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3rd Gear

*Bicycle Culture
and Stories*

gestalten

Bicycle Culture and Stories

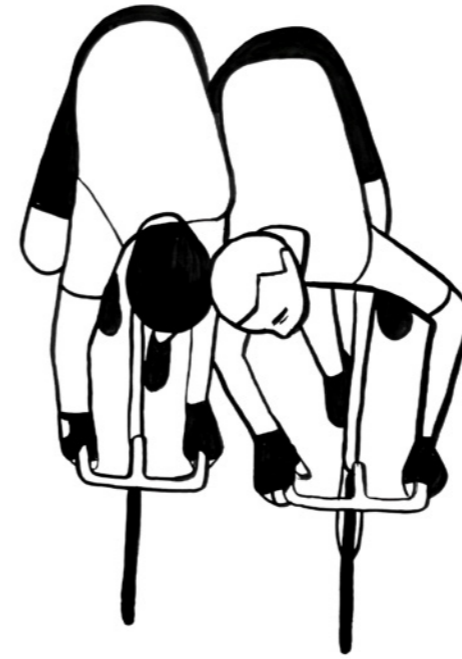
Cycling is all about smelling the flowers and hearing the birds and feeling the wind in your hair. We're here to fight for the wind in people's hair.

Cycling Without Age
(page 166)

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Text: SHONQUIS
MORENO

Preface



Illustrations: Created by Geoff McFetridge as a series of 40 original paintings on paper, these illustrations were then turned into limited edition shoes produced by Nike. Only 24 unique pairs were made of each sneaker in sizes 9, 10, and 11. On May 26, 2011, they were auctioned with a starting price of one-hundred dollars, with the proceeds donated to the MOCA Foundation.

His main bike is an orange Fuji Feather fixie named Gina. Gina replaced Petra, who was bought with high school graduation money and was with him until someone stole her in broad daylight off a street in Manhattan. Ralph Brescia has been biking around New York City for 16 years but, in the past five, he has become a daily rider. He rides to work, rides to run errands and, on weekends and summer evenings, he rides to explore. He has pedaled the length of Long Island in stages and finished the Tour de Queens once and the Five Boro Bike Tour twice. Recently he

rescued a 1976 Raleigh Twenty three-speed folding bike from the curb where she was awaiting a garbage truck. Brescia had to give "Viv" a good scrubbing and replace her tires, cables, grips, and brake pads; later he will buy her a Brooks saddle, lighter-weight alloy wheels, a front rack to carry packages, and maybe a bell. He has done most of the work himself, but her forks were bent, so he took her to his local bike shop in Bay Ridge—where the motto is "Shut up and buy a bike"—to straighten them out. "Cycling in the city has changed in that it has become a thing," he says. "Bikes are now an accessory to substantiate one's cultural identity: there are the goal-oriented spandex sportos with carbon fiber frames that cost as much as a used car, the hipsters with vintage Schwinns and fixies and, for style-conscious couples, matchie-matchie Linuses and Shinolas, and then there are the folding bike people."

Tribes. While biking booms, it diversifies. In Pamplona, Spain, Eneko Astigarraga is the founder of Oraintxe, a bike messenger service and advocacy focused on urban biking and education. He is also a blogger posing questions about cycling culture today. "People of different profiles have begun to incorporate themselves into the urban cycling universe, adding diversity to it and showing that biking is, more than a trend, a personal choice about how to move around in cities," he says. "Hipsters and BMXers talk about cycling tribes, but both are marginal. Most of the people riding bikes are regular commuters, leisure

cyclists, and more women of all ages, and this is changing the way we talk about cycling."

Perhaps the biggest signal of biking culture's spread is rather prosaic: in 2008, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced that commuter cycling had more than doubled since 2000 in the United States—a country famous for its lack of bike fluency. The cost of a car—in time, money, and health—has become prohibitive. But in Prague and Paris, even the metro rolls to a halt at midnight. New York's Roosevelt Island Tramway hangs dead in the air from 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. And in London, when the lift breaks down under Covent Garden station, passengers walk up 193 spiraling steps to reach the light of day. City dwellers are looking for ways to maintain their quality of life without moving out to the suburbs to, say, start a family. So bicycles, including non-traditional bikes like cargo bikes, increasingly sophisticated e-bikes and pedelecs (pedal electric cycles), smartphone and Bluetooth-connected bikes, and even bikes that fold at a touch, can help tilt the balance in favor of mobility, convenience, health, fashionability—and the city.

