

2025 AfrikaBurn

# Temple Guidelines

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*“ The pages, the words, the pain and memories and intentions, all gone. The space they held, swept clean.*

*In that moment: death. In that moment, life.*

*And where there’s life, there’s always a whisper of hope. “*

Leonie Joubert  
*Curly the 'Burner* in Burning the Karoo

The Temple is a SPACE  
of intense presence and emotional release

## What Is the Temple?

The Temple has developed as a part of **AfrikaBurn's physical and emotional landscape as a space of contemplation and reflection**. The temple is intended as an area of sanctuary, a site of calm on the edge of the chaos and cacophony of Tankwa Town. A space to spend time with one's own thoughts, reflect on one's life, the lives of others, those recently passed, ancestors.

The Temple should inspire us and stimulate our spiritual awareness of nature and cosmos. While the structure may be a thing of beauty, its significance is in its transience. It is a place of letting go, a place of release. **It is the pinnacle of our celebration of immediacy and catharsis.**

**The Temple is a commissioned artwork**, carrying the opportunity and responsibility to be an agent of transformation, and as such comes with support of additional inputs for the build crew.

**The Temple is a tool for development and legacy**, and it's our mission to make sure that the values it portrays are relevant in the world, and specifically in the South-African context.

## This is an invitation for you to submit your Temple Proposal.

While everyone is invited to submit a Temple Proposal, it's important to keep in mind that not everyone can build a Temple. It's a serious undertaking and not for the faint or half-hearted. Also not just another large artwork; building the Temple requires more than best hopes, good intention and some carpentry skills; It requires awareness, sensing into our community's collective consciousness and finding the love inside you that can radiate - It requires Intent (and some carpentry skills).

The assessment of Temple proposals is a different process to the adjudication of creative grants. It involves greater deliberation and an open dialogue with the applicant Artists.

There is an ongoing engagement to help artists navigate from the development of the concept towards an artwork. We'll do everything we can to enable our artists to succeed in their creative endeavours. This means that sometimes we, as a committee, have to say: "Not yet!" - Experience has trained us to look for tell-tale signs of a concept that's not quite there as a project, and an artist that's not quite ready themselves.

## A. About Intent

We encourage the designer and their crew to incorporate positive spiritual intention into the practice and process of the Temple's design and build.

We believe that the motivation and thought that goes into the design, coupled with the collective energy that creates the space and builds the structure, is reflected in the spiritual integrity of the temple and the ritual it hosts.

*"One of the most important aspects of building the Temple is to remember that while the design initially comes from the artist's vision and the builders' sweat and tears, once it is built it belongs to the community."*  
- Burning Man

## The Structure of Temple

### Root: Τέμ- / Tem-

It is related to the concept of cutting, marking off, or sacred space. Words derived from this root often pertain to the idea of delineating a specific area, especially one that is set apart for sacred purposes.

### Τέμνειν

Temnein (Greek Verb): to cut

### Τέμενος

Temenos (Greek Noun): Originally meant a piece of land that was "cut off" from common use and dedicated to a god. It refers to a sacred enclosure or precinct, often surrounding a temple or shrine.

### Templum (Latin Noun Singular)

Term used to describe a sacred space or precinct that was consecrated for ritual purposes. Originally, "templum" referred to the specific area "cut off"; but over time, it evolved to refer to the structures built within these sacred spaces.

The construction and orientation of these Tempa (Latin Noun Plural) were meticulous, aligned with the cardinal points, and physically marked by a peribolos fence. - as with a Template.

### Contemplatio (Latin Noun. derived from CON + Templum)

Con- (Latin Prefix): 'with' or 'together'

-templum (Latin Noun) referring to a sacred space or precinct.

The prefix "con-" suggests a sense of deep engagement or unity with the object of contemplation, while the root "templum" hints at the sacred or introspective nature of the activity.

Carl Jung describes the temenos as a 'square space' where profound mental work can happen, comparing it to a 'magic circle' to deepen the idea of a protected environment for this psychological exploration, where individuals can safely engage in encounters with their unconscious. - A space for Contemplation and inner reflection, where one can explore and confront aspects of the psyche such as the animus, shadow, senex, and ultimately, the self.

### Culture

The Temple is a non-religious, neutral and equitable space.

Apart from the opening ceremony and closing ceremony before the burn, the Temple is meant for personal or small group ceremonies that do not dominate or monopolise the space for a single use at any given time.

Yoga could be an example of monopolising the space, both as a group exercise as well as religious gathering, which some feel are not appropriate for the Temple space at AfrikaBurn.

The crux of this guideline is that the [Temple](#) should be accessible at all times during the event, and any participant should be able to feel free and comfortable to use the [space](#) for their own ceremony, even while others are [present](#).

