

BURNING MAN JOURNAL

ALL THE NEWS THATS FIT TO BURN

SUMMER-FALL 2004

KIDS!

Kids have always been a part of Burning Man. When Jerry James and Larry Harvey first burned a Man in 1986, they included their sons, Trey and Robin. Trey was six. Robin was seven years old. On that afternoon the boys worked alongside their fathers. With a little help and the aid of a glue gun, they produced the Burning Dog: the Man's best friend. Since then, children have always participated in our community. Burning Man has become a gigantic playground for children as well as adults. Seen through a child's eyes, Burning Man can be a wondrous experience. Playing alongside grownups and freely expressing one's self in a world that's so receptive is not only healthy—it is healing. Viewed in contrast with a world where children are routinely segregated from adults and parked in front of television sets, Burning Man can be revelation.

However, it is equally true that children have needs that are different from those of adults. They require special care and attention. In order to meet these needs, the first and most important requirement is that parents communicate with their children. Burning Man is like a kid's cartoon. While its content is not nearly as violent as most children's entertainment, it certainly is jam-packed with novel images and new experience. This is why we ask all parents to consciously take the time to talk with their children about each day's experience. Such daily debriefings can be very rewarding—far easier, in fact, than trying to discuss the more hermetic worlds of school or television. This is because Burning Man is an experience that both parent and child can actively share and create.

Our most important advice to parents is this: The single factor that most affects children at Burning Man is *your willingness to communicate with your children in a way that allows them to express their own interpretations of experience.* In the spirit of radical self-reliance, it is your duty at our event to assume complete responsibility for your child at all times. At Burning Man, however, this duty can become a real delight. This is your chance to see your child's world as he or she perceives it. In other words, what children witness is very often far less important than how they actually experience what they encounter. If something that is unexpected has disturbed your child—a "monster", anything that's incompletely understood—you should always take time to discuss this with them. Pay close attention to how your child feels and imagines the world. Considering the way we lead our normal lives, you might never have a better opportunity.

Black Rock City houses a community and, as in any other community, its citizens also have a responsibility for the welfare of children. This year, we plan to enhance Black Rock City's family-based resources. Artists will be encouraged to perform in Kidsville, our partic-

ipant-run village for families with children. Special art tours will be organized for Black Rock City's youngest citizens. Families who wish to affiliate with Kidsville should contact this group in advance of our event. For more information about this village please contact kids@burningman.com.

As in previous years, Kidsville will be featured on our city map. We encourage other families to camp near them between streets 4:30 and 5:30 to create a family quarter. Adult oriented theme camps will be asked to camp at a distance from Kidsville, and all participants should show respect for both its purpose and its boundaries. This is the kind of geographic solution to the problem of potentially conflicting uses that we have employed in the past, akin to separating walk-in camping from automobile traffic or locating large-scale sound installations at the far ends of our city.

Likewise, in 2004, we will request that all adult oriented theme camps take responsibility for restricting the access of children to sexually explicit activity. These camps must employ doorkeepers, someone on duty to prevent minors from entering such environments. This follows models that are used in any city. Parents, however, must assume primary responsibility for the safety and well being of their children *at all times*, and families who do not behave responsibly will be asked to leave our event.

Burning Man has an exemplary record in regard to children's welfare. Over the years, we have experienced no incidents of child abuse, molestations, abductions or serious injury. But every parent's worst nightmare is losing track of a young child in a public setting. In order to prevent

this from happening in 2004, we encourage parents to equip young children with identity bracelets that indicate who they are and where they live. Participants who encounter unaccompanied children are encouraged to ask them, "Where is your adult?" If a parent isn't present, a Black Rock Ranger should be summoned. A community that truly cares can make a difference. This has been our approach to other social concerns, to the problem of litter, to the problem of human waste disposal. In both of these instances, community-wide action has triumphed.

Black Rock City has grown into the radical, thriving and magical place it has become for three primary reasons. One is our steadfast support of the ideals of community. Another is our ban on commercialism and commerce. The third is our willingness to adapt to the changing needs of our citizens and the environment. In this respect, children are symbols of our city's success. In the fourteen years since the founding of this city, people have met here, fallen in



Parents and child - photo by George Streng



Theme camp placement volunteer GoMonk with his daughters and brother - photo by LadyBee



The man on his temple - photo by Michael Christian



Travelling oil wells - photo by Erick Leskinen

was a world of personal convenience. Experience was ordered by discrete consumer choices. From the standpoint of a driver or a passenger, this was a very controlled and, above all, a relentlessly intentional world. People would elect to visit some attraction, and then drive there in a metal isolation booth. Experience between points A and B became a view seen through a dusty windshield, fleeting and vicarious, like a television travelogue. But pedestrians and bicyclists experienced a very *uncontrolled* environment. For them, our event had become, by 1996, a very dangerous place. Stretching out upon the ground to view the stars, walking on the playa without reflectors or a flashlight, even sleeping in a tent, could place a person in harm's way.

The reforms of 1997 turned Black Rock City into a more civilized community. Not only were participants made safer, they were now liberated to explore their experience of the desert, our city

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love, even married here, and now it follows that they would return with their kids. In fact, the fastest growing trend in Black Rock City has become family reunions in which three and even four generations are present. The more we, as a community, welcome these newest citizens and accommodate the needs of families, the more Black Rock will resemble an actual city. It will truly represent the attributes of life well lived. ♠



Satan's Calliope by Lucy Hosking, photo by Carlos Hunt



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A SPREADING FIRE

Wherever Burning Man communities arise they tend to embody the unique characteristics of their organizers and their region. The motto of Burning Beach, the Santa Cruz Burning Man regional group, is "Include yourself, include others", and regional contacts Roxanne and Jim Graham have been practicing what they preach for more than three years. "We've got some amazingly creative people in the Santa Cruz area. Fostering a community that showcases their talents is a lot of what motivates us," Jim said. "A lot of Burners, here and elsewhere, do amazing things, and one thing we do is help them get visibility for their work."

Burning Beach's first community event was showing a film at a local community center. 100 Burners and non-Burners showed up, some driving more than 100 miles to attend. That film showing has evolved into a daylong Burning Man film festival that drew 400 attendees in 2003. The event included art installations, miniature theme camps, and a talk by Burning Man Director Larry Harvey.

"It's hard enough being an independent filmmaker, let alone doing a film about Burning Man," Jim said. "We view the festival as a way for filmmakers to get visibility for their art while at the same time building community among Burners and people interested in learning more about Burning Man's culture. We always schedule it about a month after the desert event when everyone is jonesing for a taste of the playa."

The festival was so well received that it's now packaged as the Film Festival in a Box. This do-it-yourself kit includes a menu of short and feature length films, complete with instructions concerning promotion and event management. The festival recently premiered in London and is about to begin touring other regional communities. The goal, Jim and Roxanne say, is to publicize the work of filmmakers while providing regional



Cleavage in Space by Rosanna Scimeca - photo by Steven Fritz

communities with a way to raise funds for local projects. This year, in addition to raising funds to support regional activities, their regional group also donated \$800 to the Second Harvest Food Bank in the name of local Burners.



The Temple of Honor domes - photo by Neuro

"One thing that's important to us, in addition to building bonds within the Burner community, is connecting with other community groups," Roxanne explains. "That was the genesis of the quilting project." Santa Cruz County is building a women and children's shelter. After talking with local Burners, Roxanne approached the shelter organizers and offered to make quilts to

decorate the shelter when it opens at the end of this year. "We've got some remarkably talented sewers and costume makers in our community. They've all pulled together to contribute to the shelter," Roxanne said. "We've even got people who don't know how to sew but who want to help. Considering how much fabric there is to cut into squares, that's a godsend."

