



Painting the Big Picture – Acculturation, Burning Man-style

TEXT BOENOB

Following several hundred miles of debate, our friend S emerged from my stepvan at the pearly gates of Burning Man and bravely took a Greeter-delivered paddling that defines a newbie's original rite of passage. The other two of us being Black Rock City veterans, we'd gone several rounds with her on the import of the ritual both in terms of relevance – and, literally, import: a borrowed tradition that many of us experienced straight out of the womb. The notable exceptions – being held upside down by your feet by a giant person delivering the swat, before you even get a reasonable hug.

So begins a great playa adventure of acculturation, a surprisingly easy word to repeat quickly, despite its syllabic opulence. Try it, you'll like it: Acculturation! Not to be confused with the similarly ambitious "assimilation" – acculturation is a much friendlier concept. Officially: "Cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture; a merging of cultures as a result of prolonged contact." So we've got ourselves a two-way street; yin and yang; give and take.

Plainly, acculturation fuels the essence and evolution of Burning Man. The perceptions, histories, talents, quirks, similarities, and proclivities of every person occupying a given Burning Man create the cultural fabric of the city. Humanity, tolerance, and the radical self-expression ethos of the community have proven to be a very workable catalytic combination for creating what many consider to be the best show on Earth. And we're all a part of it.

Very arguably, then, new citizens have everything to do with the ever-changing organism that is Burning Man, past, present and future. All other issues aside, some questions remain begged: How best to bring fresh blood, sweat, and tears into the fold? Who's responsible for getting new burners acclimated and active? Is the acculturation process as it exists today in need of fixing?

"There must be some common thread, if a tenuous one, that keeps the whole thing together," TradeMark of Burning Man Information Radio offers. "If you had to



This is how we do it baby!

sum it up in one word, it's probably the one on one of the first signs you see as you enter: PARTICIPATION. And, participation requires community. Obviously it all begins with the individual; you have to want to participate. But once an individual has made that commitment, it's important to have opportunities available.

"Put simply, if you participate and contribute and make yourself part of things, you'll probably be back. But if you sit back and drink beer and stay a safe distance, you'll walk away thinking that was a pretty expensive show."

Not surprisingly, TradeMark's sentiments were echoed over and over again among the people interviewed for this article. Participants, good; gawkers/moochers, bad. With equal frequency, veteran burners shared the opinion that while a reasonable degree of self-reliance and involvement is expected from newcomers, they should be cut some slack in terms of relating to their first Burning Man experience.

"When it comes to newbies (first time attendees), one has to remember: Burning Man is a world that operates on community, support and love," says longtime BRC resident Opal Essence. "It can be scary to someone who

has been taught fear as a way to relate. I feel it is each individual burner's responsibility to share and be patient with a newbie. The experiences on the playa are like accelerated civil growth: Sometimes one cannot process what happened until they go back to our fear-based society."

Of course, there are also those who take a more hard-line approach to sensitivities. "Everyone new to Burning Man should come into it knowing that they're expected to carry their own weight," says another veteran burner. "It seems self-evident, but no matter what information and resources you make as widely available as possible, you still have people showing up who don't have a clue and aren't concerned with finding one – milkers. If you don't care about contributing on some positive level, and you're not respectful enough of the community to be prepared, the playa isn't for you."

As with many first-timers, Murielle found the Burning Man cultural environment to be a bit overwhelming when she made her maiden voyage last year. "I didn't have any trouble with the physical demands; I'd studied up and was fully able to take care of myself for the five days I was there. But you get hit with the stimulus overload factor and just a generally overwhelmed feeling once you're in the City that there's really no way to prepare for, and that's unsettling. I found that you can count on most people who've already been to be cool with the rookies, but I think everyone would benefit from zero condescension."

"Attitude from the experienced burners who don't want to 'stoop' to dealing with the newbies," TradeMark agrees is an issue. "We've been here longer and worked harder, so get out of our way, plebeian." Bad attitude!

"I've seen the size of the event make a big difference when it comes to people dealing with each other," reports JoeJo. He took several years off but came back the past two. "When Burning Man was smaller – much smaller – I feel like there was a different sense to it...like a small town vibe where everyone kind of knows each other and so they help each other out more readily. You can definitely still find plenty of that now, but the scope's so large that it's got to be a

bit much for a lot of first-timers. And it's easier to not feel accountable for your fellow burners' well-being. 'Someone else'll help them out.'"

"Acculturation means survival," adds Steven D, a British burner of six years, "so accommodating fellow burners makes sense even on a base social level. Everyone's responsible not only for themselves, but for each other as well. Fortunately, part of the beauty of Burning Man is the common commitment to look after each other; there's no compartmentalizing of good will. And that usually translates to a pretty decent atmosphere for newbies to come into, from what I've seen."

Many veteran burners also point out the importance of regional events and web-based resources such as the Burning Man site and Tribe.net in preparing the uninitiated for a stay on the playa. "I went to Decompression in San Francisco before I went to Burning Man the first time, two years ago," recounts Melanie, a massage therapist and dancer from Austin. "So when I got out to the desert, I'd already connected the dots to some extent, socially and expectation-wise. I think that without that sequence of events I would've had a bumpier ride of it."

"A newbie department out on the playa would seem to make sense," another burner suggests. "A place specifically for newbies, where they could get information and ask what they might consider to be stupid questions specific to a first time go at it."

