The snow house

There once was a struggling grad student.

They worked on building houses.

In particular, this grad student was working on how to build a house with snow.

The other grad students were very capable, and very productive.

They were already building lots of houses.

How to build houses with chimneys

How to build houses that are tall

How to build houses that are long and connected

Some of them had entire villages!

The sad grad student was very sad.

– I can build walls with bricks.

I can build four walls to make a room.

I can put ceilings and attics and roofs on them to make a house.

I can make houses with fancy configurations to make skyscrapers and dormitories and townhouses and villas.

Brick is a very workable material.

All the other grad students are so productive!

But I cannot make a house with snow. I don't even have a single house.

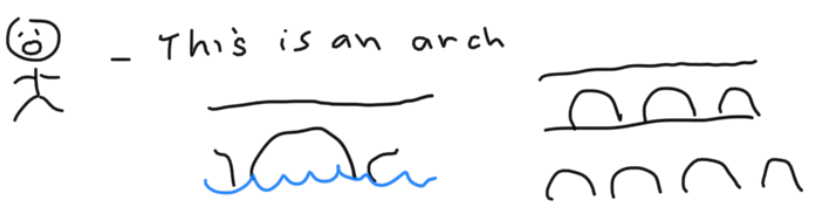
All the sad grad student had was a layer of snow bricks.

– But I cannot make a snow ceiling. ;;

The grad student felt very unproductive. All these

study other houses! They didn't write anything. They didn't build anything. All they did was sit, and look at things, and think.

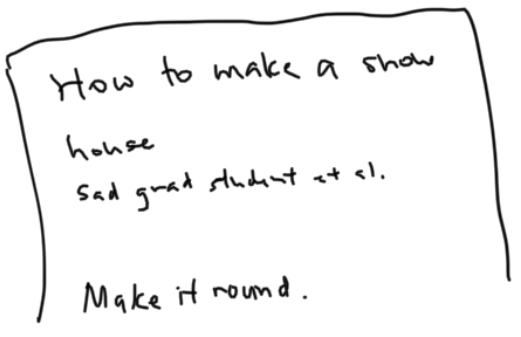
Sad grad student just looked at things.



This is a brick

I need a ceiling.

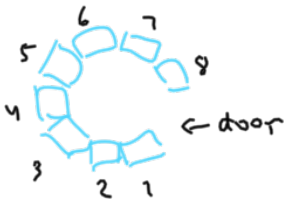
Finally, one day, they figured it out!

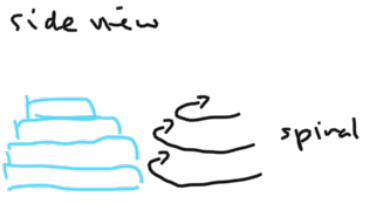


1st publication

1 sentence-long abstract

Alg 1. Brick layout for a round house.





Appendix.

Ice window.

one house, and the paper was very short.

The grad student really struggled to make sense of their work's value. ? ? worth thinking about?

All they did was draw a connection. What they did could be summed up very simply. Yet it was hard. (? Was it really?)

They felt lots of self-doubt throughout the project and after.

"Everybody knows about snow! And everybody knows about brick!
It is the very first thing even an undergrad learns about in
House Building 101.
How can what I did be so hard?"

They came to uneasy terms with trusting that their work had intrinsic worth.

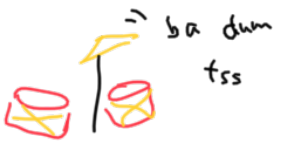
– Who says what makes a problem hard? The Egyptians built pyramids out of sand, was that hard?
The Mayans built pyramid temples and the Mesopotamians built ziggurats, were those hard?
Anyone can dig a burrow and call it a cave house, and that is making a connection. If that is easy, then is what I did easy? Was I incompetent? Nobody else worked on the same problem as me, so how can I know?

Years later, the paper "How to Build a Snow House" languished.
Next to no one cited it. Very few real people truly benefited from the work.

– The population in polar regions is very low anyway.

Not a lot of important activity depends on living in a snow house.

Skyscrapers, meanwhile, were groundbreaking.



Citation score . com

How to Build a Snow House

9 citations

Top citing articles

23 Do we really need a snow house?

11 Snowhouses induce claustrophobia

3 Bouncy castles, ice sculptures, and other fun things at Montréal's annual summer festival

House on Another House Makes a Taller House

10774 citations

Top citing articles

8995 SKYSCRAPER: Super-tall houses

8763 Just add more house layers

524 How skyscrapers could solve global overcrowding

Nevertheless, sad grad student became sad senior grad student, then sad student with a PhD in House Building, and, eventually,

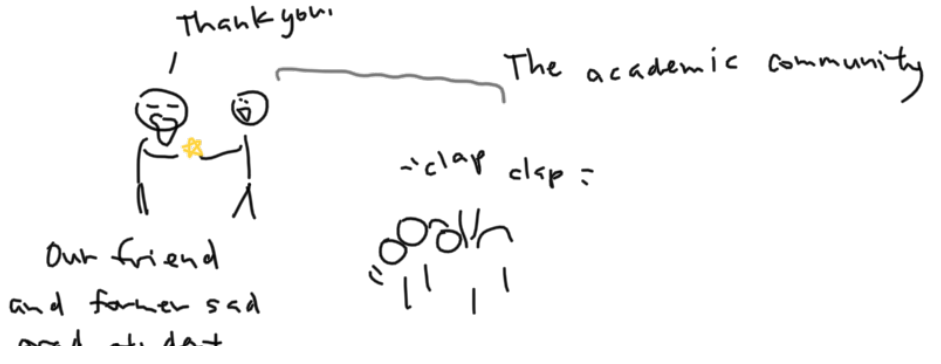
sad professor of House Building with tenure.

(At this point they were really more mellow with tinge of sad.)

They continued to do their style of work.

And so, somehow, an academic career was lived.

Even more years later, mellow professor was formally recognized for their work. Their peers felt they made some solid contributions.



The press release thought it worthwhile to note their work on building show houses:

Editorial review accompanying announcement of prize awardment, excerpt:

How to make a show house and a ceiling that does not fall is very hard. The solution is very elegant. And it takes a strong understanding of the physics behind arches to apply it in a novel way. The arches that sad grad student studied carried weight. Sad grad student used the arch for a roof where there is no weight on top to care about. It was a truly impressive work that marked the start of a career that would go on to be similarly innovative.

. . . The End.

Please cite this work as

Do we really need a snow house?

References

How to Build a Snow House