Other projects Jim and Roxanne have been involved in include developing a website for the local fire performance troupe, Nocturnal Sunshine, helping Scott "P.T. Nemo" Laurie find a home for the Ark of the Nautilus, the former San Francisco city bus nee submarine that has plied the playa for the past two years. Some of the most popular regional projects are those that reside on the Burning Beach website (www.burningbeach.com). Local photographer Richard Jones donates a CD of his annual photographs of Black Rock City, and Jim and Roxanne post these as computer desktop images for people to download. Roxanne has also compiled a 50-page book of recipes for the playa that is housed on the website. "The recipes are surprisingly popular," Roxanne said. "Most of them are great tasting meals you prepare in advance of the event and reheat on the playa. Seriously, who wants to cook out there?"

Over five years of growth and evolution, British Columbia's Burning Man Vancouver (BMV) has embraced a diverse range of individuals, groups and activities. Town hall meetings, arts and crafts bees, film screenings, fire spin jams and parties are just some of the happenings that keep the fires of the Black Rock Desert burning. This community now boasts two large annual regional Burn events, Recompression and Shine in the Forest.

Recompression was the first large-scale event created by BMV. After two years of being hosted at urban indoor venues, Recompression moved

to a rural children's camp on the Sunshine Coast in 2003. "We needed more diversity," said reps collective member Jody Franklin. "This environment allowed us to expand beyond offering just theme spaces and music." Access to several buildings situated on a beautiful, forested ocean side property allowed a fuller blossoming of the community's potential. Workshops, fire performance, friendly "cabin crawls," an open mic stage, group rituals, communal meals and the burning of a large wooden art structure added more depth, intimacy and variety to the experience. "It is an amazing show of community participation, just like on the playa, except effortless and lush," enthused Squishelle, a key organizer.

Shine in the Forest (SiTF), BMV's annual family campout, takes place deep in a coastal rain forest valley, alongside a glacial river, under snow-capped peaks. This rustic gathering is under the visionary direction of Diana Krebs. The site is home to a sacred Squamish totem circle, a congregation point for shared experience. The EmoDome and a homemade wood-fired hot tub are two popular temporary additions to the campsite. Ecological sensitivity means that Leave No Trace principles are paramount at SiTF. In the interests of conservation, BMV clean-up crews visit the site in the weeks and months before and after the event, to ensure the integrity of the land is maintained.

The three-person Regional Contact group, formed in 2001, plans events that encourage community participation. Several other groups provide important contributions to each event. The Parallels collective throws parties to raise funds and support for community projects. Fire performers from the Wet Rock Fireflies conclave host regular spin sessions and workshops that attract participants



Strolling in a dust storm - photo by Avi Smith

from all over the Northwest. Local theme camp groups like Camp Orange, Fallopia and Xara are devoted to providing artful, ambient space design at gatherings. The EmoMen create "temporary autonomous zones for experiential communication," within their warm, inviting EmoDome. As EmoMan Eric Ansley puts it, "the whole experi-

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Klimax by Michael Christian - photo by Doc Waclo



Michael Christian's cafe portal - photo by Patrick Roddie

REINVENTING POLITICS IN BLACK ROCK CITY

by Hugh D'Andrade



Reverend Billy and the Stop Shopping Gospel Choir - photo by Gabe Hirschheimer

It's a good bet that most Burning Man participants would object to the intrusion of political ideas on their enjoyment of liberated time on the playa. Life is being lived on such a grand scale in Black Rock City that to broach the subject of social strife in our "real" lives back home can feel like a drag, the insertion of the banal and insipid into a moment of sublime and transcendent experience. What could be worse than to be riding an enormous, glowing whale across a prehistoric lakebed, surrounded by fascinating, beautiful, half-naked people, only to be asked what one thinks of Nader's latest run for office?

The hostility of many Burners to political thought at Burning Man is born of a healthy desire to prevent their vibrant cultural scene from being hijacked by opportunists with narrow agendas of one sort or another. Who knows—had the participants and organizers of Burning Man been less savvy from the start, the event might have degenerated long ago into a political rally that would have left everyone feeling righteous and morally superior, but culturally and spiritually bereft.

If "politics" consists only of the uninspiring platitudes of career politicians and the drone of media commentators, let's leave it behind when we pack up our trucks and head into the desert, along with the excess packaging we remove from our consumables.

On the other hand, if "politics" has another meaning, as words often do, we don't want to lose the baby when we dispose of the dirty bathwater. "Politics"—from "polis", the Greek word for city—is also the word we use to describe the ongoing debate about what kind of world we want to live in, and the various strategies for how to get there. Our city on a hill (or dry lakebed) may seem remote, but the ripples of energy it sets in motion are continually affecting the larger world beyond its temporary borders.

First-time visitors to Black Rock City often report odd feelings of dissociation on returning to the so-called "real world". Our intense experience as active participants in a city organized around social pleasure, artistic creativity and the exchange of gifts makes for a glaring, uncomfortable contrast with our lives at home as more or less passive workers and consumers. To visit Black Rock City and enjoy it is also to ask, on some level, why can't life be like this all the time? What can be changed to bring our lives into line with our dreams, hopes, desires, and expectations? To ask these questions is to think politically, in a particularly radical way.

Many people make more or less drastic changes in their own lives after attending Burning Man—we eventually find some way to bring the wildness and spontaneity home with us as we work with friends to stage performances, create guerilla art installations, organize benefits, and create many other kinds of social projects. Essentially, we end up plugging into a wider community, not just in the Nevada desert, but at home where we live. Some of us drift away from Burning Man itself, but we keep the fires of Black Rock City burning in our back yards.

When you consider the sheer volume of interconnectedness and sociability growing out of Burning Man, all of it centered not on generating wealth for corporations or power for politicians,

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BICYCLE CITY

BY JOHN MANYJOHNS

What does Black Rock City have in common with Montreal, San Francisco, and Portland, Oregon? They're all top-rated cities for bicycling! If you're already a regular biker, welcome comrade. BRC is your city! What? You don't ride a bike in your off-playa life? Friend, you're in for a treat. Now is your chance to immerse yourself in the joys of bike culture in the world's most interesting pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly city!

In 2004, BRC will encompass streets stretching 35 miles, and it will be 8,200 feet in diameter. The Man itself will be almost half a mile from Center Camp. BRC is large enough, the experience vast enough, and the desert environment just taxing enough to make biking an ideal pursuit. A bicycle offers the perfect combination of mobility and sociability. Marvelously, at its glittering social heart, Burning Man is about direct experience and immediacy, participation and interaction, being in touch with other people, and, dare I say it, being in touch with one's soul. This space is where your bike and sweat can take you.

Have you experienced the joy of performing endless figure eights on the deep playa in the ink of night? Away from the hubbub, the event site is eerily quiet and the stars hang in plump little galaxies. Some say that nothing could be sweeter than a morning breeze blowing up your skirt as you pedal lazily toward Center Camp for an iced coffee. Unexpected art will materialize out of the dust. Godzilla Shrine! Have a fabulous conversation with a friendly person, leave an offering, stroll BRC for a while. On a bike, you'll avoid heatstroke, a bathroom is never more than a few minutes away, ice runs are a breeze, and your camp is closer than you think. You're cut off from nothing and no one.