Twenty-five years ago in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Mark Martin sold his car and began to travel locally only by bike. Ten years ago, he founded the city's first bicycling and walking advocacy. "After nearly 10 years of effort, we have begun to see a change in attitude in city government, along with tremendous increases in ridership,

including commuters, and community involvement," says Martin, who rode a little over 8,500 kilometers last year. "Now there are two new groups started by women."

Strengthening its mainstream potential, biking has found strong proponents in the design world. Rob Forbes, founder of the furniture brand Design Within Reach, also launched Public Bikes in 2010, overseeing design and direction. Forbes founded Public with sustainability in mind, but also because he was "seeing youth non-car culture emerge in the U.S." Forbes, who takes 30- to 50-kilometer weekend trips on a road bike, rides daily around San Francisco and stays in hotels that rent bikes when he travels in other cities—and writes a design-oriented blog based on his adventures. Forbes has seen more and more amateurs mounting bikes and certainly, as we are changing our relationship to bicycling, bicycling is changing our cities. In Berlin, the Radbahn project will create the first (mostly) covered 9-kilometer bike path through the city, and although Detroit has lost its



automaking industry, it has gained 270 kilometers of bike routes. Other cities have also launched major efforts to turn derelict infrastructure like rail lines over to bicyclists. Ever since Brooklyn established the first American bikeways in 1894, New York City has anticipated cycling trends in the United States, but the city did not get a bike share program until 2013. It launched, however, with an impressive 4,300 share bikes and is expected to grow rapidly. In fall 2015 the city added its 1,000th mile of bike path, a number that doubled over the last eight years. It is not only New York: San Francisco can boast that it has the largest bike coalition in the United States. "Bikes are now commonly seen by all and respected by most," Forbes says. "It's no longer 'us against them.'"

This is a trend that has been ratified by visionary brands that invite employees to use company-provided bikes on corporate campuses, like Google, Facebook, Twitter, and Apple—which uses Forbes's Public Bikes. If there is one thing that these brands do, it is proliferate self-expression, if only in 140-character bundles. They understand that the people, city, and planet-friendly values that define biking culture reach into every niche and tribe. These universal values are something that Milan-based new media publisher (and Tweetbook creator) Michele Aquila is seeing couched in ever-greater variety. Long involved with mountain biking and road cycling, he has co-founded a cycling repair workshop called Brugola Rossa (Red Hex Key) in Florence and a cycling team called Cicloidi that organized a 100-kilometer "non-competitive" ride over the toughest hills around Florence. "There is an incredible variety of cycling clubs and groups growing up here in northern Italy," he says, listing

small communities like the Cani Sciolti Valtellina, a team that mashes up cycling and mountaineering; the Spokes & Nipples bloggers, who organize night rides and night climbs even in winter; and Track Bike Total War (TBTW), "the neglected children of the fixed gear world," as Aquile calls them. His 2016 calendar is already full of grassroots events: cyclocross, gravel or vintage bikes, bike polo, track cycling, randonnée, alleycats, killer climb races, and so on. "On the one hand, everything is fragmented," he says. "On the other, variety is to me the most entertaining attitude in cycling. And all of this is fuelled by social networks—Instagram, Strava, Facebook..."

As biking draws in a much more diverse range of devotees, self-expression and individual style are at a greater premium. In Moscow, photographer Alena Chendler publishes a blog called CyclesLady, posting portraits of stylish professional women—DJs, models, young mothers—who have begun to populate the city's streets with both bicycles and fashion. She started the project because she noticed an increasing number of women riding around wearing high fashion—trendy trainers, or skirts and dresses by the likes of Margiela, Prada, and Pugh. "The bicycle is the perfect transportation for the city," she writes, "and it is beautiful."

