

We came to the desert

Looking for a party

Looking for adventure

Instead we found ourselves

We are the party

We are the adventure

BURN.
BY I MUST BE DEAD & MOHAWK



Deadhawk

When I first decided to do this book, I'm not sure what I was thinking. Looking back it was a really terrible idea, and it seemed like most people who had been to Burning Man knew that as first timers it would have been wiser to go experience it the first year, and then perhaps the second year do a book. I don't usually do anything the smart way really, so I did not see any cause for alarm. As soon as I got to this place though, I immediately had a deep feeling that I was fucked. I could not wrap my brain around what this place was, and the idea that I was going to have to summarize something indescribable in the form of pictures, in the span of only a weeks time, seemed retarded. I wanted to do a good job; I wanted to give you guys a great book so I was pretty scared I was over my head. A general sense of fear creeps in when I approach a project usually, because I want it to be good, or perfect even, and I can get caught up in that ideal super easily, so imagine how truly terrible I felt that my first successful big project to get funded was going to be awful, because I had no idea what the fuck I was doing. If you add on top of this what was going on in my personal life, it was going to be a mess. I for some dumbass reason bought tickets to Burning Man with a stripper, thinking that we would go and have a great time and fuck and be merry, but naturally as any relationship with a stripper goes, we were a catastrophe and I decided to not go with her a short time before the Burn. So I arrived without her, and went about my business, but as you will hear soon, I certainly did not get rid of her or my photographic mental meltdown!

You might be wondering why I'm saying this in a photo book, or why I'm going to tell you my story alongside these pictures, so I will see if I can help you understand even though I'm not sure I really understand. I think it's because I want you to know what I was thinking when I shot these, I want you to know what was going on in my life when I shot these. Because in the end it all worked out, and I am not sure how or why, but I took so many pictures that I am proud of, that I am really excited to share with you, and for that I am thankful that this all happened this way, and I think the stories will help you understand why it all happened this way.

So come watch me Burn.





A day or two into this thing, and I hadn't shot shit that I liked. I was kind of freaking out to be honest, because I wasn't sure I was working hard enough, I wasn't sure if I made the right move to do this project, I wasn't sure if the stripper was going to show up, I wasn't sure if this other girl I wanted to see was going to show up, I wasn't sure what would happen if both girls showed up, I wasn't sure if I had the right supplies to even do this project, I wasn't sure if my camera was going to be ok, and I basically wasn't sure if I was even having a fucking good time. I wasn't sure of a lot of things.

Then we started shooting in the playa storms, and everything just kind of snapped. I was sick and fucking tired of protecting my gear, and I was sick and fucking tired of trying to take photos I thought others wanted to see rather than what I wanted to see, and I realized that you guys sent me here to simply take pictures of what I found interesting. Not to document burning man, not to replicate what other guys had done before, but to simply shoot what I liked and thought was cool, regardless if it had any burning man feel to it or not, I just wanted to take some god damn good pictures.

And for the first time I was happy with what I was doing here.