Riding on the playa is a magical experience. However, the playa will

not magically fix your bike, nor will the Burning Man Project. Before you leave for the desert, make sure your bike is in good working order. In preparation, ride that puppy! If it has a problem in your home town, it surely will in Black Rock City. Is something going *thunk*? Are the wheels wobbling? Are the tires getting flatter by the minute? Do rusty and abraded cables murmur "tetanus" in the wind? When you turn the handlebars, does the bike keep going straight? If you can answer "yes" (and "I don't know" is acceptable evasion) then you have some work to do.

You are responsible for fixing and maintaining your bike before and during the event. At Burning Man, this practice is called radical self-reliance! If you can't fix it yourself, your home town bike shop can, usually for a very reasonable fee. Don't wait! Better yet, remember that Burning Man is also about communal effort. Someone must know someone who has bike mechanic skills. How about a home-town bike-tuning picnic, a party, a fund-raiser, or an ice cream social?

Once your bike is properly tuned up, you can begin to decorate it. Reduce your chances of collision and increase your chances of easily finding your bike in the dark of night: Cover it with reflectors, put LED type lights on it, install a lamp and a warning device that honks or jingles. Yelling "Hey! Look Out!" doesn't work. Bring a lock to



Flaming bicyclist by Dan Ng - photo by Bucky

deter theft and accidental bike appropriation. Bring basic tools and parts such as an air pump, tire levers, and two extra inner tubes per bike. If you're part of a large camp, bring a designated bike mechanic or come prepared to adopt one.

Here are some pre-playa tune-up tips:

- 🚲 **Wheels** Prepare for tube and tire troubles; inflate the tires well before you go, and bring a patch kit, tire pump, and spare tubes.
- 🚲 **Chains** If yours is merely rusty, use a "dry" style lube. (Ask your local bike shop.) If it's fused (with completely immobile links), then you'll need to get a new chain.
- 🚲 **Brakes & Shifters** Do they work? Does the bike change gears well? Does it brake well?
- 🚲 **Nuts/Bolts/Screws** Is anything loose? Tighten everything you can, with a firm twist.

CARS, CONTINUED FROM P1

and one another. Burning Man organizers were justifiably proud of this change. They had triumphed over the tyranny of the automobile. This accomplishment, however, must be viewed in relation to one of the fundamental facts of modern life: *people always want a ride*. And Americans, in particular, always seem to want an easy ride. *To live and lie reclined* might be our national motto. Liberty and convenience, freedom and ease—these slogans could, with justice, be imprinted on our money. This expectation of convenience is our heritage as members of a consumer culture.

Because of this almost irresistible impulse to employ motorized transportation, we face a new and serious challenge in 2004. Having once stopped the onslaught of cars that besieged our front gate, having introduced participants to the profound value of unmediated experience based on one's own strenuous efforts, we must now confront a renewed threat to both the safety and the quality of life of Black Rock City. This threat has appeared at our *back door*—a door that we left open by a crack in 1997. It represents the one exception, apart from vehicles driven by vendors and staff members, to our basic no driving rule: the *mutant vehicle* known as an art car. Liberating art to move and circulate is a laudable ideal. When properly regulated and operated, mobile art works create delightful kinds of interactive experience. Mobile art, whether it is human or motor powered, can be a brilliant brush stroke on the inviting canvas of our flat, blank desert home. And yet, this category of art has begun to create a serious hazard.

Our answer to this growing problem does not necessarily involve reducing the number mutant vehicles that will be allowed to roam the playa, nor have we set a quota. Imposing either requirement would deplete our culture. Our primary solution, instead, is to *renew enforcement of the rules we've always had in place*. Already, earlier this year, we took the extraordinary step of banning two large mobile art works from returning to the event in 2004. We did this because of frequent and repeated violations of our playa speed limit, even after many warnings. The speed limit in Black Rock City is a slow, safe, and measured 5 MPH. Common sense should tell us all that large, fast-moving vehicles are extremely dangerous in a populated setting. Consider this simple formula: Speed X Mass (in a pedestrian environment) = A Very Serious Danger to Everyone.

A vigilant observance of our rules for mutant vehicles will begin at the gate. Vehicles such as non-mutated ATVs, quadrunners, go-carts, motorcycles, and dirt bikes will not be allowed to pass into Black Rock City. Participants arriving with such vehicles will be permitted to enter our event, but they must agree to leave all unauthorized vehicles in an impound yard. Furthermore, mutant vehicles, particularly large and potentially dangerous ones that are operated without regard for our rules or the safety of others, will be towed and impounded. For an explanation of our general policies concerning vehicles, consult *Vehicles at Burning Man* at <http://dmv.burningman.com/> This page contains information about our Department of Mutant Vehicles and its rules and procedures.

In the past, we have struggled while attempting to enforce these long-standing rules due to a lack of communication within the Burning Man Project, especially on the playa. This

year the Department of Mutant Vehicles will share data with the Black Rock Rangers. Rangers do communicate with many drivers every year, but they have often been unaware of what may have occurred during previous shifts or the status of a mutant vehicle with our DMV. In 2004, such information will move in a continuous flow from one department to another and from one hour to the next. This information will be communicated to Rangers in the field, where judgments can be fairly made on the basis of a history of behavior. It will not be possible to shrug off two, three, and four warnings, as some drivers have done in the past. Also, as in past years, drunk driving remains a legal offense regulated by the laws of Nevada. Law enforcement authorities can cite participants for driving while intoxicated.

All art vehicles must be registered with the DMV in advance of the event, and they must be inspected and licensed at DMV headquarters before they are allowed to operate. Applicants should be aware that it is not enough to do a chop job on a beater, decorate it with paint and tinsel, and call it art in order to obtain a ride for the duration of the event. This year Burning Man's Art Department will join with the DMV in evaluating applications.

The art car movement in this country has a long and

venerable history. Many brilliant works have appeared on the playa, and most serious art car creators are members of a very responsible community. Burning Man, we like to think, has helped to make real contributions to this genre. We welcome mobile art of every kind, and we hope to see more examples of this unique form of self-expression in the future. But we are asking everyone who contemplates the creation of a mutant vehicle in 2004 to first ask themselves a few questions. *Am I creating this vehicle just to have a ride or give a group of friends a ride? Am I willing to make my artwork interactive in some way that contributes to our community? Will I endeavor to create the most beautiful and visionary work possible? Most, importantly, am I ready to abide by all the rules that will help my community to live safely together in the freest (but not necessarily the easiest) city on Earth?* 🔥



Playa serenade - photo by Dale East



The Quadrupus, mobile art by Gary Stadler - photo by Andrew Wyatt



Solar powered vehicle - photo by Eric Cassel



Crowds around the Labyrinth - photo by Gabe Kirchheimer

2004 ART THEME

By LARRY HARVEY

“There is a size at which dignity begins; further on there is a size at which grandeur begins; further on there is a size at which solemnity begins; further on, a size at which awfulness begins; further on, a size at which ghastliness begins. That size faintly approaches the size of the stellar universe.”