"Part of the wonder of Burning Man is seeing and hearing about the unique ways that folks get used to it or not," the hooper Swivl notes. "Of course, we could do Burning Man summer camp leading up to the event during the first weeks in August. Set up an obstacle course. Bring in trainers." Ambitious. The general rule is that if you think of it first, make it happen; or if you hear an idea that seems right, own it!

The push for acculturation, and how best to accomplish it, is still being debated. Hopefully you'll see some of the fruits of those efforts before and at this year's Black Rock City. However, it seems clear that acculturation is everyone's responsibility. Bringing people together with a common ethos, and helping out when you see someone straying, will enhance the experience for us all. 🌱

'Round the Fire of the Man's Head - PSYCHE!

TEXT NAOMI BOCK

Night of the Burn, 2005. I'm wandering through the darkness of the deep playa.

The burn itself had been a memorable one, to say the least. Setting this year's rotating Man on fire had some unexpected consequences. The heat had made the Man spin into a high-speed dervish. But this was a little more intense, especially when the Man started whirling so fast he broke free of the base and shot up into the sky, raining huge burning chunks all over the playa. Miraculously, no one was hurt... not badly, anyway. It was roundly declared the best burn ever, and for the vast majority who didn't know it was an accident, an indication that the increasingly cautious Burning Man Organization had gotten some real edge back.

So I'm lost in reverie out on the playa, but getting a little cold so I head for the orange blur of a fire. As I get closer, I can see it's one of the Man's cinder-chunks; unmistakably his head from the distinctive triangle shape. Two wizened European men are sitting by it, deep in conversation – German, maybe? I decide not to interrupt, sticking to the other side of the fire. They look familiar, famous maybe. One has a white beard and small round glasses over his frown, the other beardless with slightly bigger glasses and smile.

Maybe it was something I ate earlier that awakened my childhood German comprehension, because suddenly I can understand their conversation. The bearded one is calling the

beardless one "Carl-Gustav", who's calling him "Sig". They seem to be psychoanalyzing somebody – a man... The Man?

"Clearly, he was in a state of pure Thanatos, the death instinct," Sig declares.

"He was enacting an alchemical archetype of the collective unconscious," offers C.G.

I'm not following, but not confident enough in my re-kindled German to ask questions. C.G. must have read my mind, as he looks at me and smiles. "For the benefit of this lovely young fraulein, Sig, perhaps we should introduce our positions. You see, my dear, my colleague here believes the psyche comprises three parts: the id with its animal desires and unconscious motivations, the ego housing the primary self-identity, and the superego, one's governing conscience, influenced by the authoritarian ideologies of a person's family, religion and society."

"Now I agree that the ego is the center of conscious identity, but in my view, the deeper part of the psyche, the self, is home to both a personal and a collective unconscious. We are all born with an intuitive understanding of certain archetypal symbols, and our unconscious self organizes our personal experiences through the universal symbol-language of dreams, searching for meaning and wholeness."

"Hocus pocus," Sig mumbles. Then he says to me with a shrug, "Carl Gustav was my student,

but he has certainly strayed from my teachings with his strange spiritual ideas, dressing up what are simply human pathologies."

C.G. looks ready to blow his top. "Your morbid reductionism and refusal to deal with man as a spiritual creature defies the cultural and biological truth of religious experience as an expression of the psyche! Look at the amazing ritual performed here on the playa each year. Symbolic of the psyche's desire to cleanse itself, to reunite the ego with the original deep self, fusing with the collective soul through fire, that great tool of alchemy!"

"Come back down to earth, Carl Gustav. You've got a giant wooden man erected and then set aflame. The whole thing is just a big bonfire of repressed sexual desire."

"Schei-sse, Sig, do you always have to boil everything down to sex?"

"By your curse Carl Gustav, I'd have to say that you are regressing to the anal stage."

Even though I don't really understand their debate, it seems to me like it's getting rather petty. I close my eyes and ponder the mysteries of the psyche. It seems pretty jam-packed, with all those memories, phobias, compulsions, and delusions. The mind is a pack rat, the unconscious a dumping ground for countless random impressions. That's a hell of a lot of MOOP And most of it nonflammable, unfortunately, which means we're stuck carting it back out.

When I manage to re-focus on the conversation 'round the fire the two men have returned to their psychoanalysis of the Man.

"The fact that he relives this trauma every year points to a serious repetition-compulsion," intones Sig.

"He repeats this experience as part of his ego's individuation cycle," sighs C.G.

I want to ask them if they realize the Man is literally (if also psychologically) a construction of the people of Black Rock City. But before I open my mouth, they're already laughing lightly in response.

"Yes, of course we know that, but we're at Burning Man, so we're having a little fun."

Suddenly this loud digital ringing starts in my ears. It sounds like my cell phone, but those don't work on the playa. . . Oh, I'm actually in my bed in Vancouver, what a crazy dream. But Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung will actually be on the playa in 2005, if only in spirit. They're slated as street names for the Psyche art theme. I imagine myself lost in Black Rock City this year - taking a wrong turn somewhere after Freud and finding myself way out past Jung. . . Scheisse.

