

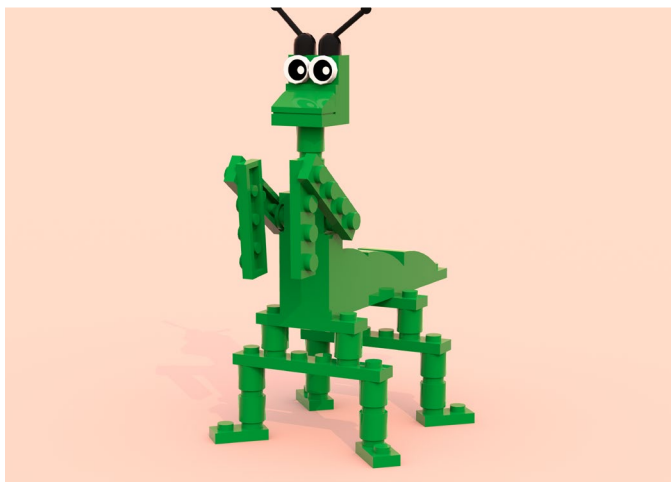
# Writing a LEGO® Book - The LEGO® Zoo

By Jody Padulano



Writing a book has always been one of my childhood dreams. I read many books back then, literally piles of them, and I wished to be able to entertain a reader the way these authors were entertaining me. It's all a matter of inspiring people, just as LEGO® bricks aim to do. When you find something interesting, you get inspiration from that and it may lead you to reproduce the things you love. This also applied in my case – I tried to make LEGO® sets that looked like the ones I was given, and I tried to write books in my notebooks that looked like the adventure books I loved to read.

I found them again as an adult, and they were terrible. Interesting, but terrible. Anyway, I was a child and that was the best I could do. As an adult I tried to write something better, and started writing LEGO® news on a small blog, my LUG's one, in order to keep practicing. Who would have ever guessed that this practicing would have led me, one day, to write a book of my own? I certainly wouldn't have. But that became true in a very short time. From daydreaming about writing a book to having my very first book in my very hands took only a few months of work. I realized that this was a reality only when I saw the cover for the first time. But let's backtrack to how it all started.

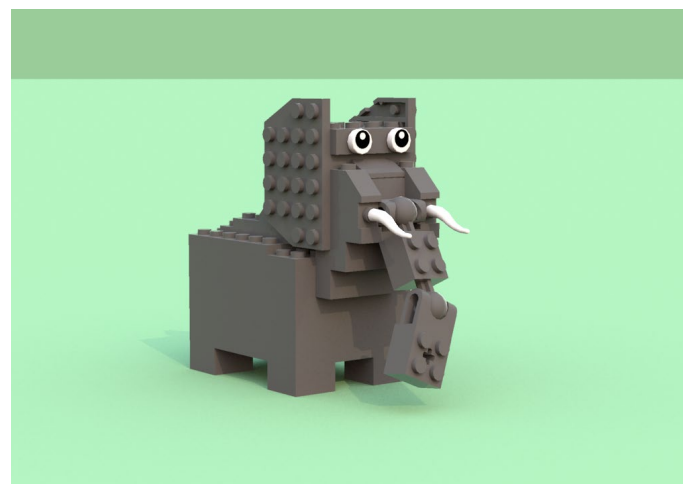


People knew me from my articles on my LUG's site, and I was active also on Facebook which led me to be known even outside of my LUG. So when NuiNui, a Swiss editor who was looking for LEGO® authors in Italy, asked the biggest LUG in my country (ItLug) for people interested in writing, I was contacted. I was euphoric, but still cautious as I always am when something that I really want is approaching. I had some telephone interviews and I gradually understood that this thing was real, and that I was about to make it even more real. I met the editor and set up a contract – my first one for a book. I was amazed! I really couldn't believe it because, well, it has always been a dream of mine.

My task was to develop some funny-looking animals in LDD and, if the editor liked them, build 50 of them in order to complete the book. I was also asked for some more chapters that would help children to organize their bricks and learn how to get the parts used in the book. I was also asked to use very common bricks – ones that one could easily be found on BrickLink without spending too much. Things went really smoothly, my concepts were liked and this became a daily job. Creating an animal in LDD, making instructions, rendering, writing an introduction, and working out the cost for the pieces that made it, were all tasks that I had to execute for every single animal, and it wasn't easy.