—Thomas Hardy

The Ancients thought that the trajectories of the stars described a cosmic dome. Lights that moved erratically within this vaulted space were labeled deities. Today we know that these are planets, like our earth. They whirl around the sun, a yellow star belonging to a galaxy we call the Milky Way. Arising from the northeast and southwest on summer nights, its luminescent arc appears to hold the heavens overhead. Science tells us we are peering through the plane of an immense and churning thing, a twirling pinwheel made from stars so numerous that they recede into a mist. Adjectives are insufficient to describe its size. Beyond this scrim of light, our minds confront the universe. This year’s theme asks three essential questions. These are questions that occurred to us when we were young, questions asked while lying in the grass on summer nights and gazing at the sky. Where does everything come from? *Where does everything go? And where and how, in this vast scheme of things, do we fit in?*

A wandering Muslim merchant stopped a Hindu Brahmin who was lecturing on the structure of the universe. It was, said the Brahmin, supported on the back of an elephant. What supported the elephant, asked the merchant.

A turtle, answered the Brahmin. What supported the turtle, asked the merchant. Another turtle, answered the Brahmin. What supported that turtle, asked the merchant. Suppose we stop asking questions, suggested the Brahmin.

—Hindu proverb

Scientific theory tells us the energy that now pervades the universe was once compressed into a single point without discernable dimension. Time and space did not exist; no then was then, no there was there. This means that once this “singularity” began to grow it happened everywhere and nowhere all at once. The density and temperature of this extraordinary state, we’ve been informed, were infinite. But recent theories now suggest that this may not be true, and very different states may have preceded this event. Hidden beneath its “event horizon,” a world may once have existed in which space was infinite, matter scarce, and temperatures extremely cold. Yet, whether we choose fire or ice, all scientists agree that it is possible to trace things backward to a kind of natal point, an instant out of which all time and space sprang into being. Evidence makes clear this was a very violent birth. We call it the Big Bang.

Where do we find ourselves? In a series of which we do not know the extremes, and believe that it has none. We wake and find ourselves on a stair; there are stairs below us, which we seem to have ascended; there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward out of sight ... Ghostlike, we glide through nature, and should not know our place again.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



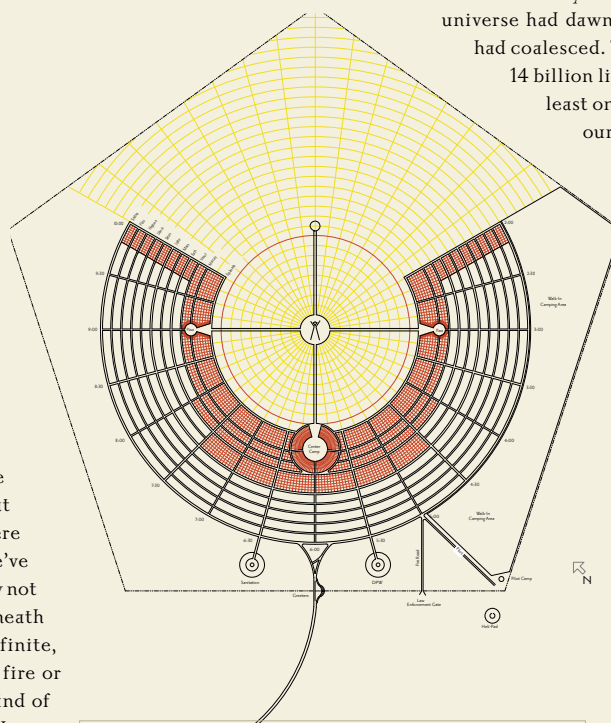
The BucketMen stroll past the Moving Hand of God - photo by LadyBee



Fire duet at El Circo - photo by David Huang

According to recent estimates, within one-trillionth of a second, this proto-universe expanded to approximately the size of a turtle. This represents an increase in the size of the observable universe one thousand times greater, if measured by percentage, than its expansion during all ensuing history. This follows from the fact that inner space, the microscopic world of quarks, electrons, and neutrinos, is even deeper than the universe we see at large. Considered on the scale of the infinitesimally small, even solid objects are analogous to outer space. This world and all those who inhabit it are mostly made from emptiness. Within one second ATB (After the Bang) nucleosynthesis—the beginning of a process that produces atoms—had commenced. A few

hundred thousand years after that, photons freely moved through space. In earthly terms, the universe had dawned. Within five hundred million years, the first amorphous galaxies had coalesced. Today, astronomers detect these storms of stars across a span of nearly 14 billion light years. Between these distant smudges and ourselves, they count at least one hundred billion galaxies, a multitude that’s equal to the stars within our Milky Way.



The farthest objects we observe are alarmingly bright light sources called quasars. They radiate more energy than a hundred normal galaxies combined. This coruscating light is caused by friction. Great Niagras of matter—of gas and dust and floating space debris—are pouring inward toward the densest objects in the universe. The mass of these collapsing entities is thought to be billions of times that of our sun. Each generates a field of gravity that captures photons – not even light escapes them. This action represents a drastic warping of the fabric that comprises space and time. Anything that enters the event horizon of a “black hole” crosses into oblivion; matter stretches till it discombobulates, time slows down until it’s nearly standing still. Beyond the distant realm of quasars, we encounter a uniform wall of absolute darkness. All we can detect there is a vast field of invisible radiation. Pulsing out of this abyss as microwaves, it permeates the universe.

A well-known scientist ... once gave a public lecture on astronomy. ...

At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: “What you have told us is rubbish.

The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.”

The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, “What is the tortoise standing on?”

“You’re very clever, young man, very clever,” said the old lady.

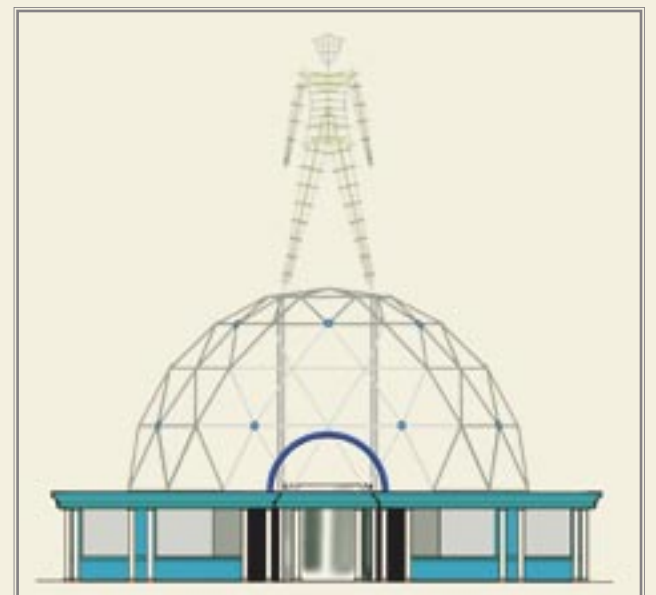
“But it’s turtles all the way down.”

—Stephen Hawking

Yet even this enormous panorama represents a very partial glimpse of the created universe. Our view is limited by the speed of light (a light beam travels 5,880,000,000 miles in one year). The page you are currently reading, for example, actually exists about a nanosecond in the past. The image of the moon you see from Earth is really history.

It is one and a half seconds old by the time it appears on your retina. This means that the farthest objects we are able to detect, located nearly 15 billion light years from our planet, are really light-borne relics of a very ancient past. We stare at spectral ghosts that haunt the origin of things. The so-called background radiation that assaults our universe is a giant heat signature. It’s all that’s left of the convulsion that created time and space. It is the last blush of the Big Bang.