### Placement

A quiet and reflective [place](#), the Temple is usually placed on the outskirts of Tankwa Town to offer a pilgrimage to a quite remote [locale](#).

But it has been placed in the middle before and activated as a conscious spiritual space to good effect.

### Structure

The Temple can be anything. It should be inspiring. It does not have to resemble a classic temple or other building, but it should have some structure.

We encourage the designers to incorporate a boundary/perimeter that creates a precinct, in order to demarcate a quiet area free from mutant vehicles and bicycles.

### Burn

At the opening, the Temple is a clean slate. At the end it is covered in words, feelings, photos and other objects of remembrance, objects in general, and bits of human existence - Many find [solace and](#) catharsis here.

There's only one official ritual in the Temple: Burning it. - On Sunday night. In silence. *Maybe?*

The Temple burn is intended as a silent event for the community. The silence is important - it ushers in the sense of the sacred, [of reverence](#), and allows all witnessing it a pause to reflect and [turn inwards \(for some, their first chance at the event\)](#).

But it's the Temple Artist decision - The Artists may choose to use sound as an element [within the Temple](#). (This should be discussed with ArtCom in advance)

The burning of the Temple structure should be done in a conscious manner.

*"The Temple burn is an example of something that became an unintentionally ritualised icon because our energy made it so."*

- Simon Bannister (Temple Artist)

## B. About the Sculpture

### The Design

It should be worthy — beautiful, inspirational, a conscious manifestation of the guiding principles of AfrikaBurn.

It's a Burning Artwork — it must work as a sculpture; and it must work as a burn.

Ideally, the Temple will be a 3D sculpture, viewable from all sides.

Consider the proportions of the Temple form and its relationship to people and setting.

Consider the space beneath and around the Temple

While this is not one of the design criteria, consider a reference to the theme.

### Materials

In line with our principles, the Temple should be constructed out of waste / recycled / environmentally friendly materials wherever possible.

Materials are to be considered from a burn perspective too. Avoid materials with a high glue or chemical content (such as MDF).

### Burn

The Temple is a sculptural fire. Burning is as integral to the design of the piece, as structural and aesthetic considerations.

A burning artwork is conceptualised and built as a burning artwork, which is different from being an artwork that can burn. A burning artwork comes alive when set alight, it makes sense, and it requires very little accelerants.

Consider the following:

- How you would like your sculpture to burn and fall.
- The duration of the burn — too long and people lose focus, too short and people miss it.
- The lighting of the Temple— priming time, ignition points, performance aspect, etc. How do they work together or how might they clash with each other?

There's a vast knowledge base accumulated through years of experience by the different fire team players — it's at your disposal, please make use of it.

## Lights

As an aesthetic element, part of the design of your piece, as well as for safety reasons, the lighting is part of sculpture — and it can make a big dent in your budget when not thought through properly.

Think about:

- Burn: Removal of the lights before the burn.
- Options: Balance between cost, adequate output, maintenance required to function during the event, use outside of the event, environmentally friendly or not, etc.
- Power Source: Placement of your power source in relation to the piece — where, in, on or near the sculpture can it go, that it doesn't disturb the aesthetic of the sculpture (visually and/or soundwise); how far is practical; how to keep it is safe from accidental damage and non-consensual borrowing

## The Team

Remember that this enormous piece will need to be constructed. Consider our ethos in your team building. We encourage projects that promote skills exchange amongst a diverse team. Ideally, your project will reach out, create opportunities and develop skills.

Bringing in paid professional contractors and service providers is not encouraged.

Collaborate – this is the glue that holds Tanka Town together and makes it the amazing space that it is. Collaborations plug the holes in skill sets and can elevate aspects of the piece to levels that you might not have considered.

## C. About Cultural and Social Context

### Radical-Inclusion & The Two-Part-Budget

- Where the two parts are:
  - 1) The **Artwork**
  - 2) **Community Development** through the Artwork;
- where community development is not compulsory, it not a requirement
- where community development incubates participation through resource mobilisation, towards equitable engagement

This two-part-budget model is meant to nudge our artists where it might be a little tender; but also to make provision for their circumstances, motivations and learning processes. The aim is to acknowledge the diverse strengths of our artist community, encouraging artists we may wish to include.

AfrikaBurn's Radical Inclusion principle has specifically been adapted for the South African and African continental context:

“Everyone should be able to be a part of AfrikaBurn. As an intentional community, committed to inventing the world anew, we actively pursue mechanisms to address imbalances and overcome barriers to participation, especially in light of past, current and systemic injustice.

We welcome and respect the stranger. Anyone can belong.”

