



The Drink Tank Issue 142

Artcrimes
by
Frank Wu

Sometimes when you're an artist (and by "artist" I include various creative types, including "writers"), you can get away with stuff, like breaking laws without consequence. Sometimes.

Being naked in public is indecent exposure - unless you're doing it with a hundred other people at a photographer's behest. Then it's art. There are laws against endangerment - and yet you can lock yourself in a room with a hungry wolf or encase yourself in a block of ice. Then it's performance art.

Pornography is bad bad bad, unless the intervening scenes have dialog in French. Then it's an art house film.

At Burning Man last week, Paul David Addis was arrested for setting fire to the Man himself several days ahead of schedule. His act of Premature Immolation coincided with the lunar eclipse and was done with a little help from his friends. No one was hurt, but the man was destroyed before the fire was put out. (A substitute man was hastily constructed and burned on schedule.) Addis faces felony charges of arson and destruction of property, as well as misdemeanor possession of fireworks and resisting a public officer. He seems to be reveling in his new-



found mini-celebrity, as indicated by his mug-shot, which has spread meme-like across the internet.

Someone who came back from

Burning Man told me, "Well, his life is over."

I don't think so. Because, well, he's an artist. He plays Hunter S. Thompson onstage. The charges against him seem a little silly. If you go into a seething mass of anarchic pranksters, you take your chances.

I had once built an eleven foot-tall phywood cut-out of a toucan, ringed with rope lighting. Some friends took it to Burning Man (I went to Worldcon that year). It lit up their camp at night, and since it was so tall, you could see it from really far away. But my buddies warned me: Sometimes on the night the Man is burned, the pyromaniacs go a little nutso and grab anything that might burn. The toucan might not return from the desert. My theory is that if you walk into a desert, a place with no water and no life, a harsh climate with nothing to eat and nothing to sit on, if you come back out alive, you're ahead of the game.

Burning Man is a place where the rules vanish like dust in the wind. Legal and social prohibitions against licentiousness, public nudity, boozing, drugging and general mayhem and chaos simply disappear, replaced with the trust that the people around you are crazy in a fun but not dangerous way.

Arresting someone for an art-crime in an atmosphere like that is simply ludicrous. And Mr. Addis knows

it. I'm sure he happily coughed up the \$26K bond, perhaps writing it off as an advertising expense for his budding art career. (He also worked as a patent attorney before he quit to do art full-time, so he's probably not in bad financial shape at all.)

So I say, forgive the guy (he's due back in court in Nevada September 25), let it go, and move on.

On the other hand, even though I ask for forgiveness for my fellow artists, I really try to not do anything regrettable myself. People use "I'm an artist" as excuses for all sorts of things. "Oh, I don't have time to do laundry, because I'm an artist." "I haven't paid my taxes in years, because I'm an artist." "I don't worry about personal hygiene, because I'm an artist." "Why do you have piles of junk in the living room? Oh, it's an art project."

I can respect people who create things or attempt challenges because they're artists; I have no respect for using "art" as an excuse for laziness.

But, hey, we are artists, and sometimes anarchists annoyingly do unexpected things. And that's why people hate us. Or love us. Or both simultaneously.

I don't like all art (personally I think a lot of "performance art" is silly), but I plead for their chance to do it. I don't respect all religions (e.g., some cults which exist only to provide power and money for their founders),

but I will defend the freedom of religion in this land. If I am allowed to create my art and practice my Christian faith, others should be allowed to create their art and practice what they believe.

Editor's Note: I'm not so sure. If you buy into the Burning Man theory (and go and read there website and see if you can do so) then they have a right to be angry. Now, I'm not sure that arson is the right charge, I'd say malicious mischief.

And with that, I'd like to present several photos from the 2007 Burning Man from J. Slang Beloussow. You can find more at tripoutdesign.com or [mishap at DeviantArt.com!](http://mishap.at)



Burning Man 2007



It's stuff like this that makes me want to actually go to Burning Man. If it weren't up against WorldCon, I'd probably have already made the trip out to the Playa.

That is basically an Industrial Habitrail. It's a climbable playstructure. You can get from the bottom cab to the top through that tube. How they do these things, I dunno.

