



ALIEN: Building a book

By The arvo Brothers

We feel it is almost inevitable to start this new episode retaking the text of our first article, written already 8 years ago in the inaugural issue of this magazine. Reading those lines anew, it is amazing to discover how our creative cycle appears to repeat every 10 years... picking up forgotten dreams and fantasising with reproducing them at a larger scale.

Building them in more detail, more faithful to the original, with better techniques; hanging on to second chances, trying to reach our own ceiling and taking our self-demandingness to new levels.

All of this, which appears to be our sickly fixation - and it is - that is destined to never be fulfilled is favoured and "promoted" by the appearance of new constructions and builders, the appearance of new parts and techniques that offer an infinity of possibilities ... in short, the renovation of our inspiration!

So... Are we guilty of being this way? NO!!!... of course not...

... YOU are!:D:D

The objective of this new article is to show you the process of redesigning and building one of our fetish models, as well as the references, ideas and motivation for taking it up again after all this time. A new episode... with a happy ending! ;)

ALIEN v2.0

As we were saying, it really drew our attention in this "revision" of Alien - apparently subconsciously - right after having done the same with the Kaneda bike ... following a similar order as 8 years ago... as if those two constructions are in some way connected...

... curious and perturbing :D:D

Any revision is easier to carry out if you start from a reference in which the defects have been clearly exposed by the passing of time, making them easily identifiable to the observer.

That is what in our opinion has happened to our previous model - Alien Sculpture 2007 - and without a

doubt this has been a great help when facing the design of our new build. From the moment we discovered the work of the genius H.R. Giger we haven't stopped enjoying his work. Whether in films or illustrated books, we always discover new elements that end up giving meaning to his work while, at the same time, decomposing it to make way for the next. His work is infinite. As inspiring as frustrating as it is impossible. But it is exactly this combination which impels us to try each time with more desire.

What did we want to improve? Everything. The position, the proportions, the design of some specific parts... the perception. Everything.



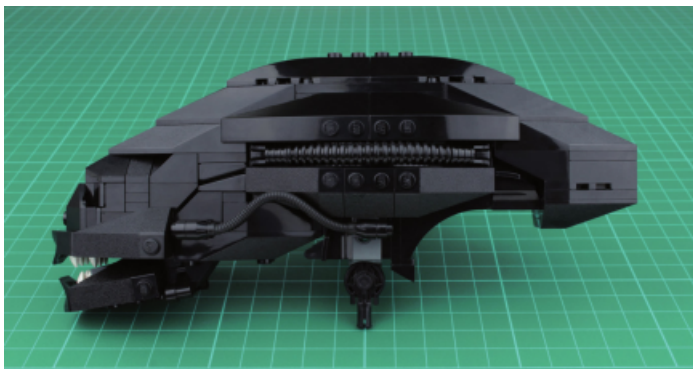
Looking back, we realise years go by and even though we have worked professionally as LEGO designers for TT Games, where we were instructed in the "liturgy" of design, our way of facing projects has changed little. However, there has been a substantial change that has little by little marked the difference with regard to our earlier constructions: we design less and less based on intuition.

Is that good or bad? We still don't know, but it turns out to be a lot less complicated. We believe we're taking a less artistic approach, but there's more craft... Is that good or bad? Actually, it matters very little. Armed with some reference images and trying to bring out the best in ourselves we fired up our computers, opened the Cheetos and got to work.

As always, we started with the most characteristic element, the one that would indicate the level of accuracy we would be able to reach. In this case, the **head**.

Our objective at this stage is clear: obtaining a profile that is as accurate as possible; dispensing with some of the sidesteps we were forced to use in our first version, basically because of lack of skill. And because we still didn't understand that a "literal translation" into LEGO® parts is not often achievable.

