

Candy R. Wei Prize

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It's All About The Bike

In 2015, I traveled to Copenhagen, Denmark for a 3-week urban studies course to study how design played a role in Denmark's urban landscape. After the class had finished, I wanted to stay longer. I had 3 days before my flight back home to find a reason to stay. I applied to various design firms in the area but had no luck, instead I landed an apprenticeship at a local cargo bicycle shop called Benben Cykler. I quickly pushed back my return flight, found housing, checked my visa, and of course scared my mother.

For the next 8 weeks I discovered everything from how to patch a punctured tire to how a machine created 200 years ago now transports over 50% of Copenhagen's commuters to and from work every single day. Part of that 50% are over 40,000 cargo bicycles or better known as bakfiets. Bakfiets are used to transport groceries, take kids to school, deliver postal mail and even sell goods off of... I quickly wanted one of my own.

Upon my return I didn't have \$3000+ to spend on a bike to Ann Arbor, so I built one. I sketched, planned, and prototyped my own cargo bicycle design in my freetime. 8 months later, I was swerving down South State street with my very own custom built cargo bicycle with a full load of groceries and my best friend in the cargo bay.

The goal in building the cargo bicycle was to show the possibilities that a bike can have and how it can change the way people live in a city. The cargo bike reduced the need for a car, emitted zero emissions, didn't require a parking meter, gas, insurance, or a driver's license. It overcame the issue of a regular bicycle, carrying cargo and most of all it was a better way to experience one's surroundings.

It is exhilarating to think about how a local bike shop was able to provide such a surprising experience and most of all show me a perspective that I couldn't have found anywhere else. This upcoming summer I will be continuing to experiment on how bicycles and cargo bicycles can be better supported within Ann Arbor's transit network and public parks system.



Photo 1: One (Long John) of many types of cargo bicycles found in Copenhagen.



Photo 2: How much Denmark supports its commuters through its bicycle infrastructure. Everything from safe lane widths to designated traffic lights. In this photo, a trash can is tipped on an angle to allow cyclists to dispose of their trash while riding.

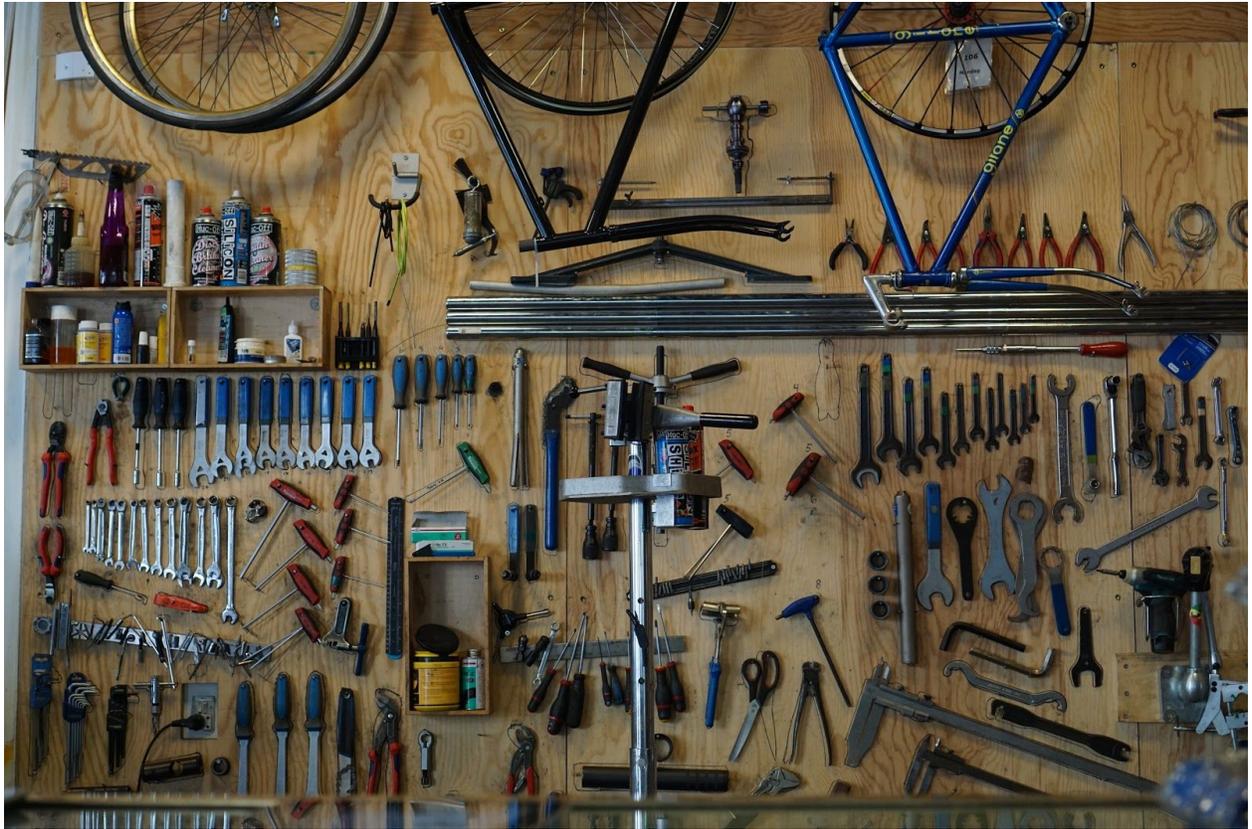


Photo 3: The organization and attention to detail found at Benben Cykler representing Denmark's pride in cycling.



Photo 4: Early experimenting with jigs and bicycle frame building techniques.



Photo 5: Final product at the Stamps School of Art and Design Undergraduate Juried Exhibition 2016.