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When brothers Eli Hansen and Oscar Tuazon deliver the bad news, it's good

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"Tent" is an image of the fate of the outsider in our society.

John the Baptist withdrew to the desert to live alone on whatever he could wrest from the land, beginning a tradition that continues to this day.

Especially in America, self-sufficient loners enjoy legendary status. They are the embodiment of the pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps mythology, a truth [William Carlos Williams](#) expressed as a cautionary tale: "The pure products of America go crazy."

[Brothers Eli Hansen](#) and [Oscar Tuazon](#) make art that celebrates the purest of pure products, the shaggy solitaries who dig in and take root where nobody else can tell them what to do.

Be it ever so humble, they rarely pay taxes on the hovels they scrape together from castoffs and fragments. If something breaks, they fix it. If they want a tattoo, they find a needle. For a radio, they wrap salvaged copper wire around the core of a toilet paper roll.

Their light is solar or from animal-oil lanterns; their transportation pre-internal combustion engine, and their quest for freedom avid. [Bob Dylan](#) was thinking of them when he wrote, "To live outside the law you must be honest." Los Angeles artist [George Herms](#) had his own encounter with the breed early in his career, when an ancient mariner stopped him on the street and said, "In this life, there are makers, fakers and takers. Which are you?"

Hansen and Tuazon are makers. In their collaborations, the loner life acquires a backwoods lyricism,

rough but effective. [Tim Gunn](#) doesn't have to tell them to make it work. Born in Indianola and bouncing around the state a little, ending up in Port Townsend for high school, they've been working together since childhood.

Hansen, living in Tacoma, blows glass and comes out of the hale and hearty end of the [Pilchuck Glass School](#) tradition. He relates to the no-frills functional glass advanced by [Buster Simpson](#) (one of the school's first directors), the painted sculptures from glass, salvage and forest scraps by the late [Italo Scanga](#), and the high-skill, burrowing mole intensity [Dick Marquis](#) brings to glass.

Tuazon, three years older and based in Paris, is more of the theoretician, but both brothers pride themselves on being able to think on their feet to forge sculptures, photos, collaged videos and installations notable for their material invention.

Sometimes that invention is recognizing what's there already. "Tent" hangs against the back wall at [Howard House](#). It's makeshift, portable and cheap but evokes art whose simplicity was startling in its own time, say, for instance, [Robert Morris'](#) sagging felt curtains from the late '60s and early '70s, before Hansen and Tuazon were born.

Any 5-year-old with a step ladder and heavy-lifting help from parents could make it, just as any tyke could put bicycle seat and handlebars together to make Picasso's bull. Children could, but they don't. In the world, the people hanging big plastic tarps from trees need the shelter. In a gallery against a wall, it's curtain cover for a window that isn't there, a metaphor for the fate of loner aspirations in the 21st century.

One of the brothers' heroes was a captain of industry. Here's their version of the story: "In 1960, during a visit to one of his bottling plants on the Caribbean island of Curacao, Alfred [Heineken](#), the president of Heineken beer, saw two problems that, taken together, appeared to him as a single visionary solution. Heineken's bottles, rather than being returned to the plant for reuse, were being thrown out, often on the streets of Curacao's shantytowns. Taking Heineken's recycling problem as the answer to a worldwide housing crisis, Heineken returned to Rotterdam and, with architect [John Habraken](#), spent the next three years designing a 'brick that holds beer.' "

Nothing came of it, till now. [Hansen's](#) hand-blown house bricks could hold beer and come with the motto, "Drink yourself into a house."

Hansen and Tuazon photograph houses and houseboats on the edge of dissolution, held together by duct tape, baling wire, old boards, cracked glass, poured tar and silicone glue.

Along with outcasts, they like idealists, like the Voluntarily [NonVulnerable Society](#) in central Oregon. It withdrew so completely from society its members invented their own alphabet, reproduced in "Vonu." "Just say no," advised [Nancy Reagan](#). One of the brothers found a note on the street written in intense block letters that takes the former first lady's idea to extremes: "Citizens oppose, reject, refuse, and repel loitering smokers in public places, 'drug and alcohol lifestyle' crowd, street druggies, hot rodders, and extreme noise harassers (boom-box cars), and those who hustle, solicit, and proposition on our street corners and sidewalks."

Their core handyman aesthetic bears a strong resemblance to Buster Simpson's and [Jerry Pethick's](#) in the 1970s. Like Seattle's Simpson and Vancouver, B.C.,'s Pethick, Hansen and Tuazon are drawn to the raw: fat seams of silicone, plain-Jane glass, scrap lumber, battered metal tubs, plastic sacks and old tar paper.

Simpson, however, has roots in the "change the world" environmental movement and the late Pethick was a do-it-yourself sci-fi visionary. Without a hint of the sad sack, Hansen and Tuazon are drawn to lost causes. With can-do exuberance, their sculptures bring to mind a future that is behind them. They make soulful fun from tragedy. Rarely is bad news this appealing.