern time has just about come. The end of history? Maybe not, but the end of a few cultural artefacts to be sure.

So why not shelves? In fact, as more and more of our reading and listening matter migrates onto our laptops, phones and mp3 players, do even the few of us who actually read books need to have these archaic frameworks cluttering the walls of our dwellings?

I admit it: these are all attempts to find excuses for not getting on with the job. Let those philistines and dumbed-down lovers of our culture of stupidity take note. There are practical everyday uses for structuralism, post-modernism and un-re-deconstructionistivism, not least in the justification of doing bugger all. You don't need to read Heidegger, Foucault or Derrida (especially not Derrida); merely pick up a few key concepts. Simply say you're deconstructing the textural discourse of whatever you're supposed to be doing and questioning the hegemony which has been accepted as foregrounding the need ~ string enough of that together and you can chill out on the sofa while engaging in discourse with a beer or six.

Not that it works on everybody. La ninfa celestial was neither convinced nor impressed by a pile of roughly sawn planks, lying on the floor, accompanied by my claim that I had deconstructed the idea of shelves, that these planks, even neatly piled as if by Carl Andre, encapsulated the essence of shelves. Unacceptable. Apparently, "the essence of shelves is that you can fucking put books and stuff on them!"

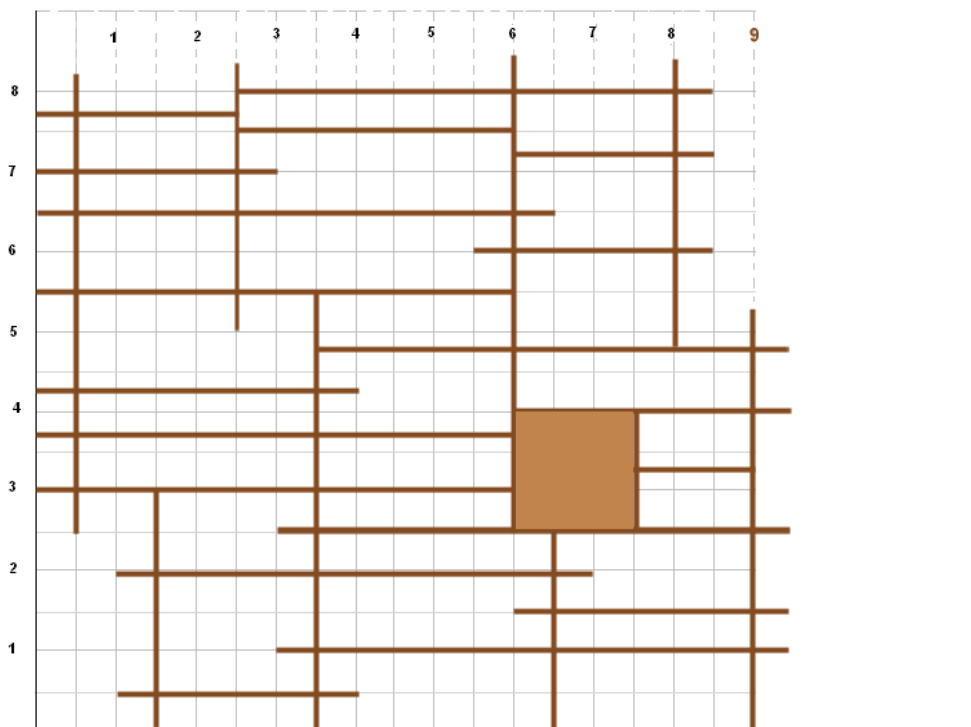
So it was back to the drawing board ~ though maybe one day even that will be an archaic phrase and we'll have to explain to youngstrers that it was a primitive form of CAD ~ 'back in them days when people had books and stuff'.

7. Waste and Pine

Let us pause a while and consider the concepts of false economy, only the rich being able to afford to buy cheap, throwing good money after bad and all that sort of rot. Let me meditate on looking before leaping and the fact that when resources are available at home one really ought to use them before stepping off cliffs, especially when funds are limited and ‘income’ but a vaguely remembered historical term. Consider the sheer irritation brought about by the phrase, “I could have told you that”, especially while one is looking at a hundred pounds’ worth of twisted softwood planking.

