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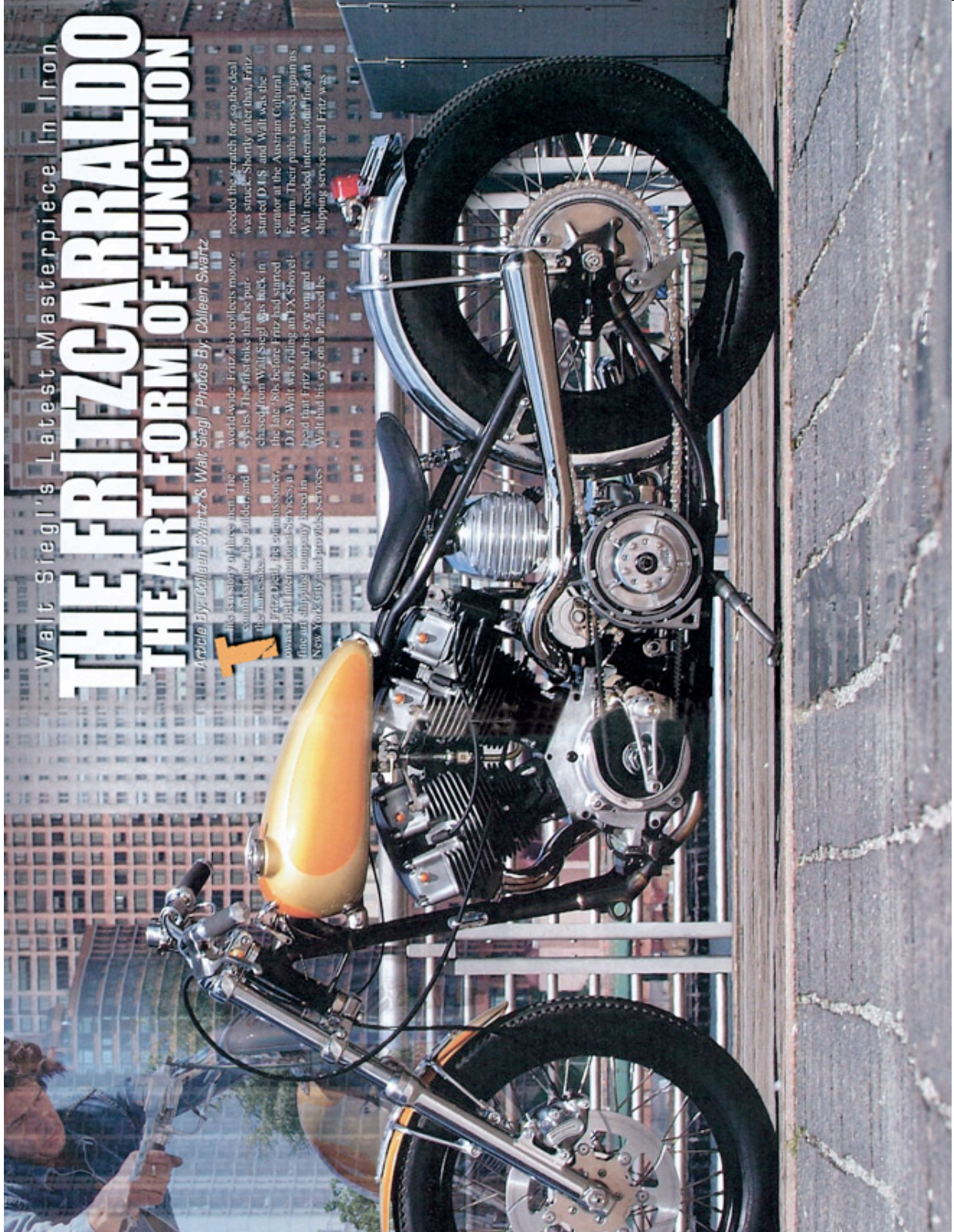
# THE FRITZCARRALDO THE ART FORM OF FUNCTION

Article By Colleen Swartz & Walt Siegl Photos By Colleen Swartz

**T**his is the story of these men. The  
commissioner, the builder, and  
the masterpiece.

Fritz Peil, 43, commissioner,  
toward Deal International Services, a  
fine art shipping company based in  
New York City, and profiles services

needed the scratch for, so the deal  
was struck. Shortly after that, Fritz  
started D.I.S. and Walt was the  
curator at the Austrian Cultural  
Forum. Their paths crossed again as  
Walt needed international fine art  
shipping services and Fritz was







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growing his company.

In the '90s, Fritz bought both a Shovelhead and a 540 KTM dirt bike from Walt, but he lost both of those in a barn fire. Walt continued to refine his building style and began taking his practical and successful formula of the '80s and '90s into what he is now known for; the melding of the functional and the purely artistic into a signature look that is undeniably Siegl.

Fritz is the perfect customer for Walt. He has cultural roots in Europe (where Walt's bikes are very popular) and he has a deep appreciation for art and motorcycles. So the commission that Fritz requested in the winter of 2007 was to become the motorcycle you see on these pages.

