

# Art of Olive Green

## Towards Art, an Ethics & a Laugh

### Archives

#### All posts for the month July, 2011

## The Sin of the Calf

Posted by *getraer* on *July 29, 2011*

Posted in: Art, Culture crit, Engaged art, The Sides of Thoughts. Tagged: hēṛ ha'ēggel, bull, Dachlauer, Di Modica, frankfurt, sculpture, wall street. Leave a comment

Art has often kept questionable company. I'm not talking about needle-pocked libertines or anarchists, but the institutional enemies of *hoi polloi*: financiers and the Church. How many *Madonna con*

*Bambinos* were eked out to feed painters during the

Renaissance; how much art was farmed out by Wall Street in the '80s to fuel a global speculative market? Basquiat's paintings disappeared from his atelier unfinished, while the paint was still wet.



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/bulls3.jpg>)  
Dachlauer's bull, left, has no such worshipful attendance as Di Modica's. (CC Jeremy Chan & Leonieke Aalders)

Right around the same time, Arturo Di Modica and Reinhard Dachlauer created huge bronzes of bulls (and in Dachlauer's case, including a bear to form a set) that now stand near Wall Street and the Frankfurt Stock Exchange, respectively. Dachlauer's pair is not extensively documented on the Internet, but Di Modica's bull has transcended its humble beginnings as guerrilla art to become world famous.

That's right: Di Modica dropped the unsolicited "Charging Bull" on Wall Street like a takeout flyer, and it was briefly impounded before public outcry led to its present installation. Further extending the boldness of the project, Di Modica editioned the piece into five total—and who is surprised that the second bull sold is in Shanghai?

Dachlauer's bull seems to lead a pretty chaste life, but Di Modica's bull has been fondled on its plumbing so many times that the oxidized patina is regularly polished away. Its resplendent equipment shines like, well, so many Gold Mansacks, which is fitting as their headquarters is nearby. The Internet is silent on whether this trite and vulgar obeisance is spared Dachlauer's bull.

They are both fine sculptures, technically speaking. But their whole *raison d'être* has been subject to a crescendo of questions. As the U.S. churns through its deadbeat-dalliance debt crisis and the Eurozone shudders under the weight of its own souring obligations, I have to wonder why so many civilizations worshiped kine into their twilight—and why artists rush to serve the handmaidens of their societies' eclipse.

## Waste Oil: Fun, Free Furnace Fuel

Posted by *getraer* on *July 22, 2011*

Posted in: Recycling, Self-Sufficiencies, Studio, The Sides of Thoughts. Tagged: casting, furnace, green, recycle. 1 Comment

The odyssey of building a waste oil-powered blast furnace from the Artful Bodger's [plans](#)

(<http://www.artfulbodgermetalcasting.com/>) has consumed my free time almost since the inception of this blog. It melted its first 10 pounds of aluminum a month ago, but as I gear up for a proper post about it that includes video, here's a summary of process-related personal anecdotes. Prior to building this furnace I ran a smaller one on charcoal for a couple of months. That became noxious and unsustainable (<http://www1.american.edu/ted/charcoal.htm>), and my guilt at its use overtook the joy of casting.

This new furnace runs on waste vegetable oil (WVO), as from a fryer, or waste motor oil (WMO), drained from car crankcases. Both are disgusting substances, but even soiled they still contain incredible energy. A cursory search about the recycling of WMO yielded this South Carolina government [FAQ sheet](#) ([http://www.scdhec.gov/environment/lwm/recycle/pubs/used\\_oil\\_recycling.pdf](http://www.scdhec.gov/environment/lwm/recycle/pubs/used_oil_recycling.pdf)) which, after an amusing paean to the joys of driving, says that most recycled motor oil is burned to heat municipal garages or generate electricity. Searching WVO leads to a lot of prating about biodiesel, whether you can make it in your garage and drive for free, etc. My process is vastly less complicated and resource-intensive. Either one burns in this furnace, but WMO burns hotter.

In order to secure reliable supplies of these scummodities, I visited two places across the street from the wine store where I work: a pizza joint and a garage, conveniently one door apart. I underestimated everyone in this "community-outreach" phase of my project, thinking people would be put off by my request for a 5-gallon bucket of their waste.

