

Dan Turkel

I recently put up some *Container Store* shelves in my room. They're white, plain and serve only to display, without commentary or ornamentation, what I've chosen to put on them and what I've chosen to put on them serves only to display, without commentary or ornamentation, who I am.

On the top shelves are two *Lego* creations of mine that survived the sad but necessary purge of childhood toys. One is a spaceship built exactly to the instruction booklet's specifications and the other ship is a time machine of my own design. Its roof can be carefully removed to reveal the detailed interior where there are several steering wheels and a pilot in front of a large windshield (or spacetime-shield, as the case may be). Looking at it, I remember days spent sitting on the floor, surrounded by the colored bricks, imagining a world of yet-unbuilt fantastical vehicles. By transporting me back to those days, the time machine works better than I had expected it would.

Below the *Lego* ships are two shelves of books. A couple of books on coding and programming and a phonebook sized *Mouser Electronics* catalog unashamedly show off my nerdy side. The *Mouser* catalog is probably not something a lot of people would enjoy reading since it is just a 1000-plus page list of various electronic parts for engineers, but I scan, fascinated, through the index and skip to pages with names of anything that sounds interesting.

*A B and H Photo* catalogue, *The Ultimate Field Guide to Photography*, and *Great Photographic Essays from Life* display an ongoing passion for photography that began with an after-school program in fourth grade and has evolved into attending numerous summer programs, taking portraits for the school yearbook, and displaying work in a local art gallery. Complementing those, on a shelf below, are several cameras whose still-life-like arrangement, even more so than their presence at all, indicates a constantly engaged photographic thought process. Looking through a lens allows for creativity as broad as does sitting in front of a big box of *Lego* bricks. My medium has changed but my desire to create remains strong. And photography isn't a solitary experience for me—the darkroom allows for a kind of bonding or, when things go wrong, commiserating, that is difficult to emulate anywhere else. Photography lets me be social and have fun, but also be individual and express myself.

*Thinking with Type: A Critical Guide* and an issue of the somewhat avant-garde biannual art publication *Esopus* hint at an undying interest in all types of artistic expression. *The Complete Peanuts: 1950-1952* and several collections of *Calvin and Hobbes* reveal an unwillingness to hide what makes me laugh, even if it's aimed primarily at children. The copy of *Strunk and White's Elements of Style* is simply indispensable and surely requires no explanation or justification. On the shelf below are many of my beloved magazines, ranging from photo magazines to music and culture quarterlies to anything at all that catches my eye. Something about the ease with which one can absorb little bits of information from magazine articles has always appealed to me.

I nearly forgot. Above the magazines, next to the cameras, is a little metal container filled with various turtles made of wood, rubber, and plastic. Most are ornamental, some have bobbly heads, one is a (dead) flashlight. I leave interpretation of the significance of this collection to the reader with only a small warning: don't go looking for anything too profound. I just like turtles.