Walt Siegl, the builder, worked until recently in a brick building on Long Island just yards from the East River. Originally this building served as a whale processing plant. Now, many generations later, Walt Siegl occupied the basement rooms; his 6'2" frame had to stoop beneath the ancient infrastructure criss-crossing through his shop space. Here, Walt fuses thought, art, metal and fuel into moving sculptures.

It is not hard to become friends with Walt Siegl. I did it easily on a Sunday afternoon three years ago and it remains one of the most inspiring relationships I have. Walt is handsome with a voice that fits him: tall and confident with an accent hard to place after being molded by 18 years in Austria, 2 in France, 4 in Russia and more than 23 in New York. His bikes speak far more for his artistry than he will ever speak for himself.

Walt knew Fritz Dietl for many years prior to this commission, and to hear the thought process that Walt goes through to explain the origins of this bike is a testament to the artist behind the bike builder.

Walt says, "Fritz came to me with only a few requirements and then he stepped back to let me create the bike. This bike utilizes an engine that Fritz already had. The aftermarket cases are Delkron, with the top end of a '76 Shovelhead. The only thing he wanted was



something light and fun to ride. He didn't even specify '60s bikes, but I knew that although he collected exotic, "high output" machines, Fritz at his heart really liked the '60s style of motorcycle. So I started building something that had the look of a bike that he and I grew up with. It has the simple profile like those of the BSA, Triumph, and Hondas, but I had to make it with a rigid frame. Nothing is as fun as riding a rigid frame bike."

Walt continually stepped back to look at the outline of this bike to maintain that stance. He used an 18" rear tire, raised seat, 19" front wheel, and worked to keep the original profile in his design. The frame is a '57 straight-leg and represents a key element to the build. It reflects the use of modified stock parts from



CYCLE 1

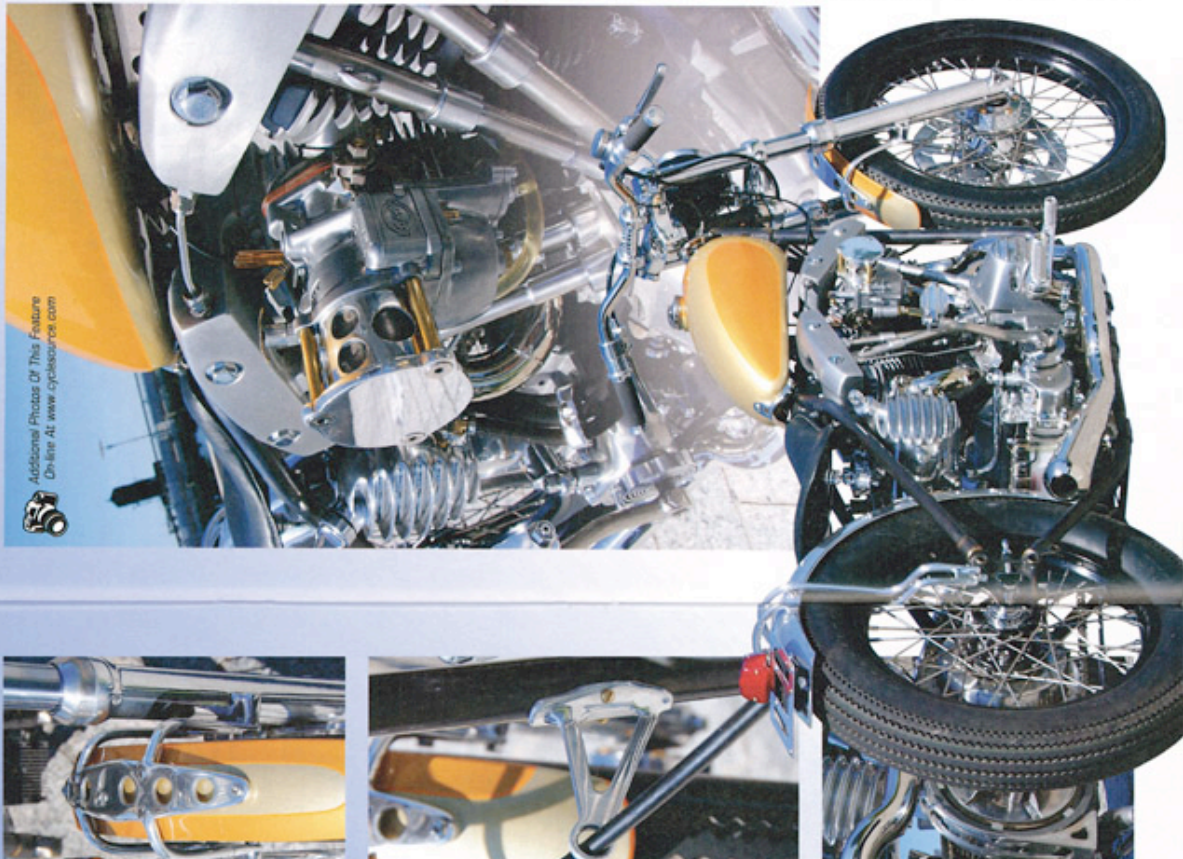
"off-the-shelf" part on this bike is the Crime Scene oil tank which Walt loves and hand-polished to bring out its full beauty. The handlebars are a little narrower and lower than the popular Flanders' handlebars from the '60s and of course hand-made by Walt as well. Fritz wanted to ride this bike in the city, so Walt custom made the pipes with a baffle system which dictates the shape of the pipes to a certain extent and is also related to the '60s trumpet style pipes. Just one of the examples of "form following function" that can be seen in a Siegl bike.