The observable universe is really only an infinitesimal part of the actual universe. The original bubble of self-contained spacetime, beginning as a microscopic speck, has continued to expand beyond the hypothetical “now” in which we remain stranded. Current observations tell us that the rate of this expansion is accelerating. Recent theories also indicate that, beyond this greater cosmos that we cannot see, other and very different universes may actually exist. In the words of string theorist Brian Greene, “... our universe may merely be one of the innumerable frothing bubbles on the surface of a vast and turbulent cosmic ocean called the multiverse.”



Man and his observatory - Rod Garrett

V A U L T O F H E A V E N

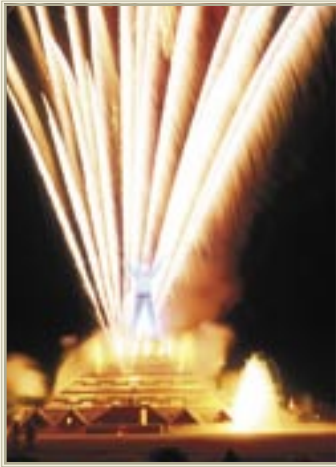
Other scientists suggest that black holes might form portals into alternate realities. It is now known that this severe warping of spacetime is a relatively common occurrence. Such a vortex is believed to exist at the center of our own galaxy. In other words, the fabric of the universe is riddled with a billion holes. These curious lacunas, at their farthest end, might actually be apertures, each capable of extruding further universes completely undetectable to us. Furthermore, this turning of the cosmic fabric in and out can be imagined, with perfect logic, to extend indefinitely, leading to universes beyond universes beyond universes in an unending succession.

*We have found a strange footprint on the shores of the unknown.
We have devised profound theories, one after another, to account for its origin.
At last, we have succeeded in reconstructing the creature that
made the footprint. And lo! It is our own.*

— Arthur Stanley Eddington

At the farthest reach of human speculation, the study of what is measurably real begins to resemble metaphysics. Empirical science, however, can assure us of the following facts. We exist upon a planet that is orbiting a star at 150 miles per second. This star is orbiting a galaxy, and it and every other galaxy appear to be rushing at unimaginable speeds away from one another. Space and time, conceived as a continuum, continues to expand at speeds that far exceed the speed of light. The universe is therefore vastly greater than we know. No one can really say where it is going; no one has reliably explained from whence it came. As mortal creatures snugly tucked between the Earth and the sky, these facts can fill us with a sense of vertigo and deep perplexity. Science has constructed theories to explain what we've observed. Yet, one by one, these monumental constructs of the human mind, when once brought into contact with the facts of nature, have cracked and leaned, have tottered and crumbled.

"Most of us," writes Timothy Ferris, "suspect that the world we see is in part genuine and in part distorted, or concocted, by our minds; the question is where the fulcrum stands between internal and external." We always need some kind of fulcrum point, a place where we can firmly stand, a structure and a home in which to house our understanding. This year in the Black Rock Desert we will build an edifice to serve us as our own peculiar Vault of Heaven. From this center we'll interrogate a universe that hovers in a mid-way space: a place between what's real within us and what's real without.



Pyrotechnic prelude to the Burn - photo by George Post



The walkway to the Man as seen from the Spheres of Transformation - photo by Rick Egan



The Spheres of Transformation by Dan Cohn & David Kitts - photo by Billy Vaughan

[ecamps_installations/alien_world.html](#). Participants at the event will be at liberty to choose the world they wish to inhabit. However, an Alien Stage Manager will oversee these choices, as well as the overall coordination of performances. *No theatrical experience is needed to participate.* The most important guideline to remember is this: Within an infinite universe even the most impossible thing can happen. That impossibility is you.



SkyChairs by Cedar Goebel - photo by David Huang

The shining metal cylinder at the center of the observatory will form a podium. From this elevated platform artist-scientists will launch experiments. These performances should in some way interact with participants inside the dome. Each scientist will be attired in a white lab coat. This uniform will serve to signify their station in our midst as experts and adepts, skilled at probing the unknown. Experiments will be conducted daily.

One such experiment, created by veteran artist Tim Black, will project a supercharged light beam through the observatory's open canopy. Precise calibration will carefully aim this light beam directly at stars and their possible planetary systems. All participants will be invited to transmit encoded messages. This information will be visible as a vibratory signature along the length of the beam. Since caution is advisable when speaking to the universe, no message will be sent without approval. Participants will vote by jumping up and down upon a special measuring device.

Burning Man's 2004 art grant cycle has concluded. However, *everyone* is always welcome to create and display his or her art at the event. If you wish to install theme-related art on the open playa, please contact themart@burningman.com. If you

feel your art is not related to our theme, please contact installations@burningman.com. We are ready to locate your art on a map that is given to all participants, and we will help you to accurately site your piece in the desert.

*It is obvious that we must regard the universe
as extending infinitely, forever ... or that we must regard it as not so extending.
Both possibilities go beyond us.*

—Scientific American March 13, 1921

Science as the pursuit of truth is the equal, but not the superior, of art.

—Bertrand Russell

This year's theme will be a blend of scientific theory and artistic intuition. Burning Man will stand upon the apex of a dome arising from a classical entablature supported by a series of gleaming white columns. This large, circular building will resemble an observatory. The pillars at the outside of its base will form a colonnade, each pair framing a proscenium—a miniature theater designed for the performance of "off-planet" theatre. Participants who enter the observatory will encounter an imposing metal cylinder arising at its center. From atop this enigmatic object, scientists will use technology to question the unknown.

This great observatory at the geographic center of our city will become a busy hive of many different kinds of interactive art. The ten small theaters indenting its outer circumference are designed to function as dioramas: scenic representations of habitable worlds. Each will form a portal to another planet somewhere in the universe. Participants will be invited to originate the content of these worlds. In the first phase of this project, we have asked artists to create images of alien environments proportioned to fit the side walls, back wall, and ceiling of each cubicle. Each image will evoke a sky and landscape that are not our own. They will become backgrounds for dramas that will be created by the next wave of participants.

In the second phase of this process, we have asked participants to devise theatrical performances. Images of the ten selected worlds are currently displayed on our website www.burningman.com/them-



The Temple of Honor by David Best and crew, photo by Rick Egan

The location of the observatory will correspond to the position of the Sun within our solar system. The concentric streets of Black Rock City, whose courses seem to orbit it, will assume the names of planetary bodies. After the Esplanade, these will consist of Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus and Pluto. The farthest street at the back of our city will be called Sedna—the most distant object known to orbit our sun. With a surface temperature of minus 400 degrees Fahrenheit, this icy planetoid is named after an Inuit goddess who is said to have created all the life forms of the Arctic Ocean. Black Rock City's radiating streets will be named, as in previous years, after the hours and half-hours as indicated on a clock.

At the opposite end of our city, far out behind the Burning Man and the observatory, an enormous crescent-shaped temple will float within the space beyond our solar system. This quarter-mile-long sculpture, entitled the Temple of Stars, will correspond to the arcing edge of our galaxy. Designed by artist David



The Temple of Gravity by Zachary Coffin - photo by Gabe Kirchheimer

Best, it will feature a forest of lamp-hung spires. By night, these lights will gleam like stellar bodies in this outer gulf of space. As in previous years, this intricately crafted temple will be a repository of remembrance. Participants are invited to inscribe it with the names of friends, lovers, and family members, mourned for and lost, who have departed earth. A monumental gateway at the center this Temple of Stars will form a ceremonial portal, an entrance to the realm beyond our local neighborhood in space.