Instead of twisted we should really have say *cupped* (you were warned there’d be technical terms). I should not really have bought cheap pine planks, even those claiming to be kiln-dried, without checking whether they’d been rip-sawn, quartercut, whatever it’s called when the grain doesn’t run across the ends of the planks in neat vertical parallel close lines. Apparently *La Ninfa Celestial* could have told me that a cross section which looks like a load of ‘(s will almost certainly change its shape when it comes in from the Scottish cold-and-dampitude to a centrally heated tenement.

Despite this I started blindly cutting slots into the planks, as per my wonderful design. For the word ‘slots’ an inserted explanation ~



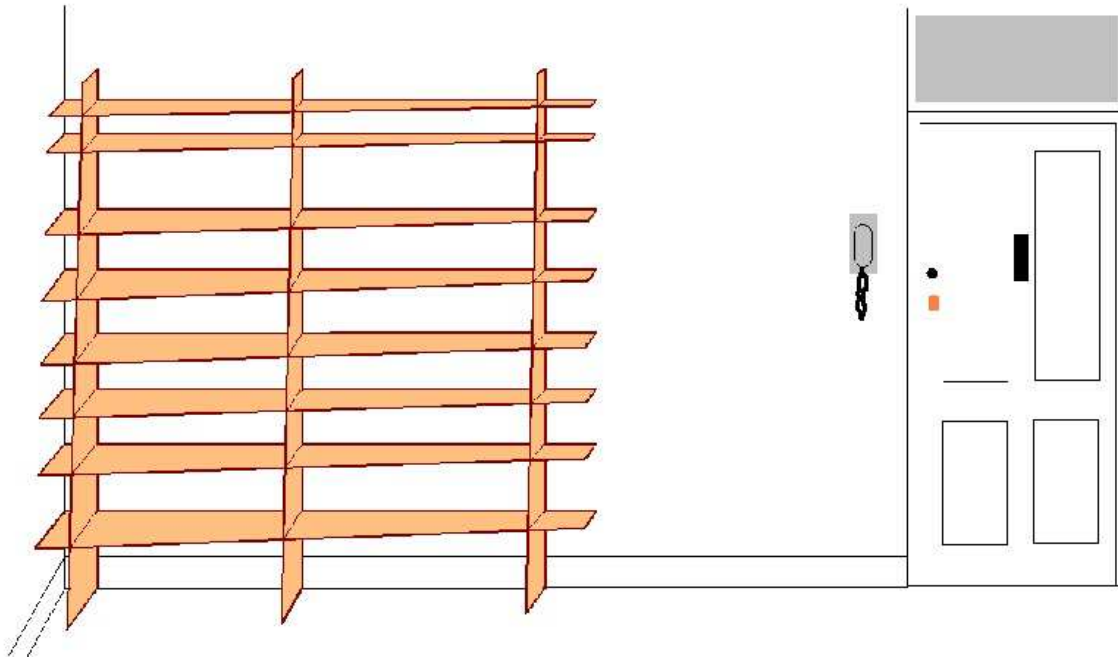
When I was a child, as the apostule says, I took a nerdcic delight in the little self-assembly plastic toys oft found in packs of breakfast cereal. Equally fascinating (oh how dull seem the gifts of today) were the cut-out models on the boxes themselves. “Insert piece P into piece V by sliding slot Q into slot W” had an almost Freudian resonance, as towering structures were erected, without the use of glue, tape or welding torch. And just as post-modern architecture betrayed the imprint of the Lego sets on its practitioners’ young minds, so does my approach to shelving pay *homage* to these *cartons du petit déjeuner*.

~ but when the wood ain’t straight, the slots don’t fit ~ which isn’t an old saying but ought to be, surely there’s a whole load of metaphorical potential there. But little shelving potential. Even though it did give rise to the thought, “Why *do* shelves have to be flat? Do they have to be horizontal? Do they have to be made?”