Look for Naomi Bock's upcoming video installation "The Youniversal Mirror of the Collective Unconscious" in the Center Camp Café at this year's Burn. 🌱

Curtis Connections

TEXT ARTHUR ZWERN

A playa vibe full of naughty nurses, lap dancers, body shots, stiltwalkers, DJs, crazy lights, chill tents, and an erotic ice bar, surrounded by all kinds of art. Burning Man? No, the second annual Burning Solstinox celebration, where we enjoyed the mid-point between burns as if we were at one.

This year's event was held March the 5th at SOMArts as a FUN-raiser to support cancer patient and burner Curtis Coleman, who appropriately themed it "Connections". And connect people did. A team following the 10 Burning Man principles as far as default will allow, connected nearly a thousand people in an enchanted village, without a single grumble about disconnecting them from their hard-earned cash.

How did a traveling children's musician with a lump in his throat end up surrounded by hundreds of us dancing, and become an icon demonstrating we are no longer an event but a year-round community? This is his story.

Curtis was always the Pied Piper in the best sense, and could make one laugh or cry within 30 seconds just by picking up a guitar. He may even have gotten thrown out of high school for stealing attention from teachers with that thing. So he toured with bands like [commercial names deleted], then found his special gift to the world singing songs to kids about safety and finding the voice inside themselves. Over a million schoolchildren were engaged, thrilled, and taught something by the time of that lump, including some at the White House.

He's attended three Burning Man events, the TOAST Arizona regional twice, and various other regional events, so kids were not the only ones connecting with Curtis through his music and the deep personality behind it. In fact burners from Arizona to Canada had already extended their circles to each other through Curtis, including this reporter. Then at a Santa Barbara burner Halloween party, he made a fateful connection – an oncologist, who immediately insisted the lump Curtis was ignoring in his throat is definitely cancer until proven otherwise.

By November, the diagnosis was squamous cell carcinoma, requiring surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. Five year survival rate 25%, and no way to sing for at least a year if ever. So what do you do when your 45-year-old best friend

has no money, no insurance, and not much time? Get donations! Folks were asked for \$10 or more, gifts of time and help, and love. Then out it went to Eplaya, tribe.net, all of his friends, and said "pass it on." The appeal said things like "when you reach your hand out to someone in need, it never comes back empty".

What do you know, it worked! Within days, money came pouring in, letters came pouring in, little handmade gifts from children arrived, a web site was up (www.friendsofcurtis.com), and a tribe had formed to support Curtis that now has over 250 members. When \$100 arrived from a jobless burner in another state that had never even met Curtis just as someone else posted asking if this was a hoax, the community that is Burning Man had fully kicked into all its gears.

People started changing their online icons to say "Save Curtis." Then a banner ad went up. Soon, the connections began to multiply - DJ Samira donated proceeds from a booking to Curtis, and a burner dancing there named Susanna happened to be an SJ Merc photographer. Soon, a feature story was in the works to cover Curtis on his journey.

The day after Thanksgiving and just four days before throat surgery would likely end Curtis' singing career, Nasti Andi and this reporter booked a last-minute recording studio slot to preserve his beautiful talent. Curtis laid 16 songs down in five hours, many in one take with some additional guitar overdubs, and some ad-libbed. The CD was mixed & mastered the next day, and it sounded so good 1,000 copies were made to raise money to help Curtis be self-sufficient. He named it "For My Friends" because of all the love from this community that has supported him.

One of the wonderful things about our community is that we learn to go WAY outside of the box so effortlessly, and sure enough there was a bill for 1,000 CDs on the way, to the most clueless newbie record producer in history. Pre-sales were about 3 copies. So, out went another call out to the community, and HeidiWD who never met Curtis had created awesome CD cover art. Mousetrapp who Curtis met on the playa only once said "why not throw a release party?" The people rejoined "great idea, go do it!"

So Mousetrapp went and gave SOMArts a deposit. As possible dates edged closer to March, a tingly feeling prevailed. Last year, a bunch of



Curtis (in ball cap) revels with friends at Solstinox

Burning Silicon regional members invented a holiday for the midpoint between burns, combining 'Solstice' since we are farthest from that Man in the desert in both time and space, and 'Equinox' since we are equally distant from two of his burns. Solstinox. A time for leaving dusty memories behind and beginning that insane race to make fantasy an impossible reality on the playa. The perfect time to bring that Black Rock attitude to the default world, all night long. Three hundred people seemed to relate to that last year, and the Southbay will never be the same.

So if we should be in asylums as it is, why the hell not simultaneously make Solstinox a bigger party in SF, release a beautiful acoustic music album to the sounds of thumping breaks and chill, and raise money for a cancer battle? It all made perfect sense in the usual twisted way. Thank god people around here actually know how to throw real parties in real cities, because the amazing Heidi Rose stepped up, personally fought all the dragons required to do this crazy thing with permits, and attracted a huge following from awesome DJs to dozens of off-duty DPW and Rangers. Nearly every last labor hour and every party item was gifted, because that's how we do it, and you couldn't do it any other way. Curtis really wants you to know how much he appreciates the hundred plus people that participated deeply in this one! A partial list is at www.solstinox.com.

