

This month, Best and crew built a temple in Coral Springs, Florida, a short drive from Parkland, to observe the one-year mark after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting. This temple is slated to burn in May, on a date that's not yet confirmed.

BACK TO BASICS

Best's Southeast-Asian-esque structures have what may well be an indelible reputation as "the Burning Man temple aesthetic" both on the playa and out in the real world. But as far as Burning Man staffers are concerned, the ongoing visual dialogue is still open for debate.

"Sometimes we get [temple proposals] from really well known architects," said Burning Man Art & Civic Engagement Co-Lead Katie Hazard. "We see a bit of a trend at Burning Man that bigger is better. We really encourage the smaller people that are just building something in their garage, that ... that's valid too."

As the selection committee reviewed 12 submissions for this year, they looked for someone with strong project management skills and "the right attitude."

"Sometimes we get submissions that feel like artists want to make a name for

themselves instead of it being a gift to the community," Hazard said.

She added that part of Van Der Bosch's appeal was his lack of glitz.

"Geordie's background is in building," she said. "He's not this polished, famous architect. He's built houses and decks and all that."

"I built all kinds of things," said Van Der Bosch. "As a typical architect, you tend to work for other people, other firms. I've been doing that for 12 years." He's also worked on affordable housing, a luxury housing project in Hawaii and the stadium at the University of California, Berkeley.

"The temple has a deliberate function," Van Der Bosch said. "It provides a service. So, that's the basis of how I design my temple. ... I spent a decent amount of time studying sacred buildings. ... One strategy is they try to create a sense of sacred through beauty. You can see that approach in Gothic cathedrals in Europe, with their stained glass and their vaulted structure." Rather than start with these types of visual elements, though, Van Der Bosch started with this question: "You provide a service, and so what is this service? ... 'It's remembrance and mourning and love and things like that.'"

"The austerity was definitely a specific choice," he said. "It's pretty stern, and I thought that would create a different environment to the rest of Burning Man, because

there's a lot of spectacle there. ... I wanted to create a place that shielded you from some of the other things at Burning Man, which can be really in your face and provocative. And that's OK, but maybe you don't need something that's in your face and provocative when you're putting a shrine up to your miscarried baby. You might feel a little sensitive at that moment."

Van Der Bosch also drew from a technique called "borrowed landscape," wherein the glimpses of the desert floor, mountains and sky from inside the temple are important parts of the experience of visiting the structure.

In a move that's sure to satisfy the Ikea jokesters, Van Der Bosch plans to make the temple's interior walls out of slats and leave loose boards nearby, which people can insert into the slats to make shelves to use as altars.

Another design consideration was the influence of Japanese tea houses. He's seen ones where visitors need to duck through a low doorway to enter, an act that resembles bowing, and he likes the way that "humbling yourself" to enter a place can symbolically put people from different backgrounds on the same plane.

Come August, when the temple is finally built, will its critics and the fans come to a consensus? Probably not. But a lot of them might relate to a story that Jeremy Crandall

from the Burning Man office told. He was at the Temple of Grace one day, a bell-shaped, David Best classic, and a good friend approached.

"He was visibly agitated and told me, 'What is this thing? This is the worst temple I have ever seen. It's empty, has no soul.'"

Right then, another friend approached.

"He ... placed a hand on my arm, visibly moved," Crandall said. "Jeremy," the friend said, "This is the temple we have been needing and waiting for. Its beauty clearly reflects the intention to create a spiritual space for us all."

Crandall introduced the two. They hugged each other and moved on.

"There you go," said Crandall. "There's art doing its job." □

To follow the 2019 Burning Man temple's progress and fundraising events, or for information on how to volunteer, follow The Temple of Direction on Facebook.

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