We invite you to explore this open-air gallery. Scattered about this great arena, many of Black Rock City's largest and most impressive artworks can be found. At night, you may wander past an enormous assemblage of giant spacetime bubbles or pass within the vicinity of a mile-high tetrahedron designed to measure the exact position of the sub-sub-basement of outer space. Finally, if you journey far enough, you will encounter the pentagonal boundary of the 5 square miles that comprise our city. Beyond this frontier, you will face the 400-square-mile void that is the Black Rock Desert. Here, pausing in the stillness of the desert night, far from crowded streets and glaring lights, accompanied only by the moon and stars and the great shining arc of the Milky Way, you will confront a space that may go on forever—or may not. ☼

THE ART WE BREATHE

by Victor Solano & Darryl Van Rhey

So why should we confine this experience to the playa? Why should we share these experiences only once a year? Is Burning Man merely an entertainment event, a festival, a fun-filled holiday? Judging from the passion and conviction of over three thousand volunteers each year, it often becomes much more than that. It is a state of mind. It is a way of relating to the world and to one another that we can apply anywhere. It evokes a part of us that is at the center of our being as social animals—expression and connection.

Every year, the Burning Man Project provides seed money for many art projects on the playa. This practice has helped keep art at the forefront of the event, transforming Burning Man into the largest outdoor interactive art event in the world. Now, as Burning Man communities proliferate throughout the world, this mission is expanding. In 1991, the Burning Man Project founded the Black Rock Arts Foundation (BRAAF). This not-for-profit organization raises funds for the purpose of promoting interactive art and community activism outside the annual event.

Larry Harvey, Burning Man's director, states, "BRAAF is meant to serve our regional communities. From Texas to Wisconsin, from New York to New Zealand, from Los Angeles to London, these communities are now creating hundreds of local events. We believe that BRAAF can connect these separate efforts and help knit them together into a worldwide community."

"In order to accomplish this goal," Harvey says, "BRAAF is contemplating two initiatives in the coming year. The first is a program through which interactive art created by participants can circulate across the country from community to community. We want people to see what others are doing. We want groups to form relationships with one another."

Another BRAAF project described by Harvey involves the creation of a facility that will be separate from the Burning Man event. This permanent meeting ground will allow community members to gather, to talk, to think, and to forge deeper, broader, year-round alliances. "Black Rock City is a big place," he states, "it's intense, but it exists for only 8 days each year. It is a grand initiation for thousands of newcomers. But it's hardly a place for more meditated and more intimate kinds of experience that could help bring community members together."

A related program, the Burning Man Network, lies at the heart of this organizational effort. 75 volunteer regional contacts, located in every U.S. state and several other countries, now serve participant communities. It is their mission to help participants communicate, cooperate, and share resources locally (for more information about the Network, see the Burning Man website: www.regional.burningman.com).

Each regional contact or co-regional group is responsible for supporting the many hundreds of independent groups that have arisen spontaneously as a part of Burning Man's culture. A good example is provided by the efforts of David Peterman and Dave Martinez, Seattle's two co-regional contacts. A recent story in the Seattle Post Intelligencer quotes Martinez, "I came back [from

Art and participation are the life and breath of the Burning Man experience. When we have walked even a few feet on the cracked, dry lakebed many of us call home or helped erect the ever-morphing, definition-defying mirage that is Black Rock City, we know that many of our memories are shaped by these artistic visions.

Burning Man] feeling that I had to give back to the community."

The article continues, "He thinks what attendees learn there—and bring back—can affect positive change. As he talks about his efforts in helping create a more interactive local group, Martinez, who works for a telecommunications company, wears a Zen-like smile. While it might seem easy to dismiss this sort of (almost) starry-eyed idealism as the fevered cultish ramblings of a New Ager, it's just as easy not to, because the Burners' zeal is contagious. Perhaps this says more about the contemporary disease of cynicism than anything else, but their optimism—this belief that positive social change is possible—makes them different."

Over 3 years, Martinez and Peterman have worked as regional contacts, knitting the local Burning Man community together. Previously, Peterman observes, individuals had coalesced around theme camp projects that existed independently of one another. Frequently, they found themselves in conflict. Resources went unshared, and plans were not coordinated. He urged his fellow Burners to cooperate. After all, he reasoned, participants behave this way in Black Rock City.

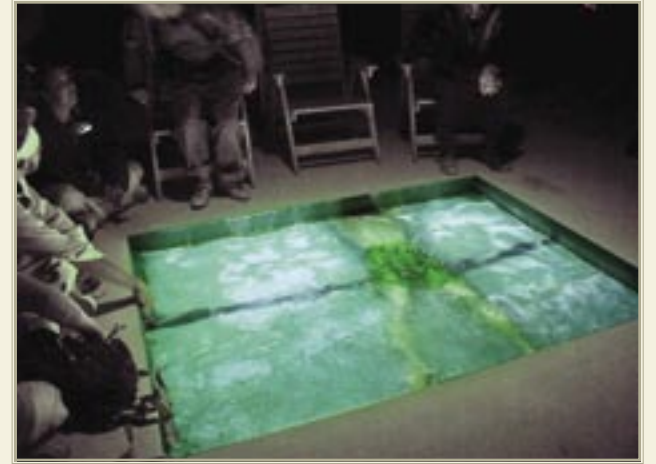
That he and Martinez have succeeded is borne out by statements in the same article. Matt Conlon, a Burning Man participant and an organizer of Lower Level, a local arts cooperative, states, "...various camps—each with its own theme and/or art projects—routinely hold fund-raisers to offset the costs of supplies for their projects. Previously, these camps didn't do much to see if there were scheduling conflicts. Now, says Conlon, local Burners are big on making sure no one's fund-raiser steps on anyone else's toes. In fact, because they're aware of each other's projects, they show up, ready to help others with man



The Labyrinth by Todd Dworman - photo by Robert Barbutti

power, tools or supplies.

"Two years ago," Conlon is quoted as saying, "that wouldn't happen. We've developed some complicated pathways that people are familiar with." He goes on to explain that Burners in Seattle see themselves as members of "a service-oriented arts community." Further proof of local community building is furnished by a succession of impressive artworks that have appeared on the playa, such as *Trial by Fire* by Chico Raskey, and *Spheres of Transformation* by Dan Cohen and David Kitts. This last piece formed an enormous gateway at our city's Center Camp keyhole in 2003. Four new grant-supported projects are arriving from Seattle in 2004, including *The Gravity Bowl* by Lars Linden and Brady Forrest. The spread of Burning Man's culture is contributing to an artistic renaissance in Seattle, as artists aid each other and solicit volunteers via connections formed through the event. A large and diverse community, inspired by our culture's ethos, is growing and spreading in many different directions.



No Diving by Linda Graveline - photo by Ron Halbert

Larry Harvey sees the Black Rock Arts Foundation and the Burning Man Network as working in close coordination. "Our Regional Contacts automatically become members of BRAAF, and a representative group of contacts will serve on its art grant advisory committee. We want to learn from them firsthand about what the greater community needs. When we first broached the idea of a Network, some folks thought we were creating a franchise or a means to tax local event revenue. Others said we'd throttle self-expression. We haven't done these things. I think people were speaking from their fear of losing what we've all created together.

"The truth is that we only want to use our size and reach and public reputation to promote and protect Burning Man's culture as it grows. We really do know a lot about this sort of thing. The Black Rock Arts Foundation can furnish this movement with funding. The Burning Man Network can preserve its spirit. We're simply doing what we've always done, but on larger scale. Really, from my point of view, Burning Man today is where it was on Baker Beach in 1986. It is now moving out into a much wider world. We need to take our courage in our hands. If we trust one another, if we learn to work together, I'm convinced we can affect history."