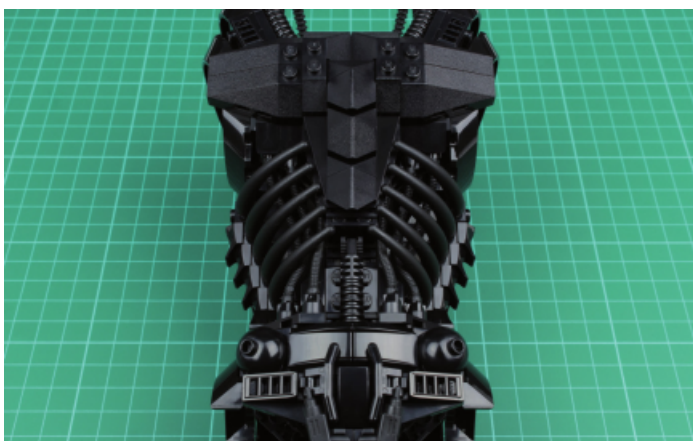
The definition of the size is imposed by "measure". From the first moment we had the firm desire to capture our adventure in another book of identical characteristics as "the book about the bike", so the size and the number of parts had to be as limited as possible while still allowing for a solid and sophisticated design.



Despite the size we found ways to introduce the main elements; tubes, interior and exterior mandibles, teeth and slimy stuff.

The head opened the way for the rest of the body and once the proportions of the model were determined we used an articulated "skeleton" to build on and complete the figure.

Despite being very careful, it became necessary to choose a posture that was as stable as possible and some "friendly" but firm joints. We did many tests, but finally the Technic/Rotation Joint Socket parts were chosen to solve the critical points.



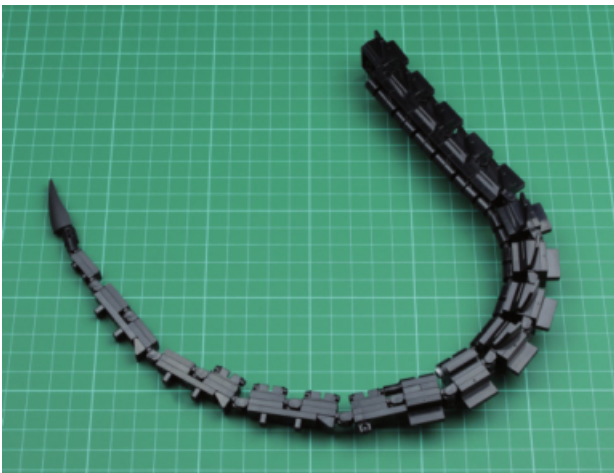
Horns, hoses, curved slopes and minifig accessories make up part of the front of the torso, sharing space with more classical building styles.

We wanted to get a "clean" model, with as few "accidents" as possible, putting emphasis on the gesture and general look and presence, but without giving up on the characteristic details of the original design. For the extremities we used textures, but the trunk was where we could really into it - that is where we included the best part of this kind of detailing.



It was really tempting to design a disproportionately long tail, curling around the figure in a show of aggressiveness and dynamism. However stability won over aesthetics.

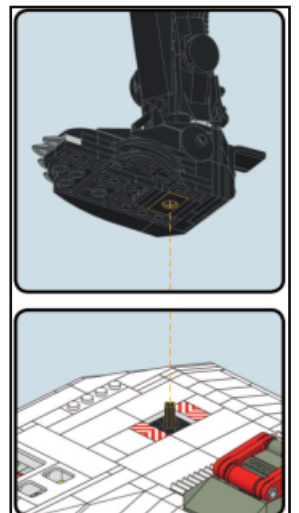
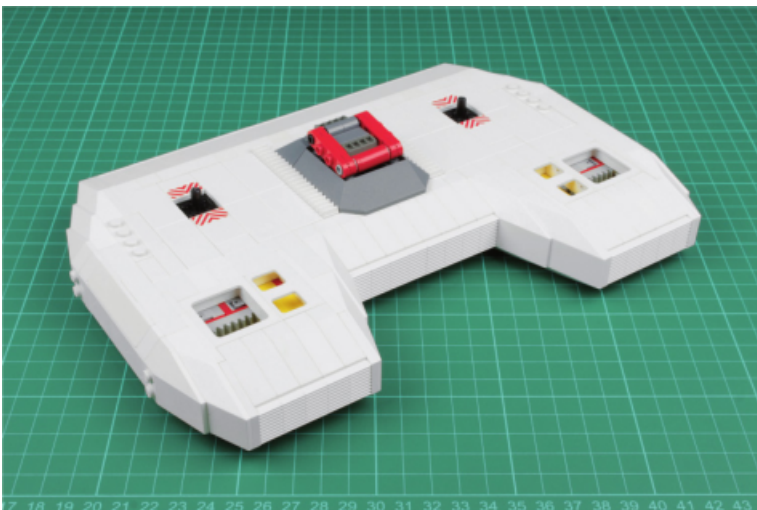
Designing a standing figure required using every possible help to balance and anchor its position. The tail was designed with that idea in mind; as a stabilising element, but without forgetting its purely cosmetic function.