Things got real interesting when Special K asked Captain Erotica for some FUN-raising ideas, and she created a safe 'n sane erotic amusement park the likes of which hasn't been seen before. At \$10 a lap dance with traffic

stimulated by Red Hot's online teasing, few madams have ever done such a brisk turnover without a single item of clothing removed. Well, I didn't see any, and I wouldn't tell you if I did anyway. Hundreds probably never found the place, since the main stage performances and DJs rocked way past the planned 4AM end. Mother Nature gave us a perfect night for filling the huge outdoor chill area with what else, crowds of us connecting with our old friends and making new ones, stirred up by roving kissing bandits.

Curtis is the most persistent person this reporter knows. He talked his way into the best care anyone could get. He taught us the most important question to ask every doctor when your life depends on it: "If your child had what I have, is there anything you would do or anyone you would go to besides what we've talked about already?" The answers to that question have increased his chances not only of survival, but of singing again someday.

As of this writing, Curtis had just finished his last of six weekly chemotherapy treatments. He has a few more of his daily radiation treatments. The effects are progressive, and while the doctors are hopeful the cancer is gone forever, they nearly killed the patient to do this. On purpose. He can hardly talk and eats through a stomach tube. We don't know if he will sing again. By BM05 he might taste again, and if we are damn lucky he'll sing a song on the playa. We do know we've raised enough money now to support him till then and bring him Home. And we know that even though he was not able to enjoy his party much, he was there connecting us, and that's the most important thing. 🌻

AZ Burners Gifting Off Playa

TEXT ANDIE GRACE

The students at Arizona's Service To All Relations School (STAR School), 30 miles east of Flagstaff, have not made it to Black Rock City yet, but thanks to the Arizona Regional group, they've learned a little something about the Burning Man community. The students at this charter elementary school, which serves children in grades K-8 from the local Navajo and Hopi tribes, enjoyed a visit in October 2004 from several Arizona burners – among them, AZ Regional Contact Gary Taylor and Lynn "Ranger Beauty" Drake-Browne – who brought Taylor's playa radio station setup to STAR's classrooms to educate the students about broadcasting.

The Arizona group took on STAR school as a test project in 2002, says Taylor, as a way to "turn (Burning Man) into something beyond just 'showing up and having a good time.'" The low-powered station, "Radio Electra", broadcasts on the playa as a gift to Black Rock City, and has made an appearance at several regional events. At STAR School, the station served as a different kind of gift – an educational tool for the school's 55 students, providing them with an opportunity to learn about low-power broadcasting and get hands-on experience behind the microphone. "Radio Electra has always been a gift," says Taylor. "I don't build it so people can listen to my voice. I build it so that others who have an interest can join in. If you include others in your creation, you give them an opportunity to interact."

The connection to STAR school started when the operators of the progressive, solar-powered school, Kate and Mark Sorenson, attended Burning Man in 2002, plugging in with the Arizona burn community along the way. The Sorensons joined the Arizona discussion list, and when the time came to find a Decompression venue, they offered to host that year's event on their ranch. The Decom was a success, and the Sorensons became a beloved part of the local group. It was that connection that led Kate Sorenson to ask Taylor if he'd be interested in bringing his

Radio Electra setup to the school. Since there already was a plan afoot to build a low-power station for the school, it was a perfect match to benefit the children by providing exposure to the inner workings of the station and the education that Taylor could provide.

On October 11th, 2004, Ranger Beauty and her husband "Rat Bastard" helped to set up the station's gear, while Taylor answered questions about broadcasting, and explained to the children how the microphone worked. "The kids were nervous and giddy," said Beauty. "From teens all the way down to first graders, they all got a chance to experience (broadcasting) first hand. It gave them a hands-on sense of how radio actually works." Each class was called in one at a time over the school's PA as it broadcast the station; the older kids tried their hands at announcements, while the youngest classes sang a song together (adorably, says Beauty, they even executed the song's choreographed hand motions as they sang).

This spring, STAR school will receive yet another gift from the Burning Man community. Using materials purchased with a \$1000 grant from the Black Rock Arts

Foundation, AZBurners will donate their manpower to build a performance amphitheater at the school for its students to enjoy for years to come.

Over time, it would appear, this ownership of the experience has translated into a social contract among the group's members. Grover Davis, an Arizona co-Regional who now lives in San Francisco, says "What happens in Arizona is truly a credit to every one of the individuals involved. It's a collective effort. It's caring for each other...even in situations where people have personality conflicts, you'll see these people and they're still working on a project - together."

Taylor agrees with Davis' assessment. "This thing isn't about 'my' creativity, it's about yours..."

we have a real sampling of skills in our community – it shows that Burning Man is not just for artists, or DPW builder types, or performers...all these folks come together to enhance the experience." Each of these skills can be given as a gift at Burning Man; extending this gift to these Arizona children was this Regional group's way of bringing a piece of Burning Man home to share.

It seems that the close ties generated by the Arizona group's approach to collaboration

have translated into a desire to help bring the Burning Man ethos into their larger community. This spring, when the same hands that will construct theme camps, art projects, and mutant vehicles for Black Rock City break ground on the performance amphitheater at STAR School, the students and their families will know that Burning Man's "gift economy" extends far beyond the orange trash fence that surrounds our desert event. 🌻

Burning at the NV Day Parade



WANTED: ART CARS FOR ARTERY ART TOURS. We need large and safe art vehicles, (capacity of about 20) that are registered with the DMV, for art tours. Wheelchair access on the art car is not required but would be a real bonus. The tour usually takes about 1.5 hours and the art car would provide their own gas and would ideally have a PA or mic on board (bullhorns are also available). The art car operator(s) need to contact us soon to let us know that they can commit to driving one tour in a sober state. Art tour vehicle operators will be blessed by increased playa karma points and knowing that they helped many participants learn more about the art of Burning Man. For more information, contact: ele_molnar@sunshine.net

Participate By Volunteering!