The owner of the pizza joint seemed to know exactly what I was talking about even before I showed him my crap phone video of the furnace's first burn. He told me that pizza ovens use similar materials to blast furnaces, and certain components I might need could be bought from pizza shop suppliers.

A worker at the garage was glad to siphon off 5 gallons of stinking waste motor oil from one of their 6 55-gallon drums. He said someone comes by once a week to pick up the drums, but no one will care if I take 5 gallons here or there. He told me a funny story about over-pressurizing the drain station and hosing down an adjacent residential building with waste oil. The going rate is something like \$50 for 6 55-gallon drums. Considering their weight, fuel cost in transport and reprocessing, it's greener when I drive some half a mile to burn up on my driveway.

Finally, the owner of the local hardware I wrote about [before](#) (<https://artofolivegreen.wordpress.com/2011/04/29/swan-song/>) advised me on furnace construction because he used to heat a barn with a water heater shell adapted to aerosolize and burn "drain oil." He used to collect the drain oil from the marina where he worked and burn it through the winter.

An experience I had dreaded became the most pleasant of the build. Now I have a working furnace as green as one can be with local supply lines to keep it running. Stay tuned.

## Black/Liquid Goldrush

Posted by *getraer* on *July 17, 2011*

Posted in: The Sides of Thoughts. Tagged: Beverly Hillbillies, BP, Carthage, colony, fracking, Homer, New York, oil, olive oil, prison labor, Rome, The Nation. Leave a comment

Though the cozy relationship between oil and government goes back to ancient Rome, these days must be its most brazen. The Romans weren't so profligate as to salt Carthage (Tunisia) after its defeat; they redeemed it into an olive oil colony that soon, in producing [two-thirds](#) (<http://web.utk.edu/~theff/carthage/lazregCV.pdf>) of the empire's quota for olive oil, was strewn with the villas of oil wealth. Oil was such a [valuable commodity](#) (<http://www.unrv.com/economy.php>) that olive country could [pay their taxes with it](#) (<http://www.sabor-artesano.com/gb/curiosities-olive-oil.htm>). It was an indispensable ingredient in cooking, lamp fuel, medication, cosmetics and so forth, the lifeblood of Roman society.

Just as Rome [forbade the importation of olive oil from Carthage](#) (<http://www.atlantisvoyages.com.tn/en/tunisia/history/roman.asp>) until its subjugation after the Third Punic War, it [passed legislation](#) ([http://www.onh.com.tn/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=55](http://www.onh.com.tn/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=55)) to encourage olive oil manufacture once Carthage was absorbed. I wouldn't be surprised if Rome's influential merchants who trafficked in what Homer called "liquid gold" wanted to keep Carthage's oil from competing with that of the empire (Italy, Spain, Greece et al.), "trading with the enemy" notwithstanding. How much did the Third Punic War have to do with olive oil and wheat?

Things certainly do change to stay the same. Homer called Rome's lifeblood "liquid gold," and *Beverly Hillbillies* called our lifeblood "black gold." It's worth fighting wars and sundering empires over.

Hell, it's worth starting wars over. Dick Cheney's 2001 energy task force schemed to plunder Iraq's oil and parcel out concessions, as proclaimed in papers like "Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield Contracts." The Bush administration would not release any of the papers on these discussions until after the war had started. By that time Halliburton, of which Cheney was the former CEO, was profiting immensely from its no-bid contracts in the region—but these were mere offsets to its enormous asbestos-related losses. Maybe Halliburton is on a Warfare to Work program, which will redeem it from its lossy past to a future of black gold-to-black ink.

Welfare to Work and like programs ostensibly help at-risk populations. When BP used prison labor (paid on a sliding scale from nothing to bubkus, and including tax breaks for BP) to clean up its Deepwater Horizon spill, *The Nation* documented largely-Black chain gangs (<http://www.thenation.com/article/37828/bp-hires-prison-labor-clean-spill-while-coastal-residents-struggle>) sporting "Inmate Labor" suits on Louisiana beaches. These populations were hardly improving their future work prospects, assuming they'd live very long: if they refused a job, they could lose all the sentence-abatement time they had worked. The Bush-era Work Opportunity Tax Credit offers companies hiring from risky populations \$2,400 for each work-release inmate. One wonders at the spirit of this law, but in practice it amounted to a stepchild of slavery—a Plaquemines Parish Sheriff's lieutenant said, "They're not getting paid, it's part of their sentence."