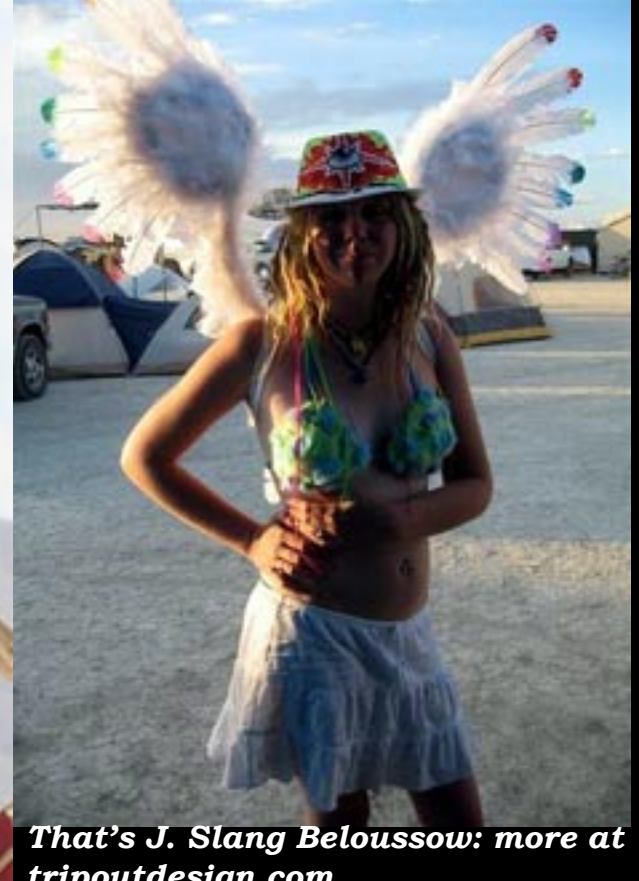


The thingee above was listed as a Steampunk Treehouse. There are many of those kinds of thing, especially this year for some reason. There is a ThunderDome, where people can compete with one another (Two Men Enter, One Man Leaves!). I'd play that hard core if I had the chance!

Burning Man 2007



You see, it's this sorta arty stuff that I'd really love to get to see. The problem is, I'm not the kind who 1) likes to go out to inhospitable places and camp and 2) I'm not a hippy or a Free Love or a Share-and-Care or any other type that tends to go out to the festivities. I'm not big on the philosophy of Burning Man, but what's there sounds and looks amazing. I might make it one day, but who knows?



That's J. Slang Beloussow: more at tripoutdesign.com



The Museum is a geek magnet. It's not just computer geeks that run wild through our halls, it's the kind of freak that loves Ham Radios and science fiction. I've met folks who were far from technical but love the design and funky features that the old stuff contains.

In other words, we get a lot of people who are kinda like me in here.

And one thing we get are a bunch of alternative transportation junkies. Steve Wozniak is a big pusher of the Segway and he gives demos here once in a while. He never really plans them, it's just what he does when he comes over. There are people who are bike nuts (and who always seem to wear their competition clothes whenever

er they show up) and there electric car types and SuperMini fans and so on and so forth. Even with the knowledge that the strange drivers like to come to us, what I found in the parking lot that afternoon was a bit shocking!

I had just returned from History San Jose and was

carrying a lot of info in my head when I pulled into our lot and saw some Jungle Gym had been left in our parking lot. As I looked closer, I saw that it had wheels. I had to know more, so I parked in the Staff area and then



walked up to my friend's desk.

"I need one of you to come with me and bring a camera!" I said. Gene-sa, the new girl, got a camera and followed me. We made it out to the parking lot and she was laughing once she caught sight of it.

"What the Hell is that?" she said and started snapping pictures.

Indeed. what the hell was it? I looked it over and found a URL and went back inside and looked it up. I was half-expecting some sort of Hippy "Save the Planet by taking 6 over Jerks with you to work" spiel, but I didn't get that at all. Instead, it was a party bus!



That's right, the idea is that you get a bunch of people, even if they don't know each other, and you have them party together on the Conference Bike! It's like the Mexican Bus that took revelers to the St. George Spirits tasting afternoon I went to, it's just a great way to party and get places. Now, it's not really a good option for true transportation, but it's a great idea for that party you were thinking of having with some sort of stupid theme!

The inventor does a lot of bikes with all sorts of weird stuff. He also is the guy who was selling kits to turn your VW bug into a light-infested art car in the 1970s. He is an artist who has done stuff over the last four dec-

ades that has made him seem like one of those Merry Pranksters that we read so much about in history class. and by looking at the website, www.conferencebike.com, you get the feeling that he's tryin gto make a little money to retire on. I think this could be big in places like Golden Gate Park giving Bike guided tours where you have a group reserve the bike and a guide drives and gives you the news behind the scenes. That could do real business. The trouble is it's pretty wide and braking doesn't seem very easy. I'm betting that a crash with anything would result in a serious

injury because of all the weight (more than 400 lbs) and the fact there are people at all angles!

I really want to ride one of these things. It's got the power of seven people and only one driver, turning their action into a drive reality. It's a great idea and I am hoping that they'll start using our parking lot as a regular staging area for their demos in the South Bay. I haven't seen another one out there, but I'm sure it'll be back!



So another issue comes to an end with an image of The Lovely and Talented Linda! You can't go wrong with her! And that's the Slightly less lovely but certainly more bearded Ken Patterson on my other side.

And we're wearing togas.

I still haven't heard whether or not it had anything to do with it, but a few months back Andy Trembley noted on his LJ that he was free Labour Day weekend, I said he should throw a Toga party. Ken and Jerry had just gotten engaged and then announced a Toga engagement party for Labour Day weekend.

Was it all my doing...or was there more to it? You decide.

The Toga party was a lot of fun. Hosted by Merv and Judith, there were people in Togas! How can you go wrong with that? Kevin Roche was there and mixing drinks when I arrived, which felt like home! I was quite pleased when Andy made me and Linda the Lemon-Chili vodka drinks that I will now call a Bovil. They were delicious.

The highlight of the evening? Watching Animal House. Now I've seen Animal House years ago, but we watched it outside, projected onto a sheet that was hanging on a ladder. It was the right way to see it.