To become a member or learn more about the Black Rock Arts Foundation (BRAAF) visit www.blackrockarts.org or send a message to info@blackrockarts.org. For more information about the Burning Man Network and how you can participate, please visit www.regionals.burningman.com



Johnny on the Spot by Saul Melman - photo by Gabe Kirchner

COMMUNITY NOTES

Airport

Pilots must familiarize themselves with new procedures implemented in 2004. Just like mutant vehicles, airplanes provide art resources (aerial photography is the major one), performance art (skydivers for one example), basic transportation, and a way to view BRC from an entirely different perspective. Also just like mutant vehicles, there are outside regulations and playa rules which MUST be followed by everyone to create a safe and considerate aviation community.

All pilots (including ultralight pilots) must receive an on-site briefing which covers overflight rules, areas that are off-limits (such as the local hot springs), general guidelines, and the most important

item: safety. No briefing means no flying, and this will be stringently enforced. Ticket rules in effect at the main gate also apply to arrivals at the Port of Entry. Landing restrictions begin on Friday, August 27th. Contact airport@burningman.com or call (408) 297-9795 but the first stop for more information is www.burningman.com/on_the_playa/airport/.

Driving

Be prepared to drive your vehicle to the camp site and leave it there for the duration of the event. Vehicles caught driving without a proper permit may be fined, impounded, or disabled by law enforcement.

Department of Mutant Vehicles

All mutant vehicles must be pre-registered. All mutant vehicles must display their DMV placard. For information on what qualifies as a mutant vehicle and to register your work of art, contact dmv@burningman.com and visit <http://dmv.burningman.com>.

Sound

If you use an amplified audio system at your camp, the volume must be held to reasonable levels. Speakers must be elevated off the playa surface, and backed by a truck, RV or anything large & solid enough to prevent the sound from traveling backwards. The maximum power amplification is 300 watts. If a problem with sound levels continues after sufficient requests and

warning, the source of power for such device or system will be disabled. Art cars with sound systems are subject to the same standards, and must cut their sound when approaching art installations and performances.

Kids at Burning Man

We are a family friendly event. We encourage everyone to know where kids' camp, "Kidsville", is located on the map. If you are not a family friendly camp, please place yourself far away from it. If you are a family camp yourself, consider camping between streets 4:30 and 5:30 near Kidsville. For more info, contact kids@burningman.com. All parents should attend to their children and are responsible for their safety and well being at all times. Parents not behaving responsibly with regard to their children may be asked to leave the event. If you encounter a lost child, alert a Black Rock Ranger immediately. Always be respectful of children's personal space and their needs.

Bike Guild

There will be no Bike Camp in Center Camp this year. We are encouraging all bike mechanics in Black Rock City to share resources and information among themselves to enable all pedal powered citizens to be self reliant with minimal needs. To this end we have created the Bike Mechanics' Guild; anyone with expertise on bike repair is automatically a part of an informal network. There will be a special meet and greet early in the event for all participating bike mechanics to help kick start the Guild. It will be announced in the WhatWhereWhen. If you are interested in being a part of the Guild, or would like to join our bike list, please contact bikes@burningman.com.



Bunnies Go Wild at BunnyWood - photo by Ron Halbert

POLITICS, CONTINUED FROM P2

but on cooperatively creating a better life for thousands of people, it becomes clear that the world is being changed—incrementally, in ways that are difficult to quantify, but changed for the better.

This tendency within the Burning Man community towards interconnectedness, mutual aid, the forging of life-long alliances, runs counter to one of the most disturbing patterns of social life in contemporary societies. In the United States and elsewhere, a quiet breakdown in civil society is taking place, with fewer and fewer people belonging to any sort of social organization (other than their places of employment— which more often than not are temporary, alien environments). Neighborhood organizations, unions, PTAs, and church groups all have suffered a decline in numbers over the past thirty years. Even bowling leagues are falling by the wayside, as Robert Putnam noted in his excellent study of this problem, *Bowling Alone*.

This rapid decline in the forms of community that past generations enjoyed has created a vacuum, a void that powerful forces are rushing to fill, with ominous implications for the future.

Individuals that are cut off from any face-to-face community, housed in lonely neighborhoods that are hardly neighborly, transported alone in massive, quasi-military vehicles to and from increasingly anonymous workplaces and shopping centers, are vulnerable to the manipulation of powerful voices piped into their tiny cocoons by the corporate media. We already know too well what these voices have to say: Fear your neighbor! Buy more stuff!

In this world of diminished communal connectivity, political



Billion Bunny March - photo by LadyBee

agendas based on fear and greed can spread and flourish. The common use of the label “conservative” to describe this tendency, which thrives on keeping an isolated population in a constant state of agitation and resentment, is a misnomer. Nothing truly democratic is conserved by policies that plunder the environment, diminish public services, limit civil liberties, and burden future generations with the weight of debt. The public interest isn't served when everything is privatized and corporations are allowed to write the laws. Communities are based upon communion with the needs of others; they teach the young, and they care for the old—but, for many, this does not appear to be the future being planned for us.

While lone individuals may feel powerless to combat this overwhelming tide of bad news, community voices are fighting back. One of the sanest (and most hilarious) is the prominent Black Rock citizen, Reverend Billy. Billy brought his Church of Stop Shopping, complete with gospel choir, to the playa in 2003. In the world outside of Black

Rock City, Billy uses unstoppable verbal firepower to wake a stupefied public from its consumerist sleepwalk—much to the chagrin of the management at chain stores like Starbucks.

Is this interactive art or political speech? When Billy's troupe toured California earlier this year, aided by a grant from the Black Rock Arts Foundation, it was very difficult to tell the difference. Main Street merchants, local civic groups and Burning Man participants joined together to protect their towns from the expansion of Wal-Mart into their communities. It was a prime example of how grassroots participatory culture can protect social spaces that nurture the diversity of culture. Billy preached, his choir sang and danced, and many people who wouldn't normally make contact enthusiastically joined in. All this is evidence of the irresistible spillage of a marvelous, liberated life from Black Rock City into more familiar but hotly contested realms. We have to ask ourselves: if this made sense at Burning Man, why isn't it relevant in our home-



Five Doors by Christopher Caparro, John Davis & Kevin Raich - photo by David Huang

towns? If we can decommodify the world of Black Rock City through creative acts of celebration, why not apply these values to the places where we lead our lives?

In the absence of the civilizing influence of community, a vision of social life emerges in which individuals compete mercilessly against each other; cooperation and openness are seen as signs of weakness, and the pursuit of power, wealth and status appears to be the only goal of life. Humans are seen as intrinsically lazy, aggressive, competitive and self-centered. As Francine Prose pointed out recently in Harper's magazine, this view of the world is endlessly promoted by so-called “reality programming” of shows like *Fear Factor* and *Survivor*. More and more people come to feel they are alone in a vicious fight for survival.

Anyone who has been to Burning Man knows this vision of humanity is incorrect. To live in Black Rock City is to have direct knowledge based on lived experience to the contrary. Humans can survive together, interact, and share resources, skills and ideas without brutalizing, tricking or exploiting one another. What's more, life in a city organized around these principles is so liberating, so ener-



Wholly Burger by Chris Neary - photo by Chris Waclo

gizing, that it makes “ordinary life” appear somewhat unreal.