We wait to see what catastrophe ExxonMobil has wrought in Yellowstone, and what depredations Big Oil will bring to New York if Governor Cuomo trades our environment to fracking companies for a few jobs and some tax revenue. The prospects aren't good; France just banned hydraulic fracturing (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-07-01/france-vote-outlaws-fracking-shale-for-natural-gas-oil-extraction.html>), and they were the first country to adopt the metric system. Maybe we'd rather eat our freedom fries in the shadow of their Statue of Liberty while pumper trucks gurn offshore.

## Xootr vs. KickPed: Folding Scooter Throwdown

Posted by [getraer](#) on [July 13, 2011](#)

Posted in: [MadeInUSA](#), [Self-Sufficiencies](#). Tagged: [bike](#), [comparison](#), [ex3](#), [folding scooter](#), [Goped](#), [KickPed](#), [NYCEWheels](#), [Patmont Motor Werks](#), [Razor](#), [review](#), [scooter](#), [Xootr](#). 28 Comments



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/szckootsz.jpg>)

The boys waiting to go out. Xootr's mudguard brake is custom.

**(August 2012 UPDATE:** A comparison of the companies' customer service. Unlike the scooters, it's a clear call. [Click here](#)

(<https://artofolivegreen.wordpress.com/2012/08/07/kickped-vs-xootr-customer-service-review/>.)

Those who snoot at folding scooters should recall that not long ago, riding bikes was hardly a serious transportation option in the USA. People rode them for health or fun, but rarely while trying to get anywhere. Today, the huge market for fancy helmets and bikes trumpets their mainstream acceptance.

Folding scooters have yet to get there. In 2000 (<http://www.razor.com/us/products/scooters/specs.html?name=A>) it was all you could do to avoid being hit by, or running over, children on Razors, and since then the market has changed—struggling to shake off the stigma of irritating flimsy toy rides.

Xootr ([http://www.xootr.com/kick-scooter\\_mg.html](http://www.xootr.com/kick-scooter_mg.html)) has done much to mature the image. Its award-winning ([http://www.lunar.com/awards\\_archive.html](http://www.lunar.com/awards_archive.html)) scooter design is magnificent and a pleasure to ride, fleet and strong. Its machined sexiness is the choice of celebrities (<http://www.xootr.com/celebrity-sightings.html>) (e.g. Leguizamo, Thurman, Jackman). I've loved my MG for several years, and appreciate Xootr's great service.

But when I sent it to Pennsylvania for repairs, my eye wandered to other f-scooters. Because without it, I can't run errands in New York City when I go in for work; in fact my life is structured around its portable efficiency. I visited the fine folks of [NYCEWheels](http://www.nycewheels.com/) (<http://www.nycewheels.com/>) to test-drive different f-scooters and after a lot of reading, riding and talking, bought a [KickPed](http://www.nycewheels.com/kickped-kick-scooter.html) (<http://www.nycewheels.com/kickped-kick-scooter.html>). I can't say I like the name. It's practical, affordable transportation that's sturdy but prosaic...they should rename it the Proller.

It's been a couple months of daily riding now, and I've decided it's exactly on par with the Xootr MG. Here's why.

The KickPed is well designed, but with less regard for style than the Xootr MG. It's more functional, but its planning was guided by NYCEWheels in collaboration with Patmont Motor Werks (of Goped fame)—so it replies to criticisms of the Xootr as well as other makes the 'Wheels team has sold and serviced.

The Xootr's biggest flaw is its atrocious **shock absorption**. Its hard polyurethane wheels cut friction, but transmit so much impact you could read braille by driving over it. Consequently it goes very fast (2-3 mph faster than the KickPed) but with no mean discomfort on rough roads. With [roads going unrepaired](http://roughroads.transportation.org/RoughRoads_FullReport.pdf) ([http://roughroads.transportation.org/RoughRoads\\_FullReport.pdf](http://roughroads.transportation.org/RoughRoads_FullReport.pdf)) in the U.S. and [colder winters](http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/11/16/us-climate-winters-idUSTRE6AF3C720101116) (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/11/16/us-climate-winters-idUSTRE6AF3C720101116>) from climate change busting up New York's roads for the foreseeable, I've come to prefer comfort.