14. Come the Revolution

Long suffering readers, was it not shelves, rather than fickle lovers, crazy deities or eco-criminals that inspired this series of blogs? What matter that you are but few in number, you exist and you deserve to learn more of my bibliotechnological progress. And so you shall (though how empty it all seems now).

Before I started cutting up warped and crappy bits of knotty pine (see blog 7, Waste and Pine, October 29 2006) I had of course had to move in, stack boxes and sort out where stuff was to go, all the while giving *la ninfa celestial* (*sob*) somewhere to get on with her stuff. So, being readerly types with a number of heavy tomes, it's no exaggeration to say I'd been phenomenologically, deconstructively and even just plain piss-aboutly exploring the wider concept of shelves and storage.



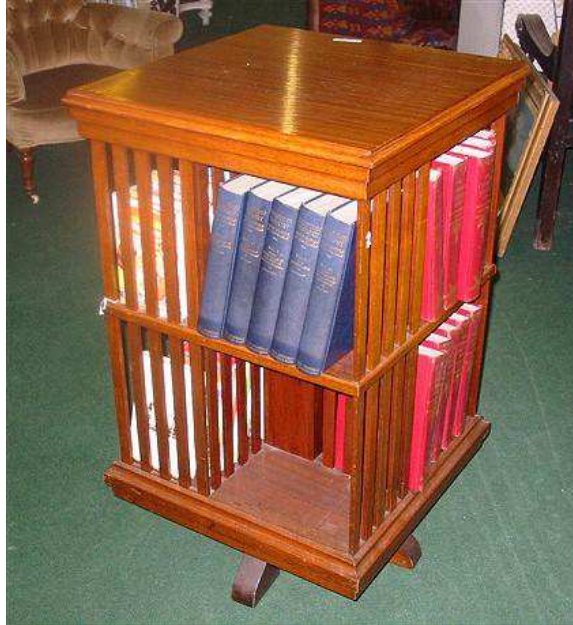
My wedge-shaped design looked so cool, like a set of shelves had tilted and was appearing to disappear (if that made sense) into the wall at its top right hand end. But, though its shelves would in fact be horizontal, it did have the distinct disadvantage of having long strips of very narrow shelving, whereas most of my books are more than an inch or two deep. The gentle, rippling sine wave of my other design was more practical but was a bugger to cut as a balsa strip model. No way was I, a man who has trouble cutting a straight line with a pre-set machine-saw, going to attempt anything so ambitious and, let's not deny it, stupid..

Meanwhile there were other spaces and options to consider. In the window alcoves of the Abode of Stone are spaces fit to put wee shelves in. The living room is sizeable and though *la ninfa's* commandeering of the box room meant I needed a pooter desk in there (until now ~ the inner sanctum is mine, d'you hear me ~ none can touch me here, manic laughter etcetera), there were still spots for rustic magazine racks and the like. So what to put there?

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I'm a modern kinda guy, a cool dude, a forward-thinking chap. But I have nothing against retro. Mother Nature only gave us the past so we could plunder it and create post-modernism. Antique shops and stately homes provide heaps of inspiration. I love the old library chairs that turn into stepladders with a shinbone crunching flip (<http://www.designboom.com/history/transformer/library.html>). And while looking round Pollok House in Glasgow, I also came across some revolting ~ sorry, that should be *revolving* shelves ~ though for the type illustrated, either term would suffice.



Wondered if it was worth picking up a pair to slip under the window sill. Then I worked out they weren't all that economical in space on account of needing room to swivel (don't we all?) ~ and they are also rather costly in terms of the elusive spondulicks. So we were soon to be seen staggering up the road from the local Barnardo's Second Hand Charity Furniture Emporium, lugging a simple set of slatted items which fit perfectly under the bedroom window and on which my almost complete set of Coronet British Edition Peanuts Cartoons now sits neatly beneath a crust of piano music and song scores (soon to be removed to a new location: *sob*).