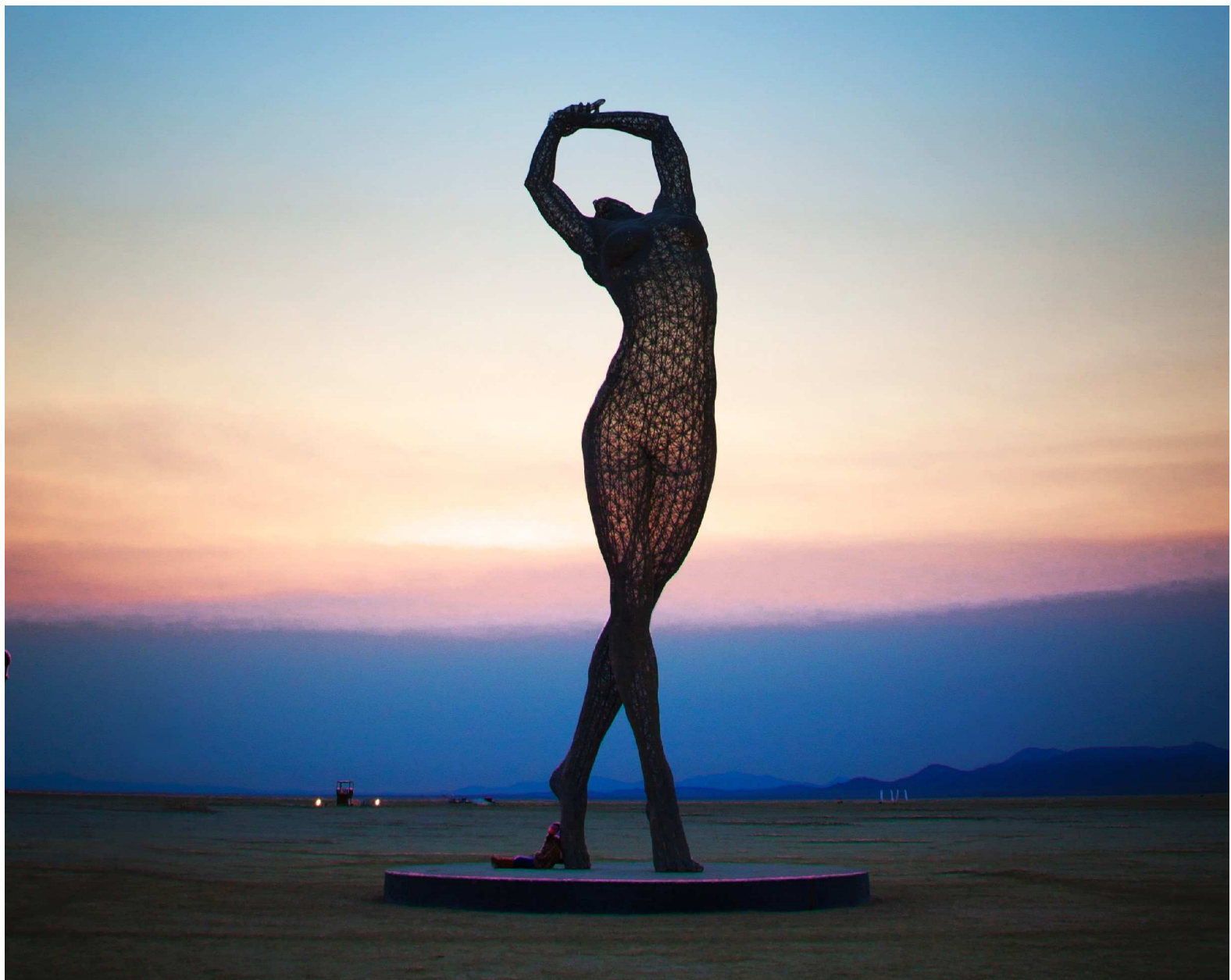












Burning Man happened at an interesting time in my career, I was kind of transitioning away from how I pushed and sold my art, because it was becoming very draining and unsuccessful. I was deciding to do things differently, I didn't really know what, but just something that didn't crush my soul every week. So I thought it would be interesting if one day we set up a make-shift studio, next to a table of my prints, and gave everything away, and took portraits of anyone who wanted one as long as they wanted to get dirty. It was kind of like a purge for me in my life I don't know. Getting rid of everything and starting over!

It made me so happy to see people come by and enjoy my work, it was my favorite thing in the world, and to watch them take one for free and to fall in love with everything just made me feel so good. Which I needed because honestly I was in a very lonely time in my life, I was confused about my love life, and was making the wrong decision 100% of the time. I had lost contact with the outside world, and had decided to go try to see someone else because in my head, I decided the stripper wasn't going to show up. Which was good, because although we were a fun destructive mess, I wanted something that made me feel good for once.

Before I went and met with the other girl though something in me wanted to not like her, or to see it as a fling instead of something serious, because deep down I didn't want to let go of the stripper, deep down I still wanted to hold onto to the chance that we would work, which seems stupid now, and seemed stupid to me then, but this story wouldn't be interesting at all if I didn't think stupid.

So I basically wanted to and thought I would not like her.

I was wrong.









































Love never seems to really give a shit what your plans are, and when you decide on something it usually feels like that's too easy, and other more difficult factors should be thrown in, or maybe that's just me...regardless I always fuck it up royally.

We got about half way into this thing, and I had met someone and started spending time with them, the person I was supposed to hate, except I didn't. I really liked them. More than I wanted to. More than I thought I could.

I was seemingly clear of the stripper and moving on with my life! It felt pretty nice to be with someone actually good for me for once! I had allowed myself to be treated like shit for so long that I kind of forgot what being treated well was like. I was taking pictures I thought were worthy of book material, I was getting fucked up every night and partying, and hanging out with an attractive girl I liked and liked me back. It was pretty swell.