Giro senior brand manager Eric Richter suggests that some bike shops are taking a new approach to retail that more closely resembles a concept shop from the realm of fashion. Their goal is not simply to sell anything to everybody. Instead, they curate their shops' contents to reflect a point of view, seeing urban bicycling not just as a utility market, but also as one component of a lifestyle—a cultural component. By the same token, an industry has been



flourishing around cycling apparel and accessories—from jerseys, bags, helmets, and integrated or smart lights to mobile applications. And cycling apparel does not always look like cycling apparel: Quoc Pham shoes go from bike to business lunch. And even when the garments are more sporty or technical, they are materially inventive and graphical: one of Rapha's jersey patterns is based on time trial data while Segrasegra trousers look like casual streetwear but are made from bicycle inner tubes.

For now, there are relatively few extreme frame builders to serve the burgeoning demand for customization, but some are working with great originality. The materials may not be so different: titanium, carbon, chromium molybdenum, bamboo—add to that list wood, a film that turns the entire frame into a bike reflector, and materials that can be 3D-printed—but the parts, details, functionality, decoration, color schemes, and shapes are new. Some geometers and engineer-makers are deconstructing the frame and reforming or deforming it: the mechanical engineer Indrek

Narusk, creator and co-owner of Tallin-based Velonia Bicycles, designed his VIKS series without a seat tube and with a double-frame and flat narrow bars that give it a low-slung dynamism reminiscent of motorcycles. Since 2012, Narusk has seen the number of daily riders rise and with it the demand for unique bikes: people want to ride something that sets them apart from them. Other builders, like Prague's Festka, are making made-to-measure bikes (bespoke fashion for the bicycling world) by using geometry and engineering to fabricate precision performance bikes for professionals and even amateurs who may not be able to feel the difference, but who know that Festka's team—a group of pros and national champions themselves—can build it.

The premium placed on originality and uniqueness has also drawn artists into the crafting of bicycles: Death Spray Custom has designed forks based on the Seven Deadly Sins, Festka's Art Edition series includes a frame on which dense scribbling encodes the lyrics of two songs, and the wings on the Alerion's top tube were sculpted by the French artist Charles Boulnois.

Before art, after transportation, and always in a little competition with teamwork, riding is about individualism. Bikes have become one of the great tools of the outdoor trend, with ATBs, mountain, touring, and cross-country bikes at the forefront. Inspired by pioneers of bike travel and, increasingly, by those who not only do it, but also blog about doing it—sharing the how-tos and don't-dos—more people are embarking on longer journeys. Ridehouse Martin leads trips into the lush New Zealand landscape and even tests Mission Workshop apparel and bags on punishing rides in any weather and over all terrain. Along with his remarkable cycling



photography and portraiture, graphic designer, photographer, and bike-packer Logan Watts shares information about gear, mapping, packing, and even the inadvisability of asking your mother to mail prescription medication to you during a ride through Mexico. From behind his bars and lens, Watts's photos, taken in the High Atlas, Costa Rica, South Africa, and the Sahara, celebrate empty space and earth extending to the horizon; difference—the unknown and the universal; and the freedom to leave home on your own leg-power with not much more than a tent and a toothbrush.

As the proverb says: the heart wills not purity, but adventure. The bicycle is a tool of that timeless hankering to get lost, really lost—even after mapping your route carefully—and then prove to yourself that you can find your way home again—sweaty, thirsty, sore, and just a little more you than you were before you put your feet to the pedals.

Drops &

Hooks

On fixed-gear style, extreme frames, custom paint jobs, and alternative apparel

There are beautiful women in Moscow, and then there are beautiful women in Moscow who ride Pashleys wearing Prada. Cycling is not just fashionable, it's a fashion tribe. It's social and self-expression: let-me-introduce-myself and who-are-you? It's reflective polka-dot socks and high-performance pants made from inner tubes. Or Kenzo and capes. In the morning, we clip in wearing a pair of leather trainers that we won't change out of all day, from bike to business lunch to dinner party to dancing. Repeat. Sure, you can get a frame that functions—or you can get a frame that cantilevers, takes wing, or has James Brown lyrics scribbled all over it. In code. Maybe it was painted by an artist—you'd recognize the name if we told you—or maybe we chose the design from 10,000 colors online. We supersize our own chainrings or buy forks custom-finished to represent the Seven Deadly Sins. We ride tandems with lovers and three-seaters with friends. And we think the pennyfarthing never went out of fashion.