It'll do. And it was a start.

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15. A Moving Story

The sale of homes is like the course of true love (*as in 'never did run smooth' ~ come on, try to keep up*). Before leaving London and the Treetops, I'd dreamed of setting up home with *la ninfa celestial* in a cool top floor tenement in an area like Marchmont, beneath a tiled and pointy turret, from the tiny window in which a mad woman, preferably called Emily, with long white hair, would scream obscenities at passers by. My ex (my previous ex I should now say, *sob*), *la frisada*, told *la ninfa*, "One year with him and you'll be the mad woman in the attic!" Maybe that's why she went.

But 'twas not to be. As my London buyer led us into more and more complications I didn't think I'd be here by Christmas, let alone Edinburgh's famous *Æstival Festival* (*look it up*). And when I finally did have a date to move, it was on us like the proverbial steam train and I had little or no time to come and start looking. *La ninfa* had college work to do and nowhere to do it and the great the good and the totally insane were descending upon Auld Reekie in arty-farty droves.

But help was at hand. A good friend and ex-colleague has a wife who comes from the charming market town of Ludlow, where some of us go each July, to see a Shakespeare play performed in the ruins of the Castle and to eat and drink far too much. She in turn has a cousin, who sometimes joins us there and he was managing a large store in Edinburgh. At the same time as I was planning to move myself here, his company was planning to move him to Leeds. Just as he finished doing up a nice little apartment to the southwest of the city. He didn't want to sell it and was looking for a tenant. Symbiotic serendipity, Batman!

Edinburgh tenements have plentiful storage space in the form of presses (cupboards to the English) and box rooms. But many a box room makes a pretty neat study and ours was especially tempting to a budding architect, with its shelves, its electric sockets and its space for a desk and drawing board. So a certain *ninfa celestial* earmarked it and we were soon to be seen staggering up the road from the local Barnardo's Second Hand Charity Furniture Emporium with a perfect-fit desk, to place before the revolving office chair brought up from the Treetops. But box rooms can be used for other things ~ there's a clue in the name ~ and all the crap we'd brought up was stacked in there awaiting sensible distribution ~ and of course, the construction of shelves. But inspiration needs its space, her needs were paramount, as deadlines loomed over her like a teetering mountain of cheese and the creative mind cannot be cramped. So boxes of books, boxes of cooking pots, boxes of painting things ~ even the open boxes of CDs which had been stacked against the wall as a form of *ad hoc* shelving, soon found themselves turning the living room into some form of game-show obstacle course. All shouting at me in their cardboard voices, "When are you going to make those shelves, you lazy, lard-arsed bastard?"

17. Litter in the Bathroom

Obsession ain't what it used to be. In a more romantic age than ours, it had a certain *cachet*. Seven centuries ago, blokes like Dante and Petrarch could build whole careers on their unrequited adoration of women they'd hardly met, writing sonnets and divine comedies and founding a renaissance or two in the process. As far as I know history fails to record anyone saying to them, "Did you get a shag? No? You just saw her in the church? You never even *spoke*? You sad bastard!"; and phrases like 'plenty more fish in the sea' are not common in their collected *œuvres*.

Things have gone so far the other way now that I recently heard a lass expressing her *disgust* that her parents have been together 26 years and never slept with anyone else in their lives (that's what they tell each other, honey). So everlasting love, despite the song, is no longer anything to boast about. To say, for instance, that I have no choice but to keep a flame alive in my heart, to let memories of what we had continue to illuminate and give an illusion of meaning to my life and inspire my work, is merely and pompously to invite derision. What value constancy to those what don't want it, what price a muse what ain't there to musify?

*So she left you flat,
You're a total prat,
Wasting time on that
Everlasting love*

But we still have our obsessions. The poets of the modern age now put their genius into their lives ~ instead of penning sonnets, they collect comic books, instead of writing *Il Paradiso*, they stalk celebrities and, more creatively, kill them too. What would the world be like if a crazed Dante had assassinated Pope Boniface instead of consigning him to a tersely rhymed *Inferno*? Or, for that matter, if Mark Chapman had written some songs instead of gunning down a Beatle? Imagine.

