

75054 AT-AT OVERHAULING

Playing with LEGO® set 75054 AT-AT

By Legotron (A. Bellón)

Since I saw this set I realized that one of the things I wanted to do with it was to modify the AT-AT design. The set was very good and a perfect starting point to build an AT-AT model I always wanted to own.

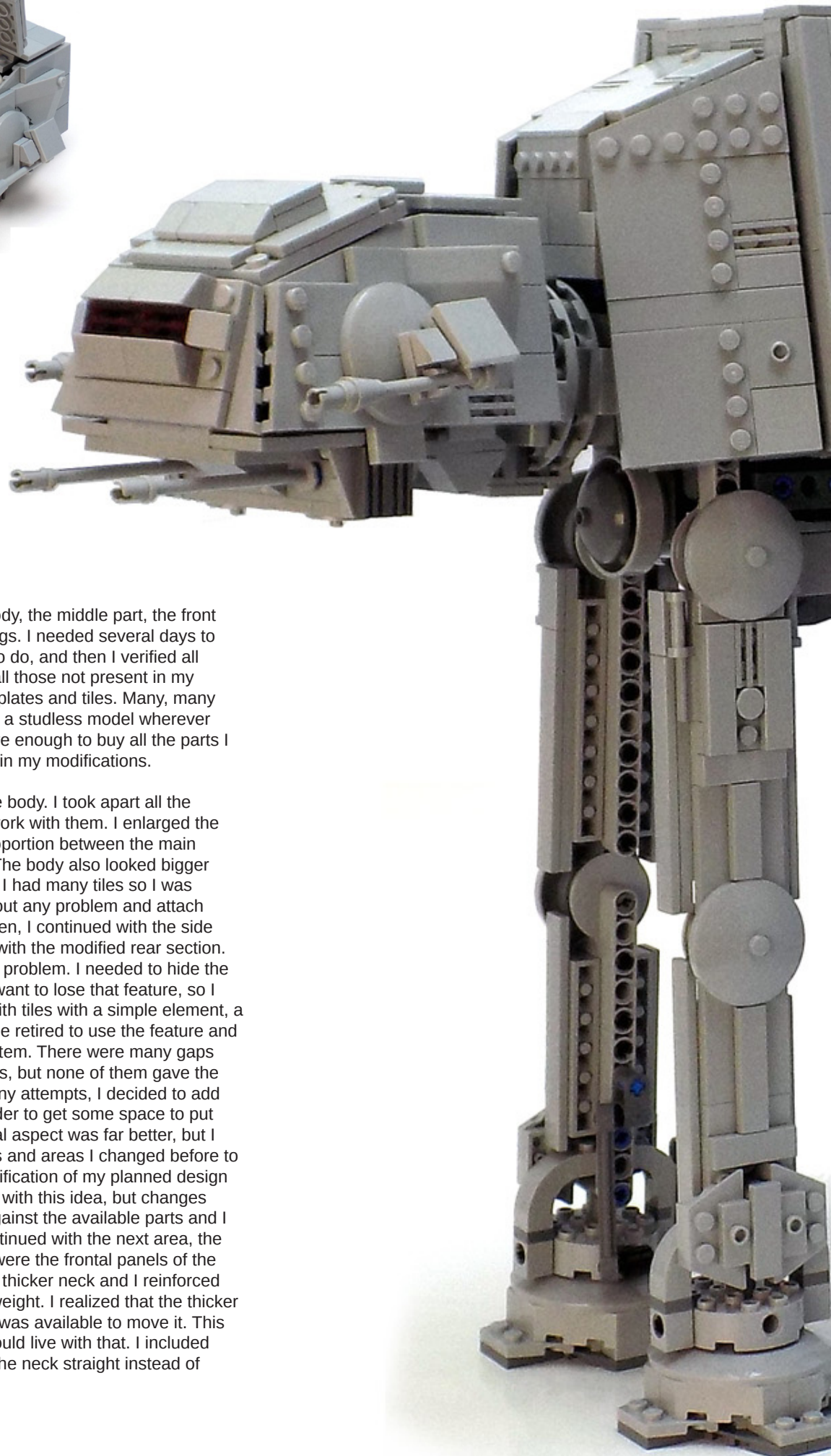
We have built a collaborative display made up of MILS (<http://www.abellon.net/MILS/>) modules to recreate the Battle of Hoth at our events. After several years the display has grown to a big diorama with many AT-ATs, but I didn't have one yet. So, the new set 75054 AT-AT gave me the opportunity to solve this little personal affront, mainly when I'm the "Imperial spirit" of that display. But this wasn't enough, I wanted to have my own customized AT-AT. As I was involved in some large projects as Panzerbricks or the MILS system that need a lot of time I needed something smaller or limited to refresh my mind. I saw the opportunity and I decided to start with the updating of my new AT-AT, although the available time in those days was a very scarce resource.