We built the base to fix the position of the feet and give the model a solid and stable support. It was not at all easy to choose a design.

The possibilities were immense, but the idea of somehow rescuing the aesthetics of the NOSTROMO started to take shape as the project advanced. If H.R. Giger dazzles for what dazzles, Ron Cobb does so for what he does. His designs are brilliant, unique, exact, balanced... genius.

We chose a base that reproduced the geometry of the doors that can be seen in the halls, rooms chambers etc. We chose white for obvious reasons. We added some details to underline the mechanical character and allowed two short axles to protrude that would "capture" the figure.



The sole of the foot includes the necessary parts (Technic bricks 2x1) to guarantee a perfect encounter between the figure and the base.

The result is very stable. All the elements - head, trunk and arms - can take different positions and are balanced between them. Unless you cat's name is "Jonesy" they will stay perfectly positioned.

1992 is the total number of parts that are necessary to build the complete model, figure and base. We have tried to adjust this number as much as possible, "lightening" where possible or grouping where space allowed.



BOOK v2.0

Making a book that details the design and construction process of a model, with graphical outlines, diagrams of colours, text and pictures... is in itself a romantic idea. The desire to reflect the experience, to conserve it and make it available to others is, in itself, also romantic.

In practice it requires a lot of willpower, order, effort and sacrifice that are - at all levels - enormous. Even so, it is worth it!

We have always believed that paper is the ideal carrier for the preservation of an idea, an experience, a feeling. It may seem pretentious and very probably our "adventure" does not merit this treatment... but we needed to do it. It must be our age ;);)



The structure of the book is really simple. The instructions present the central nucleus and they are surrounded by a series of chapters that show, describe, explain and justify some of the most characteristic phases or techniques

From a descriptive point of view the main views of the model are shown - with some annotations that are of interest, both of the figure and the base - and even a diagram of the evolution of the model, as well as an analysis of the parts used, a detailed description of the elements of the model and a picture gallery ... and of course a list of parts.

We believe we have included everything necessary to make the whole process perfectly comprehensible and to allow you to build the model comfortably and without any trouble.



Just like we do when we build, we have cared for every detail of the book. Its format and finishing, the margins on each of its pages, the colour combinations, the distribution and combination of texts and images on a page spread and even the weight - a real headache - are some of the details that have required much attention.

The choice of font or the "motives" that appear on some of the pages was designed to respect, with more or less success, the aesthetics of the universe created by Ron Cobb and the 70s/80s atmosphere that for generational reasons attracts us so much.



The colours we used in some areas of the book recreate the "cold" ambience, spiced with some of the motives of the schematic type that add a certain aseptic character to the "scene".

Although the idea gestated a long time ago, materialising the project has taken us nearly two years. Working on it every day. We could say 70% of the time was taken up by the design/construction model - figure and base - and the remaining 30% putting together the book.



Although we distinguish "plastic" from "cellulose", the phases of design/construction of the model and composition of the book shared space, almost from the very beginning of the project.

After all, a large part of the text comes from the almost annotations that described the incidences that are worth mentioning.

What has required more concentration?... we would know, but the layout phase required a lot of attention. Any change could affect various pages at the same time - more or less consecutive - with the subsequent danger of omissions or mistakes. Something almost inevitable when you manage so much information, even if you test it on a daily basis.

We are really exhausted and the same time very happy to have managed to bring this new project to light. A project that started as a simple conversation without more pretension than to pass the time and that has turned into a project we are really proud of. A small feat that, achieved together with a brother, becomes especially valuable.

Tired but content ... and above all profoundly thankful to all those who cheered us on and supported us on a daily basis. Without their encouragement there is no magic.

For all of you.

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