Text: SHONQUIS
MORENO

opposite page: Night Riders
YVR by Stefan Feldmann



Grander

oppiste page: Ridehouse
Martin (page 72)

Text: SHONQUIS
MORENO

Touring

On mountain bikes, cross-country, ATB, travel bikes, long tours, quick rides, downhill, and freedom

We ride not to feel the wind in our hair, but because when we ride we feel like we are the wind. We pedal cross-country to get there on our own two feet. Sometimes we charter helicopters to the summit just to make the downhill longer. We've felt the damp in our bones while bothying in Scotland and had asthma attacks in the suburbs of Shanghai. We stay in hotels that have pedal-through check-in and wear clothes made of fabrics that your military hasn't even dreamed of yet. When we get lost, it's because we want to, in gnarly single track, Sequoias and silence, icy rivers and cols, panoramas and the impossible Pacific Coast Highway. We've got ATBs and fat wheels and snacks in our packs and they've always brought us home again, thirsty. We've changed more flats than we can count, almost rode into the Arctic Circle, flipped over our handlebars and landed on our feet. Twice. We've been rained on. We've been curious. We've been very, very cold. We ride because bicycling is a free country. And on the way, we've seen sunsets you'd never believe.



Crosstown

Cadences

Text: SHONQUIS
MORENO

*On cargo bikes,
folding bikes,
e-bikes,
pedelecs, tech-
connected
bikes, and
the new
commute*

We're sick of the Metro closing at midnight, waiting for the lift at the Covent Garden station, and sweating on the L train in summer. We're sick of gas prices and car insurance and trying to find parking that isn't there. We even think that Kiss & Rides aren't very kissy. Policemen park in the bike lane to write us tickets for not riding in the bike lane. But that's okay. Who says quality of life in the city is low? We're not the young parents who moved to the suburbs. We carry our kids in cargo trikes and buy fresh tubes from a vending machine on the corner. Yeah, there are bike shops that sell bikes, but ours serve vegan brunch and host wine tastings; they're concept shops and clubhouses. We use our folding bikes to tow canoes and go from pedaling to paddling, from pedaling to pedelec. We bike to nightclubs and bars, on first dates and blind dates. Wearing our helmets. Sometimes. Our bikes navigate by Bluetooth and commute to work through snow and they look good enough to hang in the living room. My bike looks just the way I want it to. No one else has a bike like mine.

opposite page:
Boréal Bikes
(page 148)



Breakaways

oppiste page:
Festka (page 218)

Text: SHONQUIS
MORENO

*On racing
bikes, sports,
speed,
velodrome
drama,
competition,
and high-tech
geometries*

Forget fifth gear, the race is fixed. There's pedaling, yeah, but then there's speed. We race the course, we race the guy in front of us, we race the clock. We like competition: Bring it on. There's getting around, but then there's geometry. There are the artisans and the artists, but in this tribe we like the engineers best. This is technique. This is technical. This is high tech. Mountain bikes devour mountains and road bikes get on the road, but our wheels toggle to meet any flavor of terrain. In the following pages, you'll find speed demons and derring-do. Look for the pros, the velodromers, the time-trialers, the streetcats, and the messengers. Yeah, there are miles of freshly painted bike lanes, but then there's drafting off the M4, in the middle lane going south on Seventh Avenue. Potholes? Potholes are opportunities. We ride short courses over hairpin turns and dream about setting land-speed records. The titanium in our knees sets off security at airports, and on weekends, we eat carbon and cobblestones for breakfast. We like to go fast—and whatever we do, we don't brake.



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and Stories*

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