As a commissioned work, the Temple is an instrumental opportunity to further the intention of Radical Inclusion ( e.g. involving artists from divested communities as part of the crew), through Participation (e.g. hands-on making and shared organising), Radical Self Expression (e.g. articulation of diverse cultural values and aesthetics) and Each One Teaching One (e.g. skills transfer and acculturation).

The purpose of a stacked budget is to promote equity (over equality), in recognition that South Africa is the most unequal society, and that AfrikaBurn's intention is to invent the world anew. It is not prescriptive, but it does require engagement around fostering a level playing field.

In a nutshell:

Two-Thirds of the funds budgeted for the Temple (in the AfrikaBurn Annual Budget) are allocated towards the hard costs of producing the actual sculpture;

**One-Third** of the budget is reserved for **community development** — this means that proposals that do not have an incubation element, do not have access to this money, which then can be redirected to other projects that do, this creates fairness because the **construction budget is the same for everyone**.

This means that proposing a Temple can remain an open invitation to everyone, as, one way or the other, there is no detriment to **civic responsible use of monies**.

**Incubation Projects** are not just normal projects that are built with cheap labour by people from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. They are projects with specific concepts and outcomes, and that abide by a process with responsibilities and accountability. Not all artists can and/or should take this on.

[Read about](#)

[Temple Metamorphosis](#)



## D. About the Proposal

### What's a Temple Proposal?

**1)** A Temple proposal is a **written document** that you submit to the AfrikaBurn Art Portfolio, expressing your intention to design (and build) the Temple, and how you're envisioning it. It's a comprehensive description, through **words and pictures**, that lets us peek into your head and understand what your idea is.

**2)** Further down, there are some **touchpoints** that we would like you **to include in your Temple proposal**.

At the initial stage, the level of detail required is not equal for all the topics.

We need to have an idea about your plan (and your ability to make one), not your trucks ETA in Tankwa, so please do not start stressing the small details yet.

**3)** Should your proposal be **short-listed**, we'll ask you for more information as necessary.

**4)** Should your proposal be **selected**:

- After agreeing to the final details, the **Temple Proposal**, together with a detailed **Budget** and a rigorous **Timeline**, will be **appended to the Temple Grant Agreement**, that both parties sign.
- You'll be required to provide **structural drawings**.
- What you build must be as was pitched and/or agreed to.

This is particularly important around the design of the Temple and the budget.

**6)** Please **Be Honest**, in your proposal — you must be **clear** and **upfront** about what you are capable of, technically and practically:

- We want to help you to safely actualise your vision — this might not be the Temple, or might not be this year.
- Your initial Temple proposal is not likely to be the final one — please **request input** when needed, and **accept feedback** provided by ArtCom, as a group or individually.

**7) Submitting & Updating** your Temple Proposal:

- by email to **art@afrikaburn.com**
- Subject Line: **2025 Temple Proposal - [Project Name]** or [Your Name] or [anything we can refer to]
- All Info about this proposal must be in **One Email Thread ONLY**. If you need to add, change, update, anything in your proposal, please look for the original email, and do it there.
- Deadline: **30<sup>th</sup> June 2024**, Sunday Midnight.

## Key-Elements to Include in Your Temple Proposal

### 1. The Concept

The core idea behind the Temple you're proposing.

What is the Cultural Meaning, Artistic Vision, Philosophical Statement, Social Impact.

What are the potential/desired outcomes?

### 2. The Design

Description of the proposed Temple design.

Include size, shape, structure, colours, and other key features of the sculpture.

Consider proportions, scale, and how the design interacts with the surroundings.

### 3. Images

Any visual aids to illustrate the design. It is important that we can see the intended image and proportions of your Temple.

If you have (access to) the skills you could draw it up on a technical program like Sketch Up, but a handmade drawing on a serviette will also do it.

### 4. Materials & Sustainability

Specify the materials you plan to use and their environmental impact.

Consider the burn perspective, avoiding materials with high chemical content.

### 5. Lighting

Outline the lighting plan for the Temple at night, considering both aesthetics and safety.

Are you planning to have projections or any other enhanced visual effects?

### 6. Burn Plan

How the sculpture will burn and fall; and how long will it take to collapse.

Ignition plan and any performance aspects.

### 7. Technical Considerations

Outline technical aspects such as wind load, anchor points, and erection plan.

Do you think you'll need heavy lifting equipment or riggers?

### 8. Execution Plan

Include timelines, milestones, key activities, and key activities.

Specify resources, materials, and any external support required.

### 9. Budget

Breakdown of expenses

### 10. The People

Who are you? Please give us a brief bio of you and your team.. What do you do in the default world?

What are your experiences inside and outside of AfrikaBurn. We want to know about your skill set, your dreams, your motivations. And anything you think is relevant here.