Black Rock City is an all-participant City. Each of us is called upon to contribute our art or our talents or our efforts . . . or whatever it is you do to enhance the experience of your fellow citizens. Listed below are some of the groups within our community that could use some help with their volunteer projects. We provide this information to drive home the fact that you gotta do something in Black Rock City, 'cause there ain't no spectators! We look forward to seeing you on playa.

Airport

Yes, Virginia, there is an Airport! It exists as certainly as dust storms and glorious sunsets on the playa. Building and running a temporary airport requires many volunteers and skills. We need "Customs Agents" (training provided) for gate control, box office, greeting, and information. We need pilots to give UNICOM advisories. We need construction and general labor in San Jose pre-event. On-playa volunteers are welcomed for everything from runway marking to airplane parking to lamp lighting. Contact airport-volunteers@burningman.com or call the Airport Manager at (408) 297-9795.

ARTery

The ARTery is the Burning Man Art Team. On-playa, our headquarters functions as a check-in center for artists, as well as a hub for information about their art. Off-playa, we operate all year round to make sure that artist applications get processed and art-ifacts are catalogued. Our internal groups include Artist Advocate, Operations, Planning, Art Tours, and Tech Team. To join, please fill out the Volunteer form at <http://www3.burningman.com/people> and mark down "Artery Team" as your department of interest.

Bay Area Flambe Lounges & Special Events:

If you live in the area or are coming into town for one of these events, you can volunteer as an artist, original performer, deejay, theme camper, set-up/break-down person or builder. Share a video. Volunteer your original ideas and unique abilities. Email flambelounge@burningman.com with ideas and questions.

Black Rock Gazette

Since 1992 the Black Rock Gazette has informed, entertained and amazed the populace of Black Rock City. In 2005 we're going to do it again! We will need volunteers for all phases of design and production from the City Desk to photography to distribution, and everything in between. If you want a place to volunteer to get your toehold in Black Rock City, join us at our 10AM meetings on playa! E-mail brgazette@burningman.com

Black Rock Arts Foundation

Incorporated in May 2001, The Black Rock Arts Foundation is a non-profit arts organization furnishing artists with monetary and non-monetary aid for the production and display of interactive artwork around the globe. We are devoted to promoting a revival of art's culture-bearing and connective function by removing art from its context in the marketplace and reintegrating it into communal settings. Now in our third cycle of funding, we are looking for volunteers to help us with development, clerical work and marketing on a regular basis. We are also looking for in kind donations and people who have resources to share with others for the purpose of creating art and cultivating creative environments. E-mail info@blackrockarts.org

CampArctica

The ice must flow, and as the "soul" outlet for this essential element, CampArctica is vital to the life of our community. Help us distribute this sacred resource to playa folk in a fun, friendly environment as we create our own frozen oasis on the desert floor. E-mail icequeen@burningman.com.

Center Camp Cafe

A community of over 600 volunteers, artists, musicians and builders come together every year to create the Center Camp Cafe community space. Located in the middle of

Center Camp, the playa's largest community space operates twenty-four hours a day for the entire event. Cafe stages and space call on Burning Man participants to showcase their talents in spoken word, aerial performance, music, plays and dance in its highly-visited central location. We need artists, entertainers, decorators, builders, electricians, lighting designers, baristas, counter people, sound technicians and stage managers to bring to life this center of colorful energy. The Center Camp Cafe invites everyone passionate about participation and community to help share in this truly amazing endeavor. E-mail cafe-volunteers@burningman.com.

Commissary

Help Feed the Peeps Who Build Our City! Here's your opportunity to lend a hand in the commissary, where we cook up a storm (often in a storm) for the DPW and other Burning Man staffers. The Commissary is looking for interested folk who have a few weeks to spare for Commie administration, ten days to offer for expediting foodstuffs around the city, or for those who simply don't mind a little dust in their food. E-mail rachael@burningman.com.

Department of Mutant Vehicles

DMV Hotties Wanted - The BRC DMV seeks seasoned Playa participants to train in the process of licensing Mutant Vehicles. E-mail dmv@burningman.com.

Department of Public Works (DPW)

If you would like to volunteer your time to help build Black Rock City, and have carpentry, plumbing, heavy equipment, rigging, electrical, building skills, or just a burning desire to volunteer, you may have what it takes to be DPW. We're having work weekends throughout the year starting in late April, with a push to build BRC starting in early August. For those who want to stay and help clean up post-event for a weekend, a week or more you can help to ensure the survival of the event by joining us. E-mail dpw-volunteers@burningman.com



DPW Vols get'er done at The Ranch.

Earth Guardians

The Earth Guardians inform, inspire and encourage the citizens of BRC to apply Leave No Trace principles to life in our temporary desert home and beyond. We also visit the desert on weekends throughout the year to assist the Federal Bureau of Land Management and other desert users with restoration and conservation efforts. Email earthguardians@burningman.com.

