Calypso

If it just could float

Text and pictures by Henrik Hoexbroe

Facts about the MOC:

Length: 115 cm
Width: 19 cm
1:50-scale that is: minifig-scale
Weight: 5900 g
Parts: 25,000 (estimated)
Construction time: 4 weeks, but 2 weeks awaiting the arrival of some parts.
Finished: June 13, 2009
Builder: Henrik Hoexbroe

The highlight of this "MOC" is the hull of the ship, where I have used the technique of combining 1x2 bricks taking advantage of the small tolerance between each brick to shape the curve. After a failed attempt 6 months before, I knew that this technique was only allowed to make the part of the model above the water. I still wanted to make a boat without pixelization in the hull. I would have liked to build a sailboat, but I knew there were no appropriate bricks to build the masts, so I decided to build a research ship, resembling the famous Calypso - although I was sure I didn´t have the pieces to build the Calypso itself - because a research ship gives a lot of play opportunities having laboratories and experimental vehicles on board. I spent the first week building the hull and decks and solving technical problems.

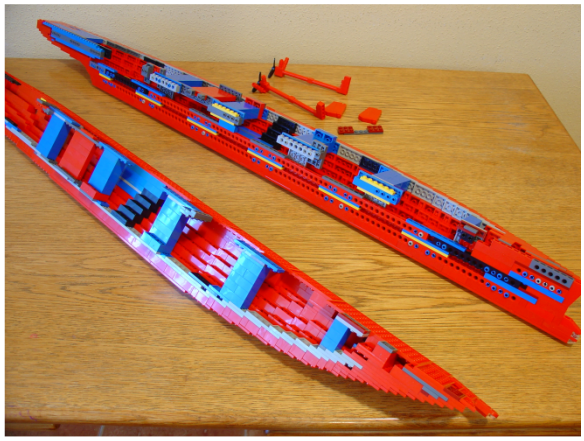
Using my whole collection of parts, I discovered that I could make a scale copy of the ship because I had enough parts due to the favourable combination of hull colours of the Calypso, "half and half" black and white. Also, alternating between 1x2 and 2x2 bricks whenever I could, I saved enough 1x2 bricks to make a boat that is 115cm long! The next step was to build the decks. I wanted to do it in "tan", but I knew, from the previous failed project, that I didn´t have enough tan parts. In the end I opted for inserting gray plates between the tan parts which gave an effect of "wood" on the floor, saving 25% of the tan parts. I think that 90% of my tan parts come from a single Creator set, the 4956. The floors only lean on the hull. Again to save parts, the floors are 1 and 2 "studs" thick. The deck has to fit with the hull, resting on a stud or a tile.

In several places I have placed holes for racks or other attachments. Again with the purpose of saving tan pieces ;-)

In order to stretch and optimize my collection of parts I had to redo each part several times, and as each part depends on others, I didn´t delay in making all the construction modular for easy handling.

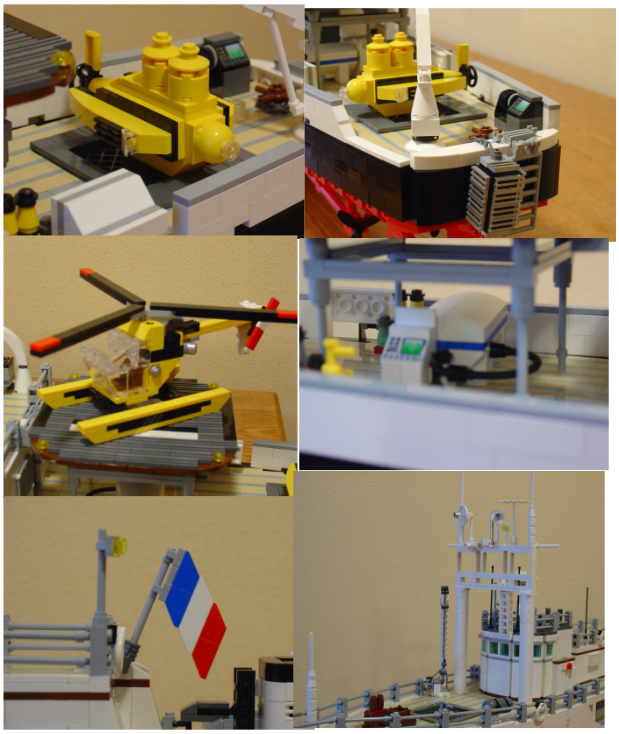
Thanks to this modular construction I could temporarily build up my construction to evaluate the final appearance, and dismantle it in parts to keep building. Although the ship was designed to use only a thin line of red bricks (thickness of a "plate") on the bottom, indicating the colour of the hull below the water, I decided that this MOC deserved to have the entire bottom of the hull. I also decided I could do more tan build a boat inspired by the Calypso, I could make an exact model to scale!

As the hull was without pixelization due to the curved wall of 1x2 bricks, I didn´t want to destroy the "studless" aspect it had, so I began to use a technique using slopes of 45 and 30 degrees, which I used in a previous "MOC" (a German submarine class VIIc). Putting the helmet upside down, I began to "draw" one side of the hull, and then copy (mirror) the other side. The red hull has 3 parts, the two sides and a central structure of Technic-beams.
The boat only leans on the red part, and stays centred by means of guides (so you can take out the rest of the ship to play with, as it is completely smooth at the bottom)
The propellers are from Fabuland line.
In this area of the boat the lack of Slope 30 degrees is especially noticeable and I think it could be improved a lot...