For those unfamiliar with the bike's namesake, Fitzcarraldo, it is a movie from director Werner Herzog, a European like Walt. Embarking on a film career with a stolen camera and working nights as a welder, (I definitely see some similarities here) Herzog went on to direct some of the finest films of the last three decades. In Fitzcarraldo, Herzog tells the story of Brian Sweeney Fitzgerald, who dismantled and carried a 30 ton steamer over an isthmus so as to not lose time in a shipment of rubber. Herzog, in his insanity, decided to adapt Fitzgerald's story, except in Herzog's version the boat weighed 320 tons at three stories tall and remained intact as it was pulled over the isthmus (which in Herzog's case, of course, becomes a mountain).

Although Werner Herzog took liberties with reality to create art, Walt Siegl's art becomes the reality of one of this generation's most gifted builders. We congratulate Fritz and Walt on this fabulous build which was prominently displayed in Michael Lischer's exhibition "One World Choppers" in Sturgis, South Dakota in 2007. It came full circle: from art aficionado, to artist, to exhibition, to the streets of New York City, to all of the motorcycle enthusiast reading Cycle Source. We can't wait to see what Walt brings us next. [www.cyclesource.com](http://www.cyclesource.com)

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the '60s and was used because it fit the requirement of being an exceptional handling element to the bike. "The narrow glide bike is very nimble and handles very well, even with the unique challenges of New York City riding and traffic conditions."

Besides creating the profile, the frame and engine needed to reflect the relationship to the '60s by playing with surface qualities. Walt said, "Motorcycles are made out of metal and Harley Davidson did such a good job with their metal, it can be so beautiful."

Walt polished the rocker boxes to an absolute luster and then went over with a rubbing compound to take the sheen away to show the quality of aluminum; this bike has no chrome on it. Walt hand finished the cases and the aluminum parts, and all of the shiny stuff is nickel plated. The frame itself is bronze plated and then Walt went over it and burned through the bronze to the brass beneath to show the beauty of the castings.

With the profile established, Walt stepped into the bike to scrutinize the details. "I wanted to build every part as much as I could in-shop. I wanted this bike to resemble a '60s style bike, not only from far away, but from very close up as well. I wanted this bike to look like it could have been produced by any company in the '60s but detail every part that is familiar to us by making it completely hand built, the way they had to."

That is where Walt shines his brightest. From the tank mounts to the kicker pedal, from the seat supports to the spacers, each part is custom made and is absolutely beautiful. The only

## THE FRITZCARRALDO TECH SHEET

**Owner:** Fritz Diehl  
**City:** New York City  
**Fabrication By:** Walt Siegl  
**Year:** All Years  
**Model:** Shovel  
**Assembly By:** Walt Siegl  
**Time:** 3 Months

### ENGINE

**Model:** Shovelhead  
**Builder:** Bones@CT Performance Center/Alex Lerner  
**Ignition:** Points  
**Displacement:** 84"  
**Plating:** S&S  
**Head:** Shovel  
**Cam(s):** 490  
**Case:** S&S  
**Air Cleaner:** Walt Siegl  
**Exhaust:** Walt Siegl  
**Primary:** Open Belt

### TRANSMISSION

**Year:** 1972  
**Make:** H-D  
**Shifting:** 4 Speed

### FRAME

**Year:** 1957  
**Make:** H-D/Walt Siegl  
**Make:** S&S  
**Stretch:** None

### FRONT END

**Type:** Narrow Glide  
**Builder:** H-D/Walt Siegl  
**Extensions:** 2 Under  
**Trees:**

### WHEELS

**Front Wheel:** Aluminum Sun  
**Size:** 19"  
**Tire:** Firestone  
**Brakes:** H-D  
**Rear Wheel:** Aluminum Sun  
**Size:** 18"  
**Tire:** Firestone  
**Brakes:** H-D

### PAINT

**Painter:** Walt Siegl  
**Type:** PPG  
**Color:** Gold  
**Special Paint:** Candy's  
**Molding:** None  
**Chroming By:** None

### ACCESSORIES

**Bars:** Walt Siegl  
**Bars:** Walt Siegl  
**Hand Controls:** Joker Machine  
**Grps:** Contour  
**Fuel Tank(s):** Walt Siegl  
**Rear Fender:** Walt Siegl/British  
**Seat:** Back Drop  
**Foot Controls:** Walt Siegl/Tarozzi  
**Headlight:** Walt Siegl  
**Tailight:** Walt Siegl  
**Speedo:** None

**Photography By:** Colleen Swartz

