

The Claire Rosen & Samuel Edes Foundation Prize for Emerging Artists

Application Materials Packet for:

Brett Tracy

The Illuminated Thread

March 25, 2010
Highway 40, east of Barstow, CA

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Artist's Statement:

Rejecting the imperative of endless growth, Brett Tracy positions the human species at the end of its industrial phase. Using video and audio field recordings, the artist reveals a world built with phenomenal amounts of fossil energy and imagines the more ecologically aware human-scaled world to come.

Abstract:

The *Illuminated Thread* is a long-term bicycle-mounted look at the wonder and tragedy of the industrial age.

A growing archive of industrial and post-industrial sites of interest, visited by bicycle in the context of an open-ended global tour, the project endeavors to increase understanding of the forces that built and sustain the industrial world. As sites are selected, researched, incorporated into the route and documented, they become part of the *Illuminated Thread's* larger catalogue. As the archive expands, so too does its potential to illustrate connections between sites and the larger systems in which they are embedded. For example, revealing the true scale of the California Aqueduct requires not only examining the canal, but the power plants that produce the electricity it consumes, and the Portland cement plant that supplied its primary construction material.

Funds from the Claire Rosen & Samuel Edes Foundation Prize will support the project through its eighth stage, covering the Northeastern United States and much of Western Europe.

Project Proposal:

The Claire Rosen & Samuel Edes Foundation Prize will allow *The Illuminated Thread* to progress in the following ways:

- Existing documentation and editing equipment, tired from months of heavy use in the field, would be replaced with up to date versions.
- The project, so far limited to the United States, would go international in scope and range, including the heavily industrialized countries of Western Europe. (See *Provisional Itinerary*)
- Funds would be allocated to present an exhibition of the best work from the year on tour. In addition to a gallery show, a catalogue and DVD would be produced.

Project Goals:

1. Document and interpret the contraction phase of the industrial adventure with an emphasis on the landscapes and structures left behind.

Industrial ruins, refineries, power plants, heroic water diversion projects, mines, chemical dumps, megastructures, container ports, heavy industry, and boneyards: a long last look at the industrial world.

2. Piece together a viable image of a stable low-energy future.

A look at improvised ground-up support systems as they emerge in the cracks of the old industrial model. Organic farms, co-ops, innovative recycling, repurposing and retrofitting efforts, intentional or lifeboat communities, sustainable building models, squatting, alternative modes of exchange including gift and barter economies, decentralized energy production, technological garage tinkering, and sites of ecological recovery.

3. Offer potential symbols and narratives of a new spirituality emerging on the heels of growing disillusion in the religion of progress.

Provisional Itinerary:

Stage Five: *The Rust Belt* (July, August, September)

New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin

A look at the country's most heavily industrialized regions, now well into decline. The rust belt is evidence that the Industrial Age has entered its contraction phase.

Stage Six: *England's Industrial Legacy* (October, November, December)

England

The birthplace of the Industrial Age, England is home to more industrial ruins than anywhere else.

Stage Seven: *Untitled* (January, February, March)

France, Netherlands

Stage Eight: *Untitled* (April, May, June)

Germany, Czech Republic

Provisional Budget:

Daily : (\$15,000)

food calories a.k.a "fuel"	\$12,000
lodging/campground fees	\$2,000
incidentals: clothing, maps, camping gear, etc.	\$1,000

Travel: (\$1,980)

Airfare: Chicago, IL to London, England	\$1,500
Bicycle and luggage fees	\$480

Technology/Documentation Equipment: (\$7,020)

VIXIA HF S21 High Definition Camcorder	\$1,400
15" MacBook Pro	\$2,300
4 Western Digital 500 GB Hard Drives (\$130 each)	\$520
Final Cut Studio	\$1,000
Adobe Creative Suite 4 Design Premium	\$1,800

Bicycle: tubes, tires, chain, cassette, mechanical work, etc.	\$1,000
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Exhibition: prints, projectors, cinema displays and published material including catalogue and DVDs	\$5,000
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Total:	\$30,000
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Project Background:

After receiving their MFA degrees from the University of Chicago in 2008, Tracy and his colleague, Joseph Miller, left the windy city behind and set off across North America on their Bicycles. During the 60-day ride to San Francisco via Portland, OR, the artist duo photographed sites of energy production, from wind and hydroelectric to coal and nuclear.

Going solo for *Stage Two*, San Francisco to the Mexico border, Tracy added megastructures and sites of industrial ruination to the itinerary. Abandoned shipyards, a derelict refinery, a defunct sugar plant, Disneyland's 10,000 capacity parking garage, and the world's most complex freeway interchange all made the list.

The project is currently in its third stage: a circuitous route connecting three of the desert southwest's most car dependent suburban metroplexes: Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Houston. The artist will visit and document aircraft boneyards, open-pit mines, the country's largest nuclear power complex, an abandoned military prison/labor camp and an 80,000-acre sludge ranch before reaching the Texas Petrochemical Patch east of Houston.

More information, images, videos and an extensive question and answer section can be viewed at the project's website: illuminatedthread.com.

Description of Media:

The enclosed DVD (two identical copies) contains three complete vignettes sampled from *The Illuminated Thread's* 50-site archive:

Blue Room: March 25, 2009

Jervis Bay: February 24, 2010

Salton City: March 14, 2010

Total running time: 6min. 17sec.