



One Story About Four Stories

One particular aspect of my life these days is something that I could never have imagined during my early years of living in Japan. At that time, six of us (our immediate family plus my children's Japanese grandparents) were living together in a standard 3DK apartment, so the idea that I would one day live in a four-story building ... alone ... would have been inconceivable.

But here I am, in my sixth year of living in my wonderfully large home in Ome. Now I should qualify that phrase 'large home' right away, for the benefit of the foreigners who are reading these little stories; this may be a four-story building, but the total floor area - all four stories included - comes to just 141 square meters. When described in the measurement system common in America, this is 1,518 square feet, or just about 69% of the current average home size in that country.

For one person alone though, whether in Japan or America, 141 square meters should be enough, don't you think? When I first moved here, it took two trucks - and not such small ones either - to bring my possessions over from that tiny apartment! How on earth had all that stuff been packed in there? It seemed completely impossible!

After the trucks had unloaded everything here at the new place, and I got most of it stowed away, I enjoyed quite a feeling of spaciousness, as I'm sure you can imagine. As everybody knows though, there is an immutable law of nature that comes into play in this situation: 'possessions expand to fill the space available'.

Now don't misunderstand - I don't mean to imply that I've been on a shopping spree, buying stuff for my home. With no other family here, I actually buy very little other than consumables these days. But many of the books previously packed away in boxes have now come out onto open shelves, and in general, with no special pressure to keep things packed so tightly, they do tend to over-run the place.

Over and above these factors though, is one other very major point. This building is not just a home for me, it is also a 'home' for my printmaking activity. There are bundled woodblocks in rooms on every floor, stacks of cardboard mailing packages of different sizes, packages of printing and wrapping paper waiting for use, and most voluminous of all, a large collection of display panels and stands for use at the exhibitions.

I walked around just now, trying to make a rough calculation of how much of the floor area here is taken up by business-related material, and find that it comes to more than 80%. This isn't a workshop in my home, this is me living in a factory!

I am very curious how my daily life would be different, both in the space, and the time, available for personal affairs, if I had arranged for my printmaking activities to take place in a separate building. What would I do in this big empty house if I came home from work at 6:00 in the evening, like some other people do?

I can't imagine what that would be like!

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>