But there are lesser obsessions, socially more acceptable, that also have their uses. In the armoury prepared against the threat of ever getting anything done, obsession is the WMD of choice. The Abode of Stone had a very cool bathroom: tiles, mirrors, designer washbasin ~ but no waste bin. And it'd be sacrilege to spoil it with a cheapo plastic bucket, right? Obsessions fired by vague memories are great ~ such a v.m. of the dinkiest little white domed bin in a friend's apartment in Montparnasse, Paris, Franceland, gave me the excuse to spend *days* searching household boutiques, catalogues and every imaginable website, and all in vain. Yes, I know, I could have called said friend right at the start to ask where they bought it but then those same hours would have to be spent making bloody shelves. But ask I did, eventually, and they not only told me which French store sold them but even brought us one back as a present.

So that's the result ~ one obsession tidily gratified, another left to inform my remaining years, though, for fear of society pointing the finger of derision in my general direction, totally in secret (I trust to your discretion, gentle reader).

As Mr Keats didn't quite put it (http://www.romantic-poems.co.uk/john_keats.htm):

*And that is why I'm sitting here
Alone and barely littering
Though all unvarnished stand the shelves
And no phones ring*

[By the way these blogs are getting longer than I ever intended ('if brevity is the soul of wit, I'm fucked') and most hits seem to be on Sundays ~ so from now on the regular midweek blog will cease and the words of wisdom and bullshit will be a weekend thang.]

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18. Shelf-centered Modern Man

You may recall, gentle reader, that I left myself at the end of blog 7 (Waste and Pine, October 29 2006), with a large pile of cupped timber of no use to man nor beast. But men and beasts are not the only creatures that lurk on ebay! There are strange beings there who will buy almost anything if it's cheap enough.

Incidentally, isn't the advertising for ebay a bit weird? Surely one person's, "I picked up the dinkiest retro crockery really cheap" is another's, "I sold my late mother's favourite tea set to pay my debts but got diddly-squit for it". Doesn't convincing folks to shop there for bargains warn the rest of us not to sell there for peanuts? Apparently not. After all people buy lottery tickets too. A mad world, my masters.

Then again, rubbish disposal is another story. It's a darn sight better to flog a pile of useless wood for a fiver, than to pay someone even more of the elusive spondulicks to take it away for you. In fact it's given me a great idea about the slots I cut out ~ maybe I'll tell you all about that another day.

Meanwhile (the same meanwhile as, or slightly meaner than, that mentioned in blog 14: Come the Revolution, Nov 22 2006) I had found a woodyard who could deliver the requisite lengths of timber in the form of pre-cut 'Craftsman's Pine', despite that profoundly inappropriate name. This edge-laminated product may cost twice as much and not look so rustic but it does have the oddly comforting property of staying flat; a property which la ninfa had just about convinced me was a Good Thing.

So, for a week or so, one end of the kitchen-diner looked like some conceptual art installation ("Lowe's work encapsulates the dichotomies of life in those between the warped and the straight wood; while the nascent, even expectant qualities suggested by the pre-cut lengths, waiting for assembly, for completion, for their apotheosis as it were, explore the nature of aspiration, expectation and, perhaps ultimately, failure and death ..."). But eventually the useless wood was taken by someone who did have a use for it, an adjustable workbench was borrowed from a friend, the trusty electric scrolling saw unleashed from its cage (all right, box) and ready to do its stuff, ripping almost neatly into pine, trousers, flesh ...

Worry not, dear friend, no limbs were completely severed in the making of these shelves and the few spots of blood, like the uneven edges and snapped-off corners of the wood were all cleverly hidden against the wall or beneath a number of weighty tomes.

Well, eventually they were. Just because everything was finally ready to roll, it didn't mean there weren't still excuses to be found ...