Taking the KickPed and Xootr past "YOUR SPEED IS..." traffic scanners, I get 14-15 mph on the Xootr and 12-13 on the KickPed riding full tilt. But the KickPed can hit anything and lose little speed.

The Xootr's **linchpin** is prone to encrustation and jamming; with time, opening or closing requires tugging or hammering. It's taken me up to 30 seconds to free it. Conversely, the KickPed's **spring-loaded axle shaft** locks it open once it's at a 90° angle, in less than a second. It makes a hollow "TOCK" sound somewhat like a shell being chambered. But the only thing holding the KickPed closed is a nylon strap, and a few times it's come loose to drop the deck like an axe, sometimes near people. On impact, it would probably cause more alarm than harm.

**Carrying** the Xootr requires a strap, but the KickPed is designed with a big gap between board and axle to rest on even the bulkiest shoulder. This gap also makes it impossible to neatly **stow** under a subway bench; I have to prop it between my legs where everyone can stare at the prosaic deck hardware. With some practice you can balance a book off it and have a place to hang your helmet.

With fewer moving parts and a simpler design, it's easy to see why the KickPed has a **lifetime warranty**. But Xootr has always replaced everything except worn-out brake pads without charge. Even with their benighted eX3 electric scooter of the early '00s (run by Nova Cruz's faulty elects), they've always been honorable.

The KickPed's **traction** is superior, with its fat (slow) rubber tires, particularly in rain. Xootr expressly tells you not to ride the MG in rain, because the brakes don't work and if you lean while turning on slick roads, it will skip out from under you. Neither brakes particularly well in rain, however, so the utmost caution must be used in traffic. It probably takes twenty feet to stop from full speed, and more if the oil from the asphalt has surfaced and sheens your works.

**UPDATE:** It's been four months, and I am still very pleased despite a new complaint about the KickPed. The **bearings** in the Xootr's wheels have been through all kinds of weather in all seasons, and have remained slick and silent. The ones in the KickPed have more friction and are poorly sealed, so every time I ride it through the rain it squeaks for a day or two. That's a shame because it's velvet ninja **silent** otherwise, unlike the Xootr which clatters with its hard tires and jarring frame.

On balance, they are both extraordinary vehicles, worth the money considering I save 20 minutes on my commute with an f-scooter each day (it saves you 66% of your walking time). Laugh all you want, walkers. You've time to during your quaint post-primate ambulations.

## Facebooked (via @TheLeftistGroup)

Posted by [getraer](#) on [July 5, 2011](#)

Posted in: Culture crit, The Sides of Thoughts. Tagged: Facebook, Haïti, nazar, social media, The Leftist, Turkey. Leave a comment I apologize for the recent caesura in my posts; I was in Turkey for a life event/holiday. I did manage to produce the below item from a laptop in Istanbul, even with a Turkish keyboard. Travel, lack of computer and Internet access made it impossible to cross-post earlier:

[Facebooked into a Virtual Prison](http://thelleftist.co.uk/wp/?p=514) (<http://thelleftist.co.uk/wp/?p=514>)

..."When she woke up from the concussion and morphine, she realized that we were to be married in 10 days. Unable to see herself lying in the hospital bed, she used her smartphone to take a photo of herself, particularly of her face where it had met a windshield with no mean force. After some crying, her next thought was to post it on Facebook."...

I'll moderate my position somewhat by adding that during the 2010 Haiti earthquake, Facebook was indispensable for locating family members who had spotty phone service because voice networks were overloaded. But isn't this only because its use is over-subscribed and -utilized? Consequently trifles can easily crowd out treasures (or tragedies)...with orbiting advertisers hovering like flies 'round ordure. They pay for our "free" service, but is it a living wage?

In the more catastrophic world that some anticipate, we might better use a social media application for disasters like my fiance's accident or the Haiti earthquake. Something short and compound like MYSPACE or FACEBOOK, suppose "ERROR LOG." A place free of commerce, where crucial information is dumped when things go beyond your control.