There is another reason why people may avoid a political discussion regarding Burning Man, and that is the obvious fact that the political situation seems rather grim to many people. No one likes being reminded that they are up to their own necks in shit. If change is unlikely, it may seem that holding one's nose and changing the subject is the best option. But the longevity of Burning Man and its spread to an ever-growing number of communities prove that social change can happen, that we can alter the world. How much and how fast is up to us.

To argue for a political view of the Burning Man movement is not to impose an agenda on what, after all, cannot be controlled. But we have learned that many labels—liberal, conservative, libertarian—are often illusions. These distinctions, when considered in the desert, seem to have less substance than the sound of canvas flapping in the wind. We also know that everyone, potentially, is an eccentric, and eccentrics can cooperate and learn to live together. Together they can build a polis, a city and a nationwide community. Once people give themselves a taste of a liberated life, once they know through experience their own power to create and re-create the world, there is no telling what they will do. In the end, perhaps the only truly certain thing we know about our culture and community is that it will always resist the reduction of life to the dull, the banal, the passive and the ordinary.

As the radicals of Paris put in during the events of May 1968: “Be realistic—Demand the impossible!”



The creature from the deep meets a temple niche god - photo by Fritz Hoddick

COMMUNITY NOTES

Tickets

Tickets are available for purchase on the Burning Man website by credit card (<http://tickets.burningman.com/>) and at the Walk In outlets listed below.

Burning Man is not responsible for tickets lost in the mail. We strongly encourage you have your ticket sent secure delivery.

All online tickets purchased after August 1 will be available at the Box Office at the Gate of Burning Man under Will Call.

All pre-sale tickets are \$250 through Friday, August 27, 2004.

Tickets purchased at the gate will cost at least \$300 and will increase in price over the course of the event. The Box Office accepts cash, money orders, cashier's checks and credit cards only - no personal or business checks. Due to our remote location, we cannot guarantee credit card sales.



The Flaming Lotus Girls' Hand of God - photo by David Mauch

Please plan ahead as there are no local cash machines.

NO tickets will be sold at the event after 11 PM on Thursday, September 2, 2004.

Walk-In Outlets accept Money Orders, Cashiers Checks or Cash ONLY. No credit cards, no personal or business checks will be accepted.

Hotline:



415 TO-FLAME (415-863-5263)

For questions about tickets ordered online, use the drop down menu on the tickets page: <http://tickets.burningman.com/contact.php>

For questions about tickets ordered via snail mail, email partiserv@burningman.com

Walk-In Outlets

Reno Outlet:
The Melting Pot, 888 S. Virginia St.

Sacramento Outlet:
Cheap Thrills, 1217 21st St

Berkeley Outlet:
The Berkeley Hat Company,
2510 Telegraph Av

San Francisco Outlet:
Distractions, 1552 Haight St

Regional Contacts

If you would like to be a regional contact in an area not yet covered, have been to Burning Man at least once, and are interested in connecting people, please email regionals@burningman.com and indicate your interest. Please visit our website to see if a Burning Man regional is in your area, <http://regionals.burningman.com>.



Fire dragons - photo by Rick Egan

Website



If you haven't visited our incredible, newly designed website, you're missing out on the most valuable information resource the community has to offer. New pages are added frequently. You will find information ranging from event preparation (what you need, your health & safety on the playa), volunteer opportunities, theme camp listings, ticket updates, and much, much more... Visit www.burningman.com.

Participate



If you would like to participate in the infrastructure that makes Burning Man happen every year, please fill out our questionnaire: <http://www3.burningman.com/people/>

A SPREADING FIRE, CONTINUED FROM P2

ence of any Burning Man event is a gift, and we like to gift in return."

From the outset, people in the community exhibited an organic tendency toward working collectively on projects and making decisions by consensus. "The outward appearance is that we don't have a structure," says IRony, a member of the regional reps collective. "But everything we do always comes together." Part of this success, adds IRony, is attributable to the fact that "We keep letting fresh people come in and take things in new directions." This informal, radically inclusive approach derives from Burning Man's essential ethos.

In many ways, core elements of the Burning Man experience have merged with local culture. The First Nations peoples of the Northwest Coast had a tradition known as the potlatch. The sharing of gifts and celebratory activities, such as music, dancing, costume, performance and ritual, were at the heart of this ceremony. British Columbia's Burning Man Vancouver

community is reviving these practices in a post-modern setting. Indeed, some of the earliest BMV gatherings were potluck feasts.

Seattle approaches community building in a slightly different way. The area has long sent a strong presence to the playa each year, with groups such as Flight to Mars, Space Virgins, AlienMonkeyLoveNest, Johnny and the Playa Cruizers, and Arson Island Resort, along with a couple thousand other participants with varying affiliations. But even this exceptionally strong showing in Black Rock City almost pales in comparison to what this community does the other 51 weeks of the year.

Critical Massive followed its debut in 2003 with a return engagement June 25 through 27 this year. This Washington state regional burn takes place on the gorgeous 80-acre property of the Lake Bronson Family Nudist Resort, with guidance from Dave Martinez, co-regional contact since November 2003. Then, after this year's Burning Man event, SeaCompression will bring back the region's own take on the traditional decompression party for its third installment. This event is genuinely a community undertaking, rather than a project of any one group or theme camp. The 900 attendees in 2003 helped generate a donation to the Black Rock Arts Foundation of over \$6,000 in thanks for the work BRAF has done benefiting artists from Seattle and around the world.

Beyond Critical Massive and SeaCompression, many major theme camps conduct year-round fund-raising activities, so the community rarely waits more than a couple weeks for an excuse to gather. David Peterman, a regional contact since April 2002, has focused his organizing on events and activities that draw out and educate new participants, such as Burning Man 101, an informal information-sharing workshop, and the annual Newbie Picnic. In addition to all this activity, every Monday is Burn Night at the Lower Level, a local watering hole owned and operated by a group of veteran participants.

In sponsoring events over the last two years, the Seattle community has steadily grown. This movement seems destined to become

even stronger in the coming months and years. For example, Massive is morphing into a fully structured LLC that will provide support for local talent while working to keep the burning spirit alive throughout the year.

Although every Burning Man community is unique, successful communities appear to exhibit certain characteristics. The regional contact groups who help to organize and coordinate community activities are typically composed of individuals with different and complimentary talents. These are people who enjoy working cooperatively with others. Like the organizers of the Burning Man event, they see themselves as facilitators of a culture that derives from the efforts of every community member. Their approach is radically inclusive. They form alliances with other Burning Man communities, as well as preexisting local groups whose members may have no direct relationship with Burning Man. Their mission is to cultivate the here and the now in which they find themselves. They understand that Burning Man exists wherever it's created and that its ethos can be translated into many different types of activity and experience. More than a party, more than a one-time peak experience, the culture that is generated on the playa has become the fabric of way of life.

This year, at the Burning Man event, Burning Man's regional contacts will host a camp in Black Rock City's civic center, Center Camp. Participants are invited to stop by and learn about the more than 75 regional contacts and their communities. Although it's often said that Burning Man arises out of emptiness, a year-round network of affiliated contacts now connects a majority of Black Rock City's theme camps, artist groups and public service projects. This ever-growing world of Burning Man could change your life.



Nate Smith's Pillar of Fire, photo by Chris Dunker



Glass blowing at Chico Raskey's Trial by Fire - photo by Zoe Heogh

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BURNING MAN

Vault of Heaven

August 30 - September 6