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20. 3 Steps to Limbo

Standing here over a year ago it occurred to me that I must take steps ~ or even buy steps ~ to get this place sorted out, turn it into a home fit for shelves. This is what I thought as I considered the fact that Edinburgh tenements have fiendishly high ceilings and concomitantly unreachable light fittings. Bad enough that my landlord has fitted five different obscure sizes of halogen bulb everywhere, irreplaceable at the average high street store (thank heavens for online shopping!), but the fact is that they're unreachable without long stilts or a trained giraffe.

A high spot of this summer's Edinburgh Fringe Festival was *La Clique*, a late night burlesque cabaret, to which I repaired with *la ninfa celestial* and *la polaca loca*. And the star of the show (unless you count the hunky guy who rolled greasy tyres over his naked torso, which my lovers assured me was pretty hot) was Captain Frodo, 'the incredible rubber man' from Norway. In part one he passed his body through two (unstrung) tennis racquets and, as a finale, brought a large metal drum onstage. From this he produced a slightly smaller drum and then from that another. Perching the second on the first, he clambered on to the resulting towerette. And produced a fourth, even smaller tin ~ you get the picture, I'm sure. As the tower got higher and the tins got smaller, his ascent became more precarious and comical, until he was perched way above us on something like a family sized baked bean can, pointing out that if that ragtag bunch of contortionists, acrobats and chanteuses can make a living doing their stuff then nothing in our dreams should seem too weird. Follow your dreams, ladies and gentlemen," he concluded: "follow your dreams!"

Well my dream was to change a light bulb in the kitchen ceiling and I was wondering why, in a flat with five-step high ceilings, I had just invested in a three-step aluminium ladder. Maybe because that was all the shelves should need? Or just plain stupidity?. And I thought of Captain Frodo as I balanced a collection of phone directories on the top rung and tried to balance first one foot and then the other, without dropping the new bulb. On tiptoe and at full stretch I could just about reach the screw-threaded monster with my finger tips and start it turning. Fortunately back then I had my charming assistant handy and she could at least hold the ladder steady and tell me to be careful.

Once upon a distant time, when I and *la frisada* lived in the Treetops of Hampingstead, a surveyor came to check out our roof. Our predecessors had bequeathed us a fitted loft ladder that for reasons unknown was also two rungs too short to reach the floor, to compensate for which, they provided an old plastic milk crate. But this proved none too steady as the large man was climbing into the darkness and down came the ladder, surveyor and all, necessitating a moonlit burial on the Heath and many denials of ever having seen the poor guy. We soon invested in a better and of course longer replacement. But we never learn.

And now the bulb has gone again, for the fourth time in a year, after a prolonged period of flickering and I begin to suspect a loose connection. I need once more to don my mountaineering gear, stack the phone directories as high as they'll go and set out for the snowy peaks. But this time I need to take screwdrivers and who-knows-what else in breast pockets and between my teeth. Scary.

So if these blogs suddenly cease without warning it could be because I'm lying broken on the kitchen floor while *la ninfa*, having called round for her things, is in the box room, digging out my will. Or I might just ask Santa for a longer set of steps. Much as I hate to admit it, it is Christmas.

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23. Shelves: vt puts aside, postpones

Once upon a time, in a reality long, long ago, these *blogs* were going to be just that. A web log, stardate whenever, all about settling into the new home and, in particular, the no-doubt-symbolic tale of building shelves.

And, though it would have been a (symbolically) sorry tale of (symbolically) slow progress, with much waffle about other subjects to disguise the truth, the procrastination and the excuses which delayed their completion; it would have also been jolly and light and maybe even entertaining, informed as it would have been by the feeling of having found at last the true love that brought light to my life and gave, even to a disillusioned nihilist, that pleasant illusion of meaning and a point to it all. Months would have passed and you might have begun to wonder, amid all the laughter, if there would ever be anywhere to put the Lowe/*ninfa* collection of erudite tomes, hyper-cultured musics and subtitled art-house dvds.