Although the set was very good, there were some details like the size of the head that I didn't like. I wanted to update the set and make some changes to get a better version of the AT-AT. I had some very specific ideas about this project:

- I wanted to use the maximum number of parts and structures of the original set, in order to keep the cost as low as possible.
- I didn't like the head, so I would build a completely new head, more in accord with the size of the neck and with enough space for at least two crew members seated and a third one standing up.
- I wanted to modify the size of the body to get a best appearance in comparison with the rest of the parts of the AT-AT. The size was to be similar to the other versions of AT-AT made by TLC that we use to display in the diorama.
- I didn't want to change the internal structure of the AT-AT. Because it was sturdy and very well designed to attach all the elements of the AT-AT.
- I had a 2 month deadline, because I wanted to display it at our main event, HBME 2014 in December 2014, but due to my real life job, I would only be able to work on this project some weekends, so there was very little time left and many things to do.

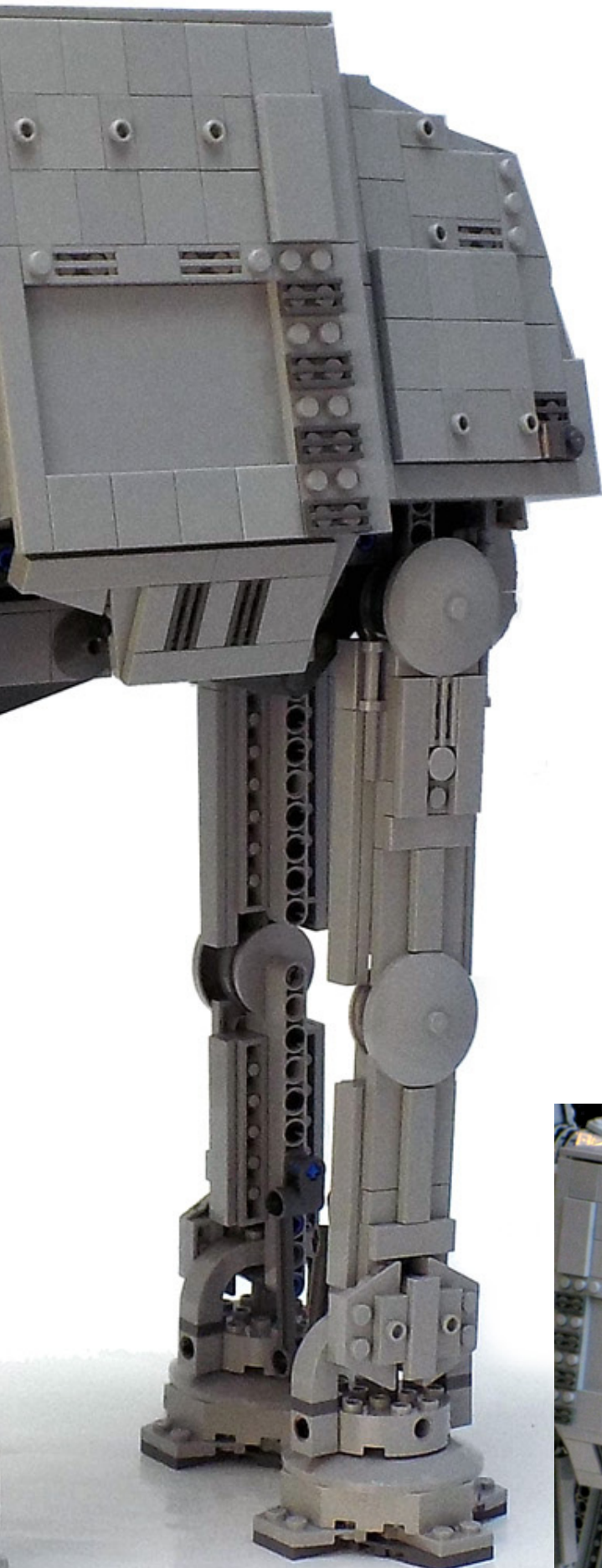
One of my favourite features of the 75054 set AT-AT was the way you could break off and snap the different components of the model: the panels of the body, the legs and the head, so you could work on each element separately. This was very important to make the updates easier. I divided the task in