Emergency Services Department (ESD)

ESD provides BRC with Emergency Medical Services, Fire Fighting, Mental Health and Emergency Dispatch services. We are currently seeking professionals and volunteers for all areas of ESD service. E-mail 911@burningman.com.

Exodus

The Exodus team is always in need of volunteers to direct traffic out of our beloved city at the end of the event. In our quest to empty Black Rock City as quickly and safely as possible, we need people to fill a couple of roles for four-to-six hour shifts on Saturday,

Sunday and Monday of the event: Set-up: A few dedicated, hardworking volunteers needed to set hundreds of cones to delineate the exit lanes and merge points. This happens during the day on Saturday. Exitters: Stand in the dust and wave traffic into and across lanes. Answer a few questions, untangle snarls, but mostly wave goodbye! Flagger: This is a job that requires a bit more time commitment - Flagger will attend a Nevada State certification class that takes about 6 hours and is held off-playa during the event. Transportation is provided and the certification is good for two years. Tear-down: Some more hard-working people needed to pick up all those hundreds of cones and help tear down the Greeters' shade structure. Please check out the website at <http://exodus.burningman.com> or E-mail exodus@burningman.com

Fire Conclave

We are looking for Fire Performers, Musicians, Fire Tenders and anyone who would like to help with fire activities and be part of the Fire Conclave throughout Burning Man. No matter where you may live in the world you can still participate in Fire Activities. Email CrimsonRose,NakedFireGoddess,crimson@burningman.com.

Gate and Perimeter

Gate Staff and Perimeter needs your help to ensure that every person is a contributing member of the burning man communities, in the most fundamental way (has purchased a valid ticket). As our departments run 24hrs many short 6 hour shifts are available around the clock. Volunteers' activities range from directing traffic, tearing tickets, participating in vehicle searches, to riding along with the perimeter team and thwarting fence-crashers outside our city. E-mail gate@burningman.com

Greeters

As you prepare for our spiritual journey into the desert this year, consider the opportunity of being a Greeter. It's a great way to meet new people and express your love to your playa brothers and sisters. Greeters take on a shift of 4 hours of meeting and greeting and welcoming home a lot of weary and excited travelers. We search for registered theme camps and

Media Mecca

The Media Mecca Team manages media policy on and off the playa year-round. We need people willing to connect and create relationships with the media. E-mail media-volunteers@burningman.com.

Office Squad San Francisco

We can always use dedicated souls to help throughout the year at Burning Man HQ SF on a regular or irregular basis. Projects vary from filing, copying, data entry, bulk mailing, video logging, you never know who will need help with what in our busy hub. E-mail officevolunteers@burningman.com



Census volunteers count at BMHQ.

Playa Info

In Center Camp, under the blue "i" in the sky, you'll find the central point for getting and distributing the hot information. Want to know about the times for a particular event, how to have your RV pumped, or how far the Sun is from planet Earth? Lost something? Need a camera tag? Need to find a friend's camp? The Playa Info Oracles are a veritable fountain of factual and frivolous information about workings and activities of BRC. If you're someone who loves to meet all kinds of new people, be empowered with information, communicate, and be helpful, this is a great volunteer opportunity, in a very lively and fun environment. We need people with all levels of experience to volunteer in our service areas. E-mail playainfo@burningman.com.

Rangers

The Black Rock Rangers ride the edge of chaos. The Rangers are a group of male and female volunteers that are non-confrontational mediators and providers of information, devoted to public safety and the quality of participant experience. Rangers also serve as a buffer or interface between participants, the Burning Man organization, and outside agencies. We have an Echelon group that is an integral part of the Ranger department providing logistical support for Ranger operations. E-mail rangers@burningman.com.

Recycle Camp

Dedicated volunteers are needed to promote recycling to the citizens of BRC. Spread the word, collect aluminum cans for the Gerlach School, have fun and Leave No Trace. E-mail recycle@burningman.com.

Technology and Web Team

The Tech Team develops, manages and maintains the back-end infrastructure and public-facing elements of the Burning Man technology tools which include the website, extranet, databases, office-based desk top support and system administration. The web site projects bring together technical, UX, content and other web-related volunteers dedicated to supporting and expanding a strong online community, which provides information, resources, contacts, and a way to celebrate Burning Man throughout the year. A fun and diverse group of talented individuals, the Tech Team welcomes network engineers, system administrators, python programmers, Zope/Plone developers, HTML coders, CSS wizards, database jockeys, web scripters, graphic designers, information architects, project managers, writers, content editors, and image jockeys. These days we are particularly looking for project managers, writers, and user experience gurus to help with our current projects. If you're interested in helping, please fill out the volunteer questionnaire at: <http://www.burningman.com/participate/questionnaire.html>

Video Documentation Team

The Video Documentation Team is looking for general volunteers with knowledge of video production, a team volunteer coordinator and videographers with their own equipment. E-mail hellga@burningman.com . 📹

hook up folks with a Lead Greeter who points them in the right direction. We hand out fun filled packages of collated materials. We provide camera tags for video capable cameras. We offer BRC virgins the opportunity to ring in the beginning of an experience that will forever change their lives. We smile and laugh and walk away from our shifts charged with the happy energy of newly arrived BRC citizens. We are also looking for Burning Man veterans to act as Leads to be the ears and voice of the station, keeping things running smoothly. E-mail sparkle@burningman.com.