I would have done my best to illuminate the design process that led to the final idea, a brilliant, post-modern tribute to 50's style, based on two identical, interlocked rectangles. You may have already seen the picture, featuring the then happy couple in blog 7. If not, go back and look at it now (you know you want to!). See if you can spot the original, subtly broken rectangles. Shelves at different heights for cd's, dvd's, videos, assorted books and even, the *pièce de résistance*, the dinky cupboard, in contrasting mahogany stain.



Eventually, you might have been treated to this collage, showing, as best one can with a small camera in a narrow corridor, the finished and part-stocked buggers thems(h)elves (pre-staining, so imagine the wee door a darker hue). What a sense of completion, of achievement, I could have shared with you all, how your hearts would have soared and what inspiration you might have taken from the tale, what deeds might have been done in those optimistic days!

But procrastination is not only the thief of time and the waster of woodwork but also the buggerer of blogs. I have already spoken of, or at least hinted at, the excuses, the need to administer tlc to *la ninfa celestial*, the need to bum around being a dilettante... They even delayed my blogging about the delay.

But, one fine day the planks were measured, slots were cut (see later blog), edges were sanded and all was put together (see above). My architect had already raised a point of doubt about the bending moment at the left hand end and, indeed, despite a slight modification to the plan (can you spot it,

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reader?), when full of books there is a slight sag. But the only effect of this is to make it hard to get the cd's out of the middle of the lower left shelf. At least nothing looks like breaking.

Obviously symbolism only goes so far.

24. A CAD and a Bounder

I believe it was Mr Edison who told us that genius is one per cent inspiration and ninety-nine per cent perspiration. I sometimes wonder if in the post-post-modern 21st Century it might be one per cent appropriation and the rest automation. Nick an old idea; tart it up with a computer.

Even before spending time with a budding architectural genius, I knew that her great Catalan predecessor, Antoni Gaudí i Cornet designed an amazing crypt for the never-completed Church of Colònia Güell. The domed ceiling is supported by a series of columns, all leaning at crazy angles and yet all supporting the roof with perfect efficiency. The design was developed by hanging weights, corresponding to the roof mass, from chains, stretched into and attached to the model's roof at the required points. By viewing this in a mirror, or photographing it and turning the picture over, Gaudí could specify the layout, knowing all the stresses to be exactly right. No automation, just inspiration.

But today it's all done by CAD. No, I'm not saying architects have become less principled people, I mean Computer-Aided Design. Programs that allow people to draw up designs, see them in 3-D from myriad angles, travel through them in animated style, fill in solids, analyse stresses and strains, on their buildings, if not themselves ~ believe me, architecture may not be the best course of study for *ninfas* prone to stress-related bonkersness: it certainly doesn't help their relationships along: I'm far from unique in my victimhood (incidentally, this very weekend, she is finally moving out her small but perfectly formed body and all the stuff that goes with it, once and, probably, for all; but let's not speak of such sorrows here ~ *sob!*). So, naturally, we had to get such a piece of software and, obviously, I, as an old techno-geek from way back, had to have a play.

