



Having a glance back at the pieces of my childhood, in my school notebooks, smattered with sketches, shelves with mismatched toys upon them, and afternoons of making up imaginary cities, I see that some influential things might seem ordinary most of the time. Not only did my lifelong interest in creating elaborate Lego structures develop my imagination, but it also eventually led me to a career as an architect, as it taught me how to imagine spaces and solve problems creatively, and why it is worthwhile to discover a reason to transform ideas into reality. My interest in building started on a random summer afternoon, at seven years of age, when I was given my first large Lego set. It took place in our tiny living room with the sounds that were common in our home: my mother preparing food in the kitchen, my brother screaming at a football match, and the ceiling fan running gently over our heads. I received a box with a bright red paper in the hands of my father, and I remember him saying very excitedly, "I think you'll like this." Hundreds of colored bricks were poured on the carpet like jewels when I tore it open. I recall hours and hours of sitting cross-legged as the guidebook put options for me to make on the table. Initially, I was overwhelmed by the number of pieces, but as the walls started to become aligned and the windows started to line up, quiet determination overcame my feeling of frustration. With time, though, the hobby became a challenge: pieces were lost, constructions were falling apart, and designs were difficult to master. Nevertheless, these little battles made me realize that I was resilient and accurate and that I needed to know why something had failed during the first attempt before I could make it better. In retrospect, I can observe how this childhood experience is a general truth and that the seeds of our future are frequently planted at the most unexpected time. As I grew older, I transformed my recreational activity into a purposeful one. I started to build my own buildings, draw plans in a notebook, and remodel

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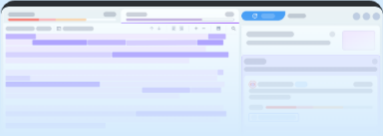
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As the most unexpected time, I grew older, I transformed my recreational activity into a purposeful one. I started to build my own buildings, draw plans in a notebook, and remodel existing sets to make them better. I vividly recall making an attempt to re-create a miniature skyline based on an outing with the family. No matter how many times I worked on the base, the highest tower tilted to one side. I was impatient and swearing. I made many tries before noticing that it is not the tower, but the foundation that needed my attention. That little discovery felt important, as though it had been possible to learn structure at a deeper level, which helped new possibilities open. The new challenges brought about in these experiments included balancing proportions, visualizing interiors, handling symmetry, and creating a stable and appealing structure. I was practicing early architecture unconsciously. The deeper I read, the more interested I was in real buildings and could read why a particular shape was selected and how architects managed to find a solution to complicated design issues. It was a time that helped me to learn that learning can often be relevant when you are not in the classroom, and that exploration driven by passion can be the most educational thing. Looking back at these years of building, demolishing, and reconstructing has helped me realize how severely this hobby shaped me as a person. The hours spent playing with bricks showed that I was interested in similar things: I liked solving spatial puzzles, was excited by creative challenges, and loved to make messy piles into coherent and meaningful structures. When my high school counselor questioned me on what I would like to major in, what came to my mind was the miniature cities that I would construct. I understood that my enthusiasm did not lie in the toy itself but in the imaginative process that it involves, the process of space-making and the process of making things happen. This discovery made me understand that architecture is not a blind decision but the continuation of my childhood interest. The frustration from collapsing towers was reflected

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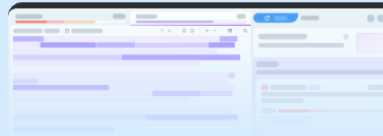
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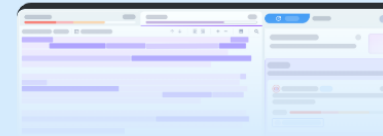
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