sections: the rear part of the body, the middle part, the front part, the head and finally the legs. I needed several days to plan all the changes I wanted to do, and then I verified all the needed parts to purchase all those not present in my stock. They were mainly small plates and tiles. Many, many tiles because I wanted to make a studless model wherever possible. 4 Bricklink orders were enough to buy all the parts I thought were going to be used in my modifications.

I began with the rear part of the body. I took apart all the armour plates and I began to work with them. I enlarged the sides by 2 studs so that the proportion between the main body and the legs was better. The body also looked bigger when compared with the head. I had many tiles so I was able to finish the rear part without any problem and attach the plates to the main body. Then, I continued with the side panels. I modified them to link with the modified rear section. But then I encountered the first problem. I needed to hide the hinges and their gaps. I didn't want to lose that feature, so I decided to cover that feature with tiles with a simple element, a detachable section that could be retired to use the feature and placed to hide all the hinge system. There were many gaps so I made many different covers, but none of them gave the appearance I wanted. After many attempts, I decided to add a brick height to the body in order to get some space to put the covers. Surprisingly the final aspect was far better, but I needed to rework all the panels and areas I changed before to work well together. As this modification of my planned design solved the problem I continued with this idea, but changes on planned builds can count against the available parts and I didn't realize of this fact... I continued with the next area, the final steps to update the body were the frontal panels of the armour and the neck. I made a thicker neck and I reinforced the joints to counter the extra weight. I realized that the thicker I made the neck the less room was available to move it. This was not very important and I could live with that. I included another reinforcements to get the neck straight instead of



pointing to the ground. When I finished it I only had to wait for the parts I had purchased, all the tiles I needed to get a studless surface.

After receiving the purchased parts I continued with the build. The next part to change was the head. As I said before I didn't like the head of the original model, so I began to work on a completely new head. It was very complicated. I wanted to maintain the same size, but allowing more interior room, and of course I wanted to get a closer appearance to the real model of the AT-AT. I also wanted to make a design that could be attached to the main body with a single axle with stop. This would ease the transport of the whole thing. To get all those features I needed many attempts in order to get the head as I wanted to be. But the deadline was close, and all those attempts delayed the construction many days.

A week before the event I had to finish the legs and there were many parts of the body that needed many tiles to get a smooth surface. I didn't realize that the additional height would require more tiles than those planned. Many of my MOCs are heavily dependent on light bluish gray tiles, so they disappear very fast from my stocks, and very few were left for the AT-AT. The changes I wanted to make in the legs were very simple, I removed many of the outer dark bluish gray parts and replaced them with light bluish gray ones, and then I had to add some tiles to get a better appearance. At this point I ran out of tiles, and there was no time to purchase new ones, because December is a very bad month to get post on time. I couldn't cannibalize other constructions because they were expected to be shown at the same event, so I decided to use the tiles only in the key areas and conceal the less visible areas with plates. Not a single light bluish tile was left in my stocks, but the model was more or less finished, and I could display it in the Battle of Hoth diorama.

Some weeks later I got the missing tiles, and I was able to finish the model. I'm really happy with the final result. It is not as awesome as some of the AT-AT version that can be seen on the Internet, it doesn't consist of many thousands of parts and it doesn't require incredible building techniques. It is just a modification of an official set. But now I'm the proud owner of my customized version of an AT-AT, that can be displayed in our collaborative diorama of the Battle of Hoth. That was one of my priorities of the last three years and now it has come true.