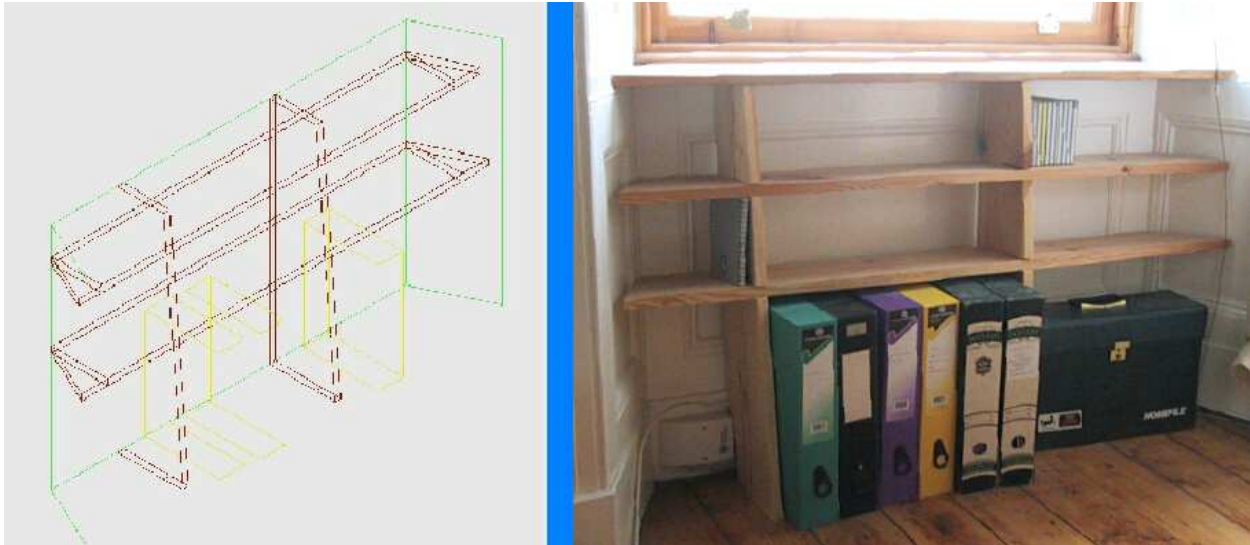
But I need practical examples, something to get my teeth into beyond drawing an imaginary floor plan and sticking in a few notional chairs and a hypothetical table, as per the misleadingly titled 'User's Guide'. As it happened, there was a space under the living room window just begging for a small shelf unit for cd's and files. Not only that, I had a few bits of reasonably straight wood left over from the earlier debacle (see blog 7). So why not use our lovely new tool to design said unit? Because it's a bloody stupid idea, that's why. But, while *la ninfa* was far too busy with drawing board and pens trying to get through her second year design project, that's what I did.

The phrase 'learning curve' is now a popular way to describe the initial period of familiarisation and the getting of, if not wisdom, at least some level of competence. So I can confidently state that we old dogs *can* be taught new tricks but that we face something that would be better described as a 'learning cliff'. So it's hardly surprising that the complex shelves described in the previous blog and many others, like those I had designed and built in my previous abodes, had taken up a lot less of my time than the simple construction in question. But that's because, instead of CAD, they had used BOE methodology, where BOE stands for 'Back of an Old Envelope'.

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The design is based on slotting three horizontal shelves into two vertical supports, leaving space for cd's and small books at the top and room for some box files on the floor. Easy. But the bay window space is wider at the front than the back and I wanted the shelves to get shallower as they went up too. The sloping design, as well as looking cool (trust me!) is more stable, needs no glues or screws, is the depth of the windowsill at the top and of the box files at the base. And is a bastard to do in 3D CAD. Because the program easily draws planks with parallel ends but (unless what passes for a manual, translated into something vaguely resembling English by Afghans from the original Martian, deceives me) is not so good at bevels. I worked out how to draw planks and narrow wedges and stick the two together, which helped but left confusing extra lines where the two component shapes joined. Then I discovered that I could have done the offending lines invisibly when specifying the original shapes ~ but could I get the bastards to disappear once drawn? Could I fuck.



So, after many hours, during which time I could have made an ornate faux-Regency four poster bed and wardrobe from finest oak, including growing the tree from a sodding acorn, the rather feeble 3D drawing above was obtained. Sadly, at this resolution, you only get a vague impression of its glorious redundancy as some of the lines have gone awol. The green lines show the existing space, the brown the shelves (the top one is missing for some reason) and the ghostly yellow give an idea of a few of the box files *in situ*. The program also allowed me to fill in the shapes ~ render them, as we say in the trade ~ and shine imaginary lights on them from diverse angles ~ hours of mindless fun ~ but you'll be glad to hear it didn't let me turn that image into a handy jpeg. However a photo of the finished construction will soon be added to the photo for your delectation and delight ~ y'all come back soon, y'hear?

So let that be a (symbolic?) lesson to you. The good old ways are often the best.