

WATERCOLOUR ARTIST *back* IN ACTION

DYNAMIC HIP SCREW. Three words nobody would think applied to me. Not for many a long year. But it's what the surgeon used to fix my cracked thigh bone over four months ago. Since then I haven't picked up a brush. Why? Because I can't get into my studio.

Six years ago I converted my roof space into a studio. Access is via a beautiful wooden folding loft ladder up which I regularly climbed and family and friends would regularly ask if I could still manage it. After my accident I had to admit I couldn't. But now it's time I got my finger out. High (!) time to ascend to the dizzy height of the studio. Here I go. First one step (only ten more to go) now the second. And that's as far as I can go. It's crazy to risk climbing higher. So what now?

I have two bedrooms. The small one boasts a folding bed, two computers, and cupboards and drawers which are stuffed full of things that I may well need in the future, at the moment don't need, but can't quite bring myself to discard. Nevertheless, I worked out that if I got rid of the bed, cleared a couple of shelves and bought a large table, I'd have room for all my art gear. "Anyone want a folding bed?" "No." "Really?" "No."

Then - a friend of a friend, a young mother with a husband and two boys, would love it. A few days later, I greeted her on my doorstep. She looked very young and small to me.

"On your own?" I enquired.

"Oh, yes" she replied.

"Where are you parked?"

"Oh, I only live down the road. I walked"

"How are you going to get it home?"

"I'll wheel it"

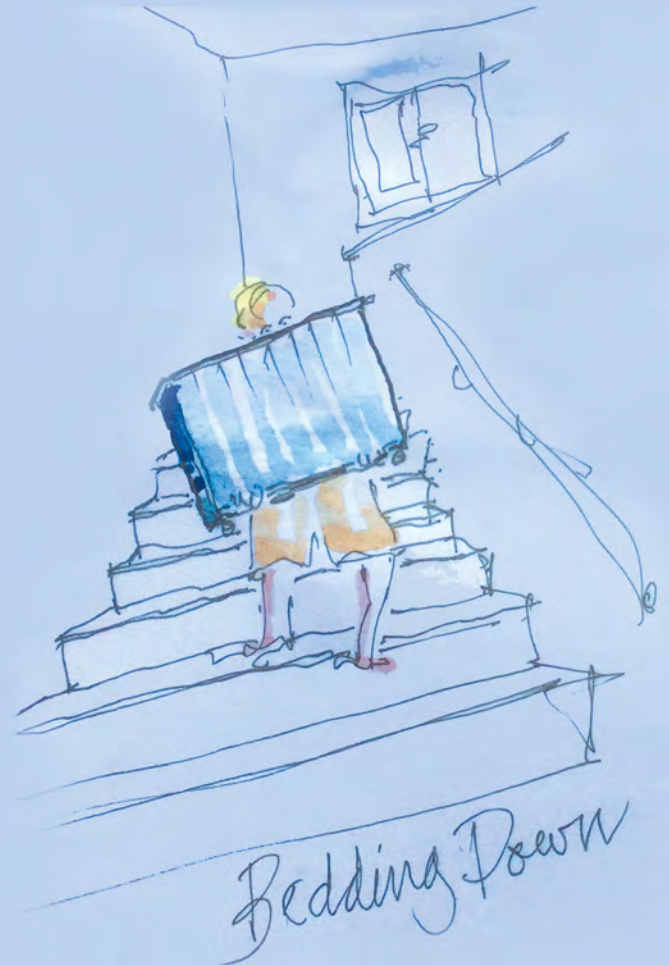
"Will you manage to get it downstairs?"

"Oh, don't worry. I'll manage. I'm very strong. I work with horses. I have to be strong, especially if they are lazy and won't lift their hooves."

She was as good as her word and brought the bed downstairs in next to no time.

"Are you sure you don't want anything for it?" she enquired.

I was sure. But then I asked if she could carry a couple of boxes



upstairs for me. She was happy to help. The boxes contained the bits and pieces for my new Ikea table. One with the table top, 4' long by 2'8" deep and the other with two legs and two 2'6" shoes all made from cast iron plus a steel frame that had to be fixed to the underside of the table top to which the legs would be attached. Weighed a ton.

My new best friend carried the boxes upstairs without any bother. I waved her off. Off she went, happily wheeling her new bed to its new home.

I tried assembling the table but I didn't have the strength to hold a leg and screw a foot to it. It was all just too heavy. But my special friend, Liz, came to my rescue and I am now all set up and I am painting again.

Ric Hinchliffe June 2016