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OUR BRILLIANT COLUMNIST WRITES EXCLUSIVELY FOR W&H EACH MONTH

“I love my home, but I’ve never found joy in making my own cushions”

I’ve never been big on craft. After all, why make my own gift wrap, tags and ribbon when I can buy a pack of wrapping paper, plus coordinating ribbons and bows for £7? I know, I know... it’s not just about saving money. Indeed, a friend who got bitten by the jam-making craze last summer reckoned by the time she’d invested in jam thermometers, fancy jars and special labels, her jars were not only fit for a princess, they could only be afforded by one!

But even though I love my home, I’ve never discovered the joy of making my own cushions or gluing wine corks to plywood to make a cork board (though there would be some fun in drinking the 20 bottles of wine to get the corks!).

Which is not at all the same as saying I have never enjoyed some exceptional crafty moments. Here are my top three:

The spaceship birthday cake.

My son was four and had been to a succession of friends’ birthday parties where the cakes

were progressively more amazing and all lovingly handmade.

“Can I have a spaceship one?” he asked. My friend promised to help.

“You can use empty tin cans to make a rocket,” she said airily. Then her child got ill. I was on my own. I tried to follow her plan and baked and iced and grew red in the face. On the day, he blew out his five candles and said, “I love my hedgehog birthday cake, Mummy.”

My mother’s present. It’s my mother’s birthday in March and I recall one year, at a tender age, unsure of what to buy her, I decided to make her something. The only

problem was that without the benefit of a craft goddess to guide me, I was stuck for an idea, so I painted a stone and gave it to her as a paperweight. There were tears on her face, but whether they were from joy or laughter is another matter altogether. **The soap recycler.** I was in the Brownies and wanted to earn the Thrifty badge. So I sewed a facecloth into a purse shape, adding a fastener. The idea was that you put those small bits of old soap bars that are too tiny to use into the pouch and, hey presto, you have a foaming facecloth. Thrifty, maybe. Hygienic? Never.

But then I got to thinking about what crafts I actually do have in my home. My son made me some animal pencil tops from pipe cleaners for Christmas one year and to be honest I did shed a tear; to me they were beautiful. And then there is my daughter’s drawing turned into my office mouse mat, and the paperweight stone she painted my face on. She was three so I look like

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a horse, but it’s all right, it’s the thought that counts. I also have tea towels of the kids’ drawings and Christmas decorations they have made every year since they were able

to that I wouldn’t part with for all the crystal ones in the world. I have a papier-mâché crocodile and a dog toy I knitted for my daughter before she was born. Its head is lopsided and the stuffing has almost come out, but she loves Scamp and wouldn’t part with him.

Therefore, I deduce that crafts are for kids or only those among us who are seriously brave or seriously talented. Good luck! **w&h**