Lamplighters

Illumination! Navigation! Celebration! Don a robe, grab a lifting pole, and jump on Lucy(fer), the Lamplighter Mutant Vehicle, as we're off to light BRC! Whiteout or shine, we light ev'ry night! Lamplighter Chapel - Center Camp. Email: lamplighters@burningman.com

Legal Team

Burning Man has a stellar team of legal help. If you have legal experience and would like to work pro bono let us know. E-mail legal-volunteers@burningman.com.

How Does Creativity Work?

TEXT BY: LIANIMAL

As this year's 'Psyche' theme got you wondering what was going on in your mind when you had the idea of decorating your bike like the fire-breathing dragonfly you dreamed about, or what made a fire-breathing dragonfly appear in your dream in the first place? Why is the human mind so much more inventive than that of other species? How did we become so creative?

That's what I get paid in the default world to figure out! Some people are put off by the attempt to understand how the creative process works. But the goal isn't to take the magic out of creativity. It's to infuse the magic of creativity into our understanding of the mind, and our understanding of the world.

It turns out that creativity has to do with the way our memory is constructed. Memories are spread across lots of little 'memory locations' and likewise, each memory location participates in the encoding of lots of different memories. So memories are smooshed into one another, and the more smooshed together they are, the greater the tendency not only for one thing to remind us of another, but for us to come up with new ideas that blend or 'entangle' our memories and concepts in interesting ways.

The ability to think creatively depends not just on how memory is constructed, but on how it gets used. In a normal state of mind, the reason one thought transforms into another is that we bombard a small bundle of these memory locations with not just the contents of our previous thought, but also new information from our senses (for example, about what we're seeing or hearing or touching). The mind puts this all together to form the new thought, and it does this again and again to generate a sensible stream of thought.

But when this kind of sensible thought process gets stuck, or doesn't solve a problem, or satisfy an intuition, or let you express what needs to be expressed, all this happens a little differently. Your attention becomes defocused,

which allows you to take more sensory information, or more elements of the previous thought into account. This makes the bundle of bombarded memory locations bigger, and it can get even bigger as the activation process repeats again and again. So the quality of your thought becomes less analytic and more associative. Memories and concepts that are only related to your current situation in strange or unusual ways, stumble in through back-door alleyways of your mind, and appear in your stream of thought. And sometimes this associative process leads to ideas that you never could have had if your thinking was constrained the way it is when you're in a more analytic mode of thought. It is well known that people often come up with insights in their dreams, which makes sense because when we are dreaming, this associative mode of thought has free reign.

So what makes us want to come up with new ideas in the first place? It has to do with what is called conceptual closure, which is the desire to have the elements of your internal model of the world somehow relate to one another, fit in with one another, whatever way they can. When there is a 'gap' in this integrated web of ideas and attitudes and feelings, you experience a kind of dissatisfaction, a yearning, until you finally achieve the 'conceptual orgasm' that resolves it and 'gives birth to' a new idea. Like for instance, the idea to transform your bike into a fire-breathing dragonfly!

One of the amazing aspects of Burning Man is not only does it provide a unique opportunity for creative self-expression but it inspires creative people to come together and see what kind of sparks fly when they interact. Each person has the contents of not just their own mind, but of each others' minds to serve as the ingredients which with to activate those bundles of memory locations. And this kind of creative interaction doesn't have to be face to face. It's enough to see (or hear or feel) the fruits of someone else's creative thought process to be affected by it. The result is that together they can come up with ideas that neither could have generated alone. Let's see what we create together in this year of Psyche!

(For more information see www.vub.ac.be/CLEA/liane or drop Lianimal, a PhD in Cognitive Science, a line at liane@berkeley.edu.)

Life at the Ranch

TEXT BY MATT MULLIN

Flying out across the Black Rock Desert, near Gerlach, Nevada, I was amazed to see what appeared to be a giant steel butterfly off in the distance. As I got closer, I could see that I had been looking at a huge silver Quonset hut, with shade structures attached to each side, giving the building a "winged" appearance. I had stumbled across Black Rock Station, Burning Man's official storage and work facility.



Aerial view of "The Ranch"

"Several years ago, the Burning Man organization leased some acreage near the playa to consolidate equipment and materials needed for the event each year", explained Dave "SuperDave" Pedroli, who is now the Nevada Properties Manager for Burning Man. Dave is responsible for the maintenance, development and acquisition of BRC's properties in Nevada, including Black Rock Station, the Gerlach Office, Gerlach Showers, Black Rock Social Club, Bruno's Trailer Park and the Reno Office.

Dave said that the original storage area, "the 80 acres," became quite an eyesore over time. To the untrained eye, it appeared as if stuff was strewn about with no organization or accountability to what was out there. Since then, Black Rock Station, or "the Ranch", as it is affectionately known, was created on a 200 acre parcel located about 20 miles from the town of Gerlach.

According to the 2004 Nevada Properties Afterburn Report, water and utilities have been established, including an irrigation system for the park. "Part of the permitting process required us to create a one-acre landscaped revegetation area, to compensate for the five acres of industrial use," reported Dave. Hualapai Park, named after the valley in which the Ranch is situated, is expected to eventually become an oasis of greenery in an otherwise stark desert environment. Dave said that virtually all of the building and special use permits have been fulfilled, indicating that meeting this objective was crucial to retaining the site for future use.