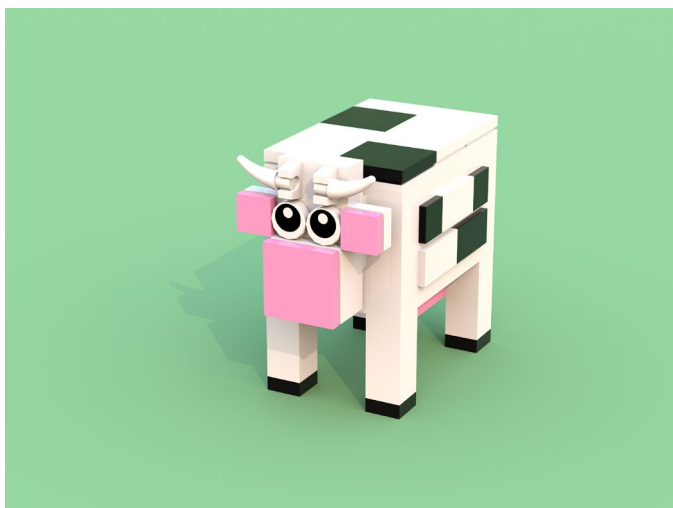
I stumbled upon many problems, from technical issues with the software I used or the machines I worked on, to lesser problems of various nature. I happened to finish one animal only to discover that some pieces were very rare and unavailable on BrickLink, which led me to have to re-work the model. One time I even had to start again from scratch.



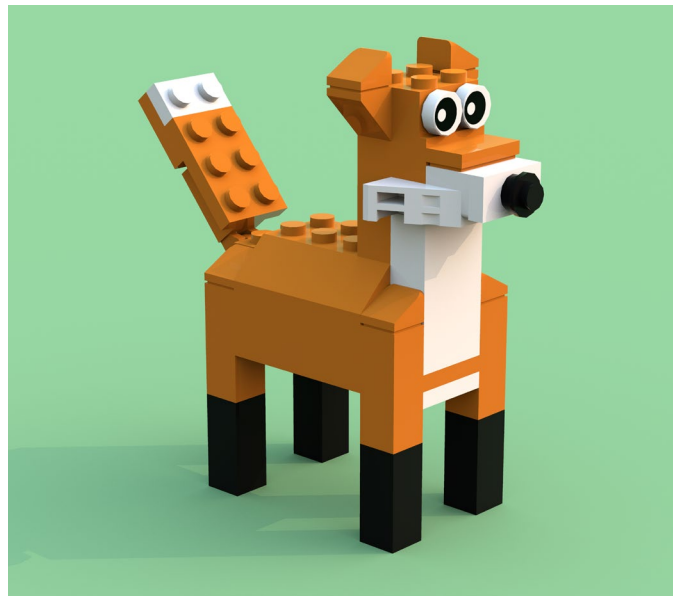
None of these problems, however, stopped me from achieving my goal, and in the end I can say the months passed by smoothly as the work kept on going and more and more animals were complete. In the end all 50 animals were ready in a timely manner. I remember sending in the last few days five animals at a time, until with a final email all of them were over and my job was ended. I was relieved. All the stress that had built up due to the fear of missing the delivery date flew away in seconds and was replaced by a sense of relaxation mixed with joy for the work done. This is the same thing I usually experience when I place the last brick on a MOC that I like, and then can't wait for it to be displayed at some event. I couldn't wait to have my book in my hands. Editing and printing took some months, and I always feared that something could go wrong in the meantime. But this didn't happen, and in September the book hit the shelves in many libraries. The editor was very happy and asked me to write a second one. I couldn't believe that. I recall the moment like it was seconds ago: I was in a parking lot and was parking my car when the phone rang. I was so happy I can't find words now which are accurate enough to describe it.



The LEGO® Zoo (the title of my first book) has a full collection of 50 cartoon-style animals. I drew inspiration from cartoon drawings of animals found on Google images. I would choose the one that I thought fitted best with my style, and built that. One exception is the cat, which should, in theory, look like my girlfriend's cat, Paco. Or something like him. Every LDD model is downloadable via QR code within a Zipfile also containing a rendered model which rotates through 360°. All the parts for each animal are checked on BrickLink in order to be easily found. There is no animal that needs a BrickLink order from more than a single shop. Most pieces can easily be found on the LEGO® Shop site in the Pick-a-Brick section.



This book is dedicated to Joe Dever, who was my favourite childhood author and who sadly passed away in 2016. He inspired me so much I can hardly tell you, and I was lucky enough to have met him in person and had one of his books signed. I think about that day every time I am asked to sign my book for friends. I don't find myself that important, nor do I expect in my wildest dreams to become such inspiration as he was for thousands of people, but if I can manage to inspire even a single child, my job is done.



I have also written a second book that will hit the shelves in 2018, and I'll start writing a third one as soon as possible. I am amazed by how it escalated so quickly, but I want to make hay while the sun shines. I mixed my two passions – writing and creating LEGO® models – in the best way I could hope for. I don't know if I'll ever be able to take my time and write a real adventure book that tells a story, but only time will tell.

In the meantime I am just happy to share with all the wonderful readers of HispaBrick my personal experience, wishing everybody who really wants something to seize their chance whenever it is possible. My dream was a small one, but in my mind it seemed unreachable until I made it a reality.  
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