And then at 6am in the morning you know who showed up at my tent. Saying heavy words that start with L and bringing back those silly emotions I had sworn off forever! She really knew how to work me to be honest. So I rode my stupid bike a mile to the other girls tent, and told her that I could not see her anymore, and that I was going to give it a shot with the stripper. I felt like I was making the wrong decision as I was doing it, but I just did it, I don't know why. If anyone wants to know how to make two girls cry in one morning, I can help you with it seriously!

What makes this awesome is that I was right in thinking I was wrong! Because if you fast forward a couple days, predictably and amusingly the same old story happened between me and the stripper, and we decided we didn't know what the fuck we were doing. I felt rejection, I felt ugly, I felt sad, and I felt like an asshole, I felt like nothing was ever good enough for me so I would always have nothing. A bunch of emotions that I'm not sure were warranted or not, but I felt them anyhow.

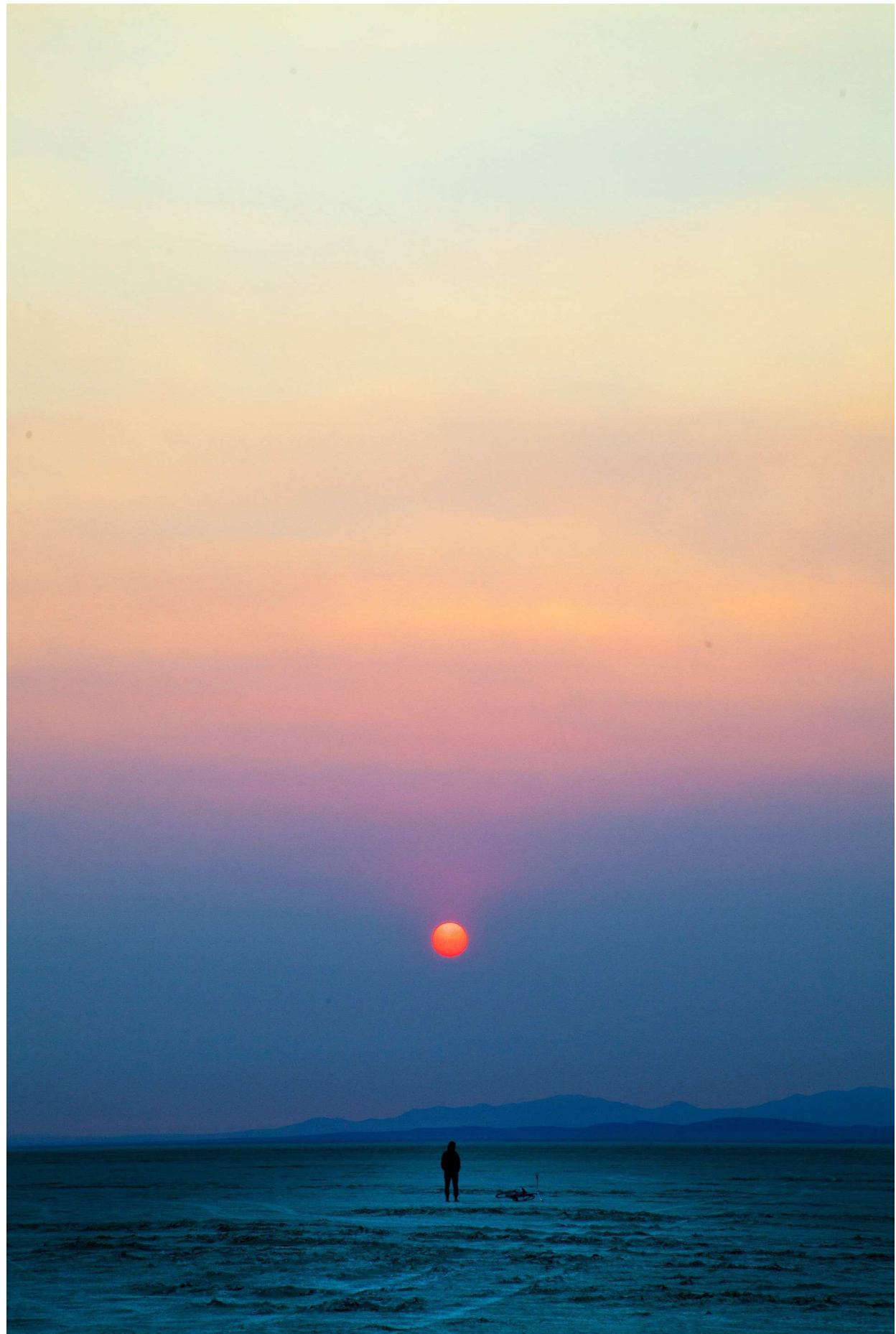
I decided to ride my bike and take pictures and mostly to cry by myself. That is when I heard Ayla Nereo playing, and had one of the best mornings of my life. It is hard to describe what this woman did for me other than to say she made me believe everything was ok in life. It sounds a little crazy but she was just pouring so much love and positivity to everyone listening, and her music was so lovely that I was smitten. I am usually goofy and light hearted while shooting but I was literally walking around crying while shooting other people listening. People were giving me hugs while I shot their portraits and I pretty much broke down in front of a bunch of people. Fun stuff!