## To All the Temple Artists,

### ...of the Past

2007 - [no title] (Brad Beard & Peter Hayes)

2008 - [No temple]

2009 - 'The Temporal' (Monique Schiess & Brad Beard)

2010 - [Same from 2009]

2011 - Pyramid temple structure (Adriaan Wessels)

2012 - 'Solace' (Simon Bannister and crew)

2013 - 'Compression' (Simon Bannister and crew)

2014 - 'The Offering' (Simon Bannister and crew)

2015 - 'Metamorphosis' (Verity Maud and crew) <https://verity3.wixsite.com/metamorphosis>

2016 - 'Awakening' (Verity Maud and crew)

- 'Temple of |Xam' (Kim Goodwin and The Dandylions)

2017 - 'Temple of Gratitude' (Walter Böhmer and crew)

2018 - 'Oasis' (Anushka Kempken and crew)

2019 - 'Temple of Stars' (Walter Böhmer & The Starlight Collective)

2022 - 'Gaia's Song' (Carmel Ives and crew)

2023 - 'Temple of Transcendence' (Carmel Ives and The Temple Crew)

2024 - 'Temple of LuminEssence' (Carmel Ives and The Temple Crew)

### ...and of the Future,

## Thank You!

## History Of Temples At AfrikaBurn

In year one (2007) a Temple was built by Brad Baard and Peter Hayes. That year our Clan was not completed on time for a burn on the Saturday night and Brad and Peter very graciously let us burn it on the Saturday in lieu of having a Clan burn on that night.

In 2009, Brad and Monique Schiess built 'The Temporal' (the theme that year being 'Time') but the structure wasn't called 'the temple', though its stated intention was to be a quiet and reflective space. It was built in what was 'the outskirts' of the event at that stage.

In 2011 Adriaan Wessels built his pyramid Temple structure.

A discussion was then had, initially among ArtCom members and then across the broader AfrikaBurn team and organisation, about whether to have a solicited temple space. It was decided at the time that we would not do a callout or solicit a temple space (motivated primarily by the fact that we didn't just want to cut and paste from Burning Man), but if there was one that rose up in the community then AfrikaBurn would support it.

In 2012 Simon Bannister entered the fray with 'Solace' and followed it up with 'Compression' and 'The Offering' in 2013 and 2014. He initially wanted to name the structures 'The Temple of...' (solace, compression and the offering) but was dissuaded, though he did go on to call the collective 'The Temple Crew.'

In 2015 Verity Maud came along and ArtCom experimented with placing it in the middle of the city for a couple of different reasons:

That was the quieter space at the time. The Loud Zone has moved to the far reaches, so to have the Temple far out would mean that it was in the Loud Zone.

That with Verity leading up activating the space very intentionally it would evolve and advance the use of and understanding of the Temple space at AfrikaBurn

In 2017 Walter Böhmer and his crew created the 'Temple of Gratitude', which also incorporated the intentionality of having a space for reflection and letting go. The Temple was opened on Monday morning with a ceremony toward this purpose.

In 2018 year Anushka Kempken and crew created 'Oasis'.

In 2019, Walter Böhmer and The Starlight Collective created the 'Temple of Stars' - a study on duality and pentagrams. This year the temple burn was moved to Sunday at the artist's request in order to "enable a space for catharsis ". The centre structure was also encircled with a perimeter (fence) for the first time, which worked well to hold the space.

Carmel Ives designed Gaia's song originally for AfrikaBurn 2020, but because of the Covid pandemic, we had 2 years of no Burn. In 2022 Carmel could finally bring Gaia's Song to life on the Binnekring. The work was a celebration of Mother Earth, incorporating sacred geometry of sound and shells.

## Some More Additional Further Temple Reading

DISCLAIMER:

The list below is a start of a list.

It is NOT the ' *The 'Burn' Temple, Important Reading* ' type of list (at least not yet);  
It's a list with rather random articles that we've started compiling,

If you would like to **suggest other readings** to add to this list, please do.

### Links to Some Articles and Websites:

2011, July 22, by Moze:



['Initiations and Salutations'](#)

2012, September 15, by Moze:



['A Sacred Place amidst the Dust'](#)

2013, January 3, by Moze:



['Spirituality and Community: The Process and Intention of bringing a Temple to Black Rock City'](#)

2013, April 6, by Shani Judes:



['Temple Tale'](#)

2014, February 26, by Simon Bannister:



['Reflections on Building 'The Offering''](#)

2014, April 24, by Antonia Blumberg:



['10 Years Of Burning Man Temples Show The Spiritual Side Of Black Rock City'](#)

Website:



[The Temple Builders Guild](#) (founded in 2020)