"As we finish construction of the shops and facilities, the future hope is that the art community will be able to use the facility for the construction and/or assembly of artwork destined for Burning Man," explained Dave.

According to Marian "MaidMarian" Goodell, Burning Man's Mistress of Communication, the immediate plans are to ensure that the property comes into compliance with all permits and ordinances. She indicated that once this priority is completed, it might eventually be possible to open the doors to the artists, but there are still many hurdles to overcome.

Though the totality of the future for the Ranch has yet to be established, one thing is for certain – a tremendous amount of hard work and effort by Burning Man staff and volunteers has been accomplished, and even greater things are just around the corner!

The Future Of Burning Man Threatened: Participants Leaving Traces Of Trash

TEXT BY CALEB "SHOOTER" SCHABER

The future of Burning Man is at risk. Small pieces of trash, called MOOP (matter out of place) have increased. The MOOP left by participants threatens the renewal of the event permit.

"People are forgetting to never let it hit the ground," said Marian Goodell, Mistress of communications in the Black City LLC. "We barely passed," continued Goodell. "It puts us under much tighter scrutiny for next year."

"Cleaning up is something you actually want to think about when you are planning your camp," Goodell said. Many participants have told her sob stories regarding messy camp sites. These range from poor planning and love affairs gone sour to participants fleeing the playa, late for a flight out of Reno. None are excusable or acceptable. All threaten the event.

Although Burning Man passed the BLM inspection after last year's event, the methodology the BLM uses to inspect the playa has also changed. Less than 4 square feet of trash can be found in the 2200 acres the event is held on.

The Burning Man site is inspected in October after the event, and a second inspection occurs in the spring. Previously, the BLM would sample 3 grids of the city 100 feet by 1000 thousand feet. Now they sample 75 circular areas 64 feet across.

"If we don't pass the BLM inspection, we don't have an event," said Will Roger, LLC member, who for many years participated in the BLM inspection of the playa. Roger's advice to all is "Be a conscious person by cleaning your mess."

JOINING THE SPECIAL FORCES!

After the event, the Black Rock City Department of Public Works, who build the city and the infrastructure prior to the event, begin dismantling the home of 35,000 people. By the time BLM performs an inspection in October no trace remains.

The DPW Special Forces is a ten person crew that removes the ashes of the man and port-potty stains from playa, among other things. Team leader DA first came to the event in 1997. In 2000, he volunteered to work for the DPW.

For him, he feels a close connection to post-event work. It's the third act of a 3 Act Play. Set-Up is the first, The Big Event comes second, and Clean-up is the finale. "It's quite a beautiful thing restoring the desert to its natural beauty," he said. "You can actually hear the city disappear with its return to silence."



Lake Lahontan at High Tide.

Once everything is removed from the playa another crew of workers walks the entire city to make sure that nothing is left behind. This has been dubbed the zombie walk.

None of the work is easy. Any participant knows that if they have tried to build something and clean it up. But this is much more labor intensive. Even veterans of cleanup have become demoralized. But others find it meditative.

"I think that walking the line has made me aware of how important it is to be responsible since we are allowed to use the earth," said Crimson Rose, LLC co-manager of the art department. Crimson spends an enormous amount of time on the playa inspecting the cleanup of art. "Since the art department gives money to create art, we feel we have a higher stewardship of the playa and to that on to the artists." She has also spent long days cleaning art up to make sure that no trace is left.

"How we leave the playa is every bit as important as how we enter," said DA. "In fact, it's more so. Right now we set the standard to which all other users of the playa are held, and I think that's a good thing."

"It's a pretty unique experience," said Mayfield, DPW volunteer coordinator. "Watching the city disappear is a great way to decompress. We play hard and work hard. Only the hardcore need apply."

Most volunteer positions with the DPW for the construction of Black Rock City fill months before the event, but there are openings now for work weekends and post-event cleanup.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

So you think you have what it takes? Before you give up your apartment and move to the desert for two months, try a work weekend.

As of this writing, all of Black Rock City is under water. But in the next few weeks that water will dry up and leave the playa renewed from the year before. The water also brings MOOP to the surface. Wedding rings, coins and even a Chupacabra Policia officer's badge were recovered in spring cleanup. One bonus is that you get to keep what you find!

But every camp has a responsibility for cleanup. Within your own camp, tribe or art project designate a Leader to focus specifically on the Clean-Up Effort. Build a team that is ready to rock when the rock show is over. Designate a vehicle specifically for garbage. Bring shovels, push brooms, trash cans, rakes, and put them to use. Pay special attention to kitchen and work areas.

Remember to never let it hit the ground, clean as you go, cleanup after your mates as they go, and volunteer for cleanup. This will keep our playa clean, and the event alive and thriving. To volunteer for work weekend cleanups contact dpw-volunteers@burningman.com to register.

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Maureen Anglin Distribution Captain
Gothalot Theme Camp Manager
Anthony Peterson Writer/Photog/LNT
Writers Howard Jones, Ed Cotter, Liane Gabora, Playa Boy, Tom Laporte, Klown Boenobo, Caleb Schaber, Arthur Zwern, Matt Mullin
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