I decided that the construction should be as accurate as I could, and I shouldn't miss out on certain emblematic details;

- The mini-submarine designed by Jacques Cousteau
- The anti-shark cage
- The helicopter
- The decompression chamber
- "Vive La France"
- The impressive array of antennas



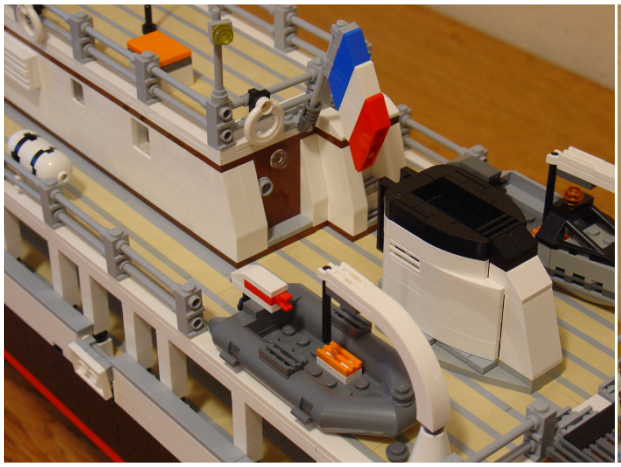
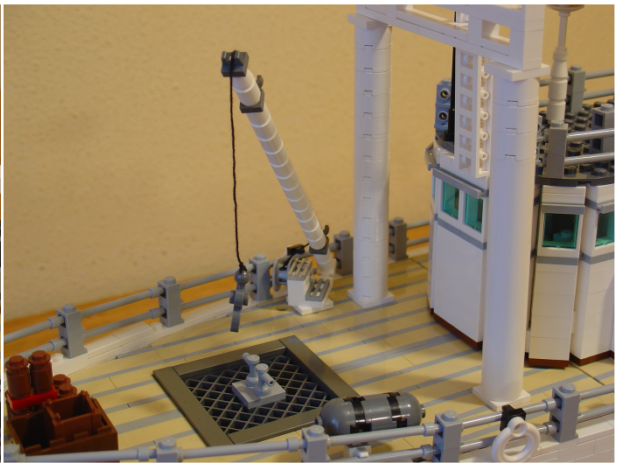
- Other details are: the submerged observation chamber, the platform for the helicopter with the letter "H", all the lifeguards and their positions in the railings...

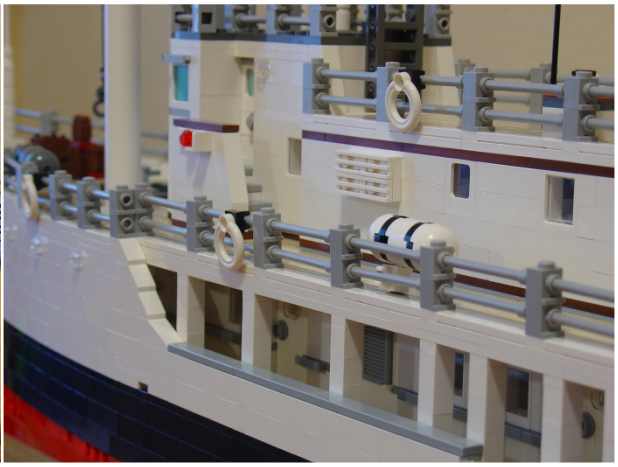
What the MOC does NOT have, is an interior design. Since I needed to use some 2-stud thick parts in the hull, there was no space to reproduce the interior. The hull of the ship also has many support structures inside to maintain its shape which don't allow interior decoration.

Trivia: The Calypso started out as a BMYS class minesweeper with the hull entirely made of wood. It was build in the USA in 1941 and successively "Lent-Leased" to England, where it served in the Mediterranean Sea in 1943 with the name HMS J-826, until 1947 when it was retired from active duty, and was sold in Malta.
It served as a ferry in Malta for 3 years until 1950. It was there that is was given the name "Calypso".

The Irish millionaire Thomas Loel Guinness bought the boat in 1950, and rented it to the Frenchman Jacques-Yves Cousteau for the symbolic price of 1 franc per year. Cousteau turned the ship into a floating laboratory for oceanographic research.
The ship was equipped with advanced scientific equipment, including submarines. underwater "motorcycles", an observation chamber 3 meters below the surface and a platform for a helicopter.
With the Calypso, Cousteau embarked on a series of journeys that took him all over the planet. Even to the most inhospitable areas. From these travels came many television documentaries about nature at sea. These adventures have been broadcast on television worldwide.

The ship was sunk in an accident at the port of




Singapore in 1996. It was resurfaced after a couple of weeks, and brought to the port of Marseilles, where it was decaying for a couple of years.
Cousteau died in 1997, and was buried in Notre Dame in Paris.

In 1998 the ship was transferred to the Maritime Museum in La Rochelle. The intention was to exhibit it. Unfortunately, there were legal and financial problems, and the restoration could not begin as planed and the ship continued decomposing more and more.
In 2004 Loel Guinness sold the boat, but the Société Cousteau has already succeeded in organizing the restoration which now in 2009 is progressing as planned!
The Calypso is now at the Piriou shipyard in England, and restoration can be followed on YouTube on the Internet.■