

Festival artwork evolves with global mission

Who: Bland Hoke, Avery Resor, Bryan Carpenter, Hallie Sales, Steve Rainer and Clint Greene

What: Flutter Tunnel art installation

When: Aug. 31-Sept. 7

Where: Burning Man Festival in Black Rock, Nev.; small-scale version shown now at Teton ArtLab

How much: Public installation; donations accepted for idea execution and material purchase

Web: www.fluttertunnel.com

By Katy Niner

This winter, a group of friends hatched an art plan.

The original mission: Seize the creative possibility of the Burning Man Festival in September. Create a large-scale, temporary art installation in the Black Rock Desert, experienced by more than 50,000 festivalgoers.

However, as soon as the group's creative gears began turning, the plan evolved and expanded.

Now, the team of Bland Hoke, Avery Resor, Bryan Carpenter, Hallie Sales, Steve Rainer and Clint Greene have a long-term goal: Channel the installation into educational opportunity. Send the solar-powered flashlights used to light the sculpture to children in Sierra Leone. Let them study at night by a powerful light.

Thus, the *Flutter Tunnel* took form.

Tunnel trajectory

The tunnel's first iteration was four summers ago, when Ben Roth, Felicia Resor and Hoke installed *Ranch Bow* on Snake River Ranch. Forty 25-foot-tall arches, paced apart, created a 700-foot-long tunnel. After two months, they dismantled the installation and the steel became agricultural fencing.

It was a design ready for revival.

Every year, the Burning Man Festival awards some \$500,000 in art grants. A week before the grant dead-



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Designed for the Burning Man Festival, the *Flutter Tunnel* includes arches of decommissioned sucker rod, plastic honeycombs left over from sequin production, and solar-powered flashlights, which are bound for kids in Sierra Leone. This model resided on the Center for the Arts lawn.

line, the group pulled together an application: a 100-arch, 1,000-foot-long tunnel modeled after *Ranch Bow*. Though they did not win a grant, the festival did give them eight free festival tickets. The money that they would have spent on tickets now pays for material and transportation costs (in the drive from Jackson to Nevada, they plan to pick up and rent the sucker rod). They also scored a massive desert site for their sculpture.

In Teton ArtLab, a miniature model of the full sculpture stretches 30 feet long. Its subtly snaked design makes it possible for a person standing in the middle to see out either end.

For five days in the beginning of July, the team set up a one-tenth-scale tunnel on the Center for the Arts lawn. The temporary tunnel gave visual definition to the project.

Creative use

Beyond intrigue, the Flut-

ter Tunnel is innovative.

"It's a new way of looking at art," Hoke said. The installation uses material creatively, expanding each ingredient's life cycle. Sucker rod, decommissioned from oil rigs and rented for the tunnel arches, will be returned for use as fencing. Honeycombed bands of metallic plastic, left over from cutting out sequins, will decorate the tunnel. The 200 solar-powered flashlights used to illuminate the tunnel will shine on for thousands of hours in Sierra Leone.

Each component maximizes material. For instance, sucker rod reverts to flat even after being bowed with tension, allowing it to be rented and returned, undamaged.

As per Burning Man regulations, all art installations must be illuminated for night viewing. After researching lighting possibilities, they settled on the latest, rugged model of solar-powered flashlight from SunNight Solar. The flashlight

uses rechargeable batteries that last 5,000 hours as compared to conventional C batteries used in most flashlights that last 15 hours. The cost benefit is clear: The solar BoGoLight saves about \$2,330, or, 999 C batteries, according to tunnel figures.

With a plan to dangle 200 flashlights from the tunnel arches, the sculpture would ultimately save about \$466,000, or 199,800 disposable C batteries.

Most importantly to the tunnel artists, the BoGoLight is socially conscious: For every BoGoLight purchased, SunNight Solar donates one flashlight to an affiliate organization in need (BoGo stands for Buy One, Give One). The flashlights will live on elsewhere, Hoke said.

In Africa, the flashlight's benefits are compounded. According to Mark Bent, founder of SunNight Solar, many households in developing countries spend 30 percent of their

income on kerosene lighting. Curbing kerosene or wood use also benefits the environment – decreasing greenhouse gas emissions – and public health – reducing respiratory diseases caused by fumes and smoke. The flashlights promote education, allowing children to study at night, and allow women and children to walk safely home after sundown.

The tunnel team decided to take the BoGo model one step further and give the flashlights they buy away, a GoGo plan.

The seven nights of Burning Man will eat less than 1 percent of the flashlights' total battery life.

Light site

The tunnel team originally planned on distributing flashlights through Into Your Hands, a nonprofit in rural Uganda. However, a recent connection with a local nonprofit offered a way to bypass the sizeable cost of shipping the flashlights to Uganda. In August, InterConnections 21 is hosting Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier from Sierra Leone and renowned author, and will send a shipping container of books to the Schools for Salone nonprofit in Sierra Leone. The tunnel team hopes to piggyback on this shipment and send its flashlights to Sierra Leone.

Now, the artists are raising \$4,000 to buy the flashlights at \$20 each. They've sold \$600 worth of bike flutter – made from the sequin waste – around the community; at the Bike Swap at Fitzgerald's Bicycles, the Center for the Arts, and at art openings at Teton ArtLab and Lyndsay McCandless Contemporary.

With \$700 left to raise, the team accepts online donations through Fractured Atlas, a nonprofit arts service organization and the project's fiscal sponsor. Through Fractured Atlas, donations are tax-deductible (to the extent allowed by law).

To donate or learn more, visit www.fluttertunnel.com.