Then she decided to make up a song on the spot, something she had never done before ever, and my initial thought was that it was going to suck! This fucking song ended up being one of the best things I have ever heard in my life though, and to watch it vanish unrecorded into the desert sort of scrambled my brain. I knew I had to shoot her and figure out a way to express my gratitude.

So I annoyed her until she agreed to do my silly idea of depicting her process in a photograph.













On the last day I was all alone, both woman had decided I was a fucking idiot and I suppose not many people would disagree. I was actually happy it was all over though; this event and situation had loomed over my head for many months before it even began, and in my heart I knew it was going to pan out this way. So for it to be done and gone and that I had somehow come out with enough photos to be happy with, was in some weird reason a really good feeling.

I knew I had enough photos to make something decent, but there wasn't enough fire in the photos, so we ran around and focused on providing that! The whole week everything was so loud and insane that I kind of got sucked into that at night and never really had a chance to get anything burning, or I guess I was too occupied with pussy and drugs, whatever. On the last day though everything was eerily quiet, the temple burn was silent, and everyone seemingly was busy reflecting on what the fuck just happened to them this week, So I took the opportunity to shoot and get you guys some fire!

Looking back I think I was too focused on trying to experience this damn thing, and didn't carry my camera with me around at night. I suppose the people were right when they said you should not photograph this thing your first year, and in some ways I agree, but I wouldn't take it back. It was a struggle to decide when to pick up the camera and when to leave it behind, because honestly every corner I turned there was something amazing I wish I could capture. As a photographer this is something that happens often to me and it's a kind of sadness I deal with internally whenever I'm traveling or doing something fun without a camera. You tell yourself to just enjoy the moment and store this one away in memory, but it's hard to not get that subtle feeling that you should have your camera, you should have taken the picture of whatever or whomever, but instead it's gone forever!

I could remember so many times I wish I had my camera with me.

But I'm working on being thankful for the times when I did.













We started with this photo and this is how we will end it, because this was written on the inside wall of a urinal I used often at Burning Man, so it was staring at me all week. I think people get lost in trying too hard to be happy, looking for the perfect time or place, the perfect people, and sometimes we can forget that if you just allow yourself to be you, and take things for what they are, you will find happiness all around you. It struck a chord with me for some reason and I just had to photograph it, in fact I knew it was going to be the cover as soon as I saw it. Problem was when I got home I could not find the shot, I searched all my cards and was extremely upset I had lost it. Turns out for some weird reason I had grabbed Mohawks camera and shot it with his, and so everything was fine, otherwise I would of cancelled the damn book probably!

Anyhow, this place and this time in my life and these people all came together in such a crazy way, I can't say which was the strongest factor in it all, but I changed as a person there. I don't know how or to what extent but I changed. I never did anything like this photographically speaking, and it was exhausting to be honest. Mohawk and I worked really hard to put this together, and I am not sure how we even did it considering we're really at the end of the day two knuckleheads with some cameras.

I felt so lost doing all of this...

The money

The photos

The girls

Everything was a mess and I am just glad to come out with images that were worth it all, I am so excited for you guys to have this, I put a lot of myself into it and I am hoping the pictures show it, I'm hoping this books shows it.

I don't know what's next

Where to go

Where I'll be

But I'm excited.

Are you excited?

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