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Reefer Madness

It's a bike, it's a sculpture, it's a ... Bio reef. Sunk in the seas off the gilts. Words by Drew Corridore. Pics by Nicole Gozzer.



Bikes, boards and Bali go together says Ano Mac of Deus Ex Machina ... and Biorock 'n' roll. The gang at the Deus Temple of Enthusiasm has dropped the rock, and is rollin' out a reef off the coast of Gili Trawangan as a way of stopping the island's sandy shelf from slipping off into a very deep oceanic trench ... and as a way of rehabilitating an area that has been devastated by dynamite fishing in the past. Ano (an Aussie) is in charge of the project that was the brainchild of Celia Gregory from Bali's Marine Foundation. She's built some Biorock (a trademark) reefs before – up north near Pemuteran. But Ano has taken the concept and turned it into a free-diving amusement event. The only place in Indonesia where you can have your photo taken on a motorcycle ... underwater.

The bike will turn into coral soon enough (two to five years) so you have to be quick-ish. Biorock reefs are the result of the musings of marine scientist Wolf Hilbertz who discovered that by making a metal mesh and sinking a metal structure around it, then putting a small (solar-powered) electrical charge through the mesh, calcium would grow on the structure. Followed by coral-based flora, which, in turn, attracts the fauna. Bob's your uncle ... habitat baby! "When Celia walked in here with the idea of making a reef at Trawangan she was looking for sponsorship money," Ano says. "But Deus is a little big company and we don't have a lot of money to throw around. "But what we did have is a lot of old bits of metal."



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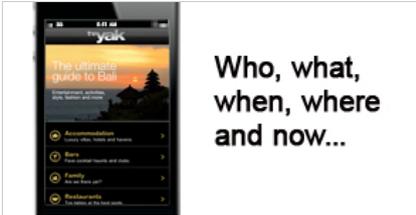
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This bounty comes from the fact that Deus strips down motorcycles in order to rebuild them with their own distinctive, retro styling.

"So we said, 'why don't we build our own bio-reef frame out of all the stuff we've got lying around here'," Ano says.

"Celia contacted Delphine Robbe at the Gili Eco Trust and together they organised the other paraphernalia necessary for the project.

"You can't just make a metal frame and sink it because it'll just rust away."

A solar array and "sacrificial anode" (a titanium mesh) to carry the charge had to be bought. The small electrical field (1.5 volts) prevents the metal from rusting, instead, allowing it to calcify.

"The surf side of Deus is all about the water and a lot of us are mad divers so it seemed an obvious thing to do to get involved in a project like this," Ano says.

"It's not a big advertising thing for us but we thought it would be fun to sink an actual motorbike on the rock so people can free-dive down and sit on it.

"We wanted to design something that was distinctively Deus – so our reef has got bikes and waves; things that are hallmarks of what we're about."

There are other Biorock reefs around Bali – notably the Coral Goddess, which was designed by Celia – of the coast of Pemuteran. And there are others dotted around the Gilis, which has been the site of the annual Biorock conference in the past under the auspices of the Gili Eco Trust.

So go and have a look – 50 metres out in front of the Gili Cafe and six metres down. Hold your breath a bit and have your pic taken on the underwater Deus bike ... easier if you're kitted out with SCUBA gear.

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