

BURNING MAN JOURNAL

ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO BURN ★ SUMMER 2006

COMMERCE & COMMUNITY

DISTILLING PHILOSOPHY FROM A CUP OF COFFEE

BY LARRY HARVEY

SOMETIMES AN EXCEPTION TO A RULE CAN DEEPEN a philosophy. For example, some critics of the Burning Man Project insist that by allowing coffee sales in our city's Center Camp Cafe we violate a tenet of our non-commercial ideology. They say that this is evidence of deep naiveté or demonstrates hypocrisy. My reply is that we've never espoused a non-commercial ideology. To be against commerce is to oppose the very existence of civilized life. Even hunter-gatherers engage in trade in order to survive.

When most people say that any thing or act is too commercial or has been commercialized, very few of them mean to say that the practice of commerce is necessarily bad. Instead, they are expressing the feeling that something essential — something that should never be bought and sold — has been commodified. This is why we have always been careful to use the words 'commodify' and 'decommodify'.

Our annual event in the desert is meant to provide an example of what can happen in a community when social interactions cease to be mediated by a marketplace. Until quite recently, all societies have provided many different kinds of rites and rituals — set apart from daily life — that rehearse and reaffirm certain core spiritual experiences that are held to possess an unconditional value.

For example, in the culture created by Burning Man, the value of a gift, when rightly given and received, is unconditional. Nothing of equivalent value can be expected in return; this interaction shouldn't be commodified. Likewise, love — the love of a parent for a child



THE MACHINE BY THE MACHINE CREW OF SEATTLE WA. PHOTO BY PAYNIE



THE FLOWER BY PATRICK SHEARN. ABUNDANT SUGAR & THE DOLAB OF LOS ANGELES, CA. PHOTO BY SCOTT LONDON

— should never be commodified. This, too, is an unconditional value, hedged round by a kind of sanctity, and can never be measured in dollars and cents.

Everyone, I think, intuitively knows these things, but we live in a consumer society in which nearly every kind of value is relentlessly commodified. In conducting the experiment in temporary community that is Burning Man, we have tried to create a special arena in which the realm of commerce ceases to intrude and interfere with vital forms of human contact: contact with one's inner resources, contact with one's fellows, contact with the larger civic world around us, and, finally contact with the world of nature that we cannot buy and cannot control.

But this, of course, leads back to the original question about coffee. Why mar this ideal picture by inserting commerce in the very heart of Black Rock City? It also brings us to a much more fundamental question. As Burning Man's culture begins to move out into the world at large, how can it sustain itself? Is it enough to simply attend regional gatherings that exist apart from that

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BLACK ROCK ARTS FOUNDATION INSPIRING ART, COMMUNITY, AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

It stood in the center of the Hayes Green in San Francisco as a giant testament to love, inspiration, anger, hope, fear, death, and truth. People from all walks of life scrawled messages in any number of languages across the wooden Temple built by David Best and the Temple Crew. From June to December, people gathered under its dappled shade, sat on its benches, and talked to one another about what it all meant. Immortality in Sharpie marker: "Gay is OK, People of Zee Wurld, Relax, Hate cannot conquer hate, only love can do that (MLK), Live Free... Or Die, If you're not on the edge, you're taking up too much room! Jim loves Phaedra, Judith was a loving and loved sister, R.I.P. Tom." Lines of poetry followed the organic and decorative contour of the center altar space. Flowers withered, tucked in cracks and crevices. Balladeers strummed old songs and new melodies. Thick Russian accents were heard, philosophers spoke, the black-clad smoked, children had their hair braided, strangers met, lovers kissed, the grief-riddled cried. This new space was beau-



FLOCK BY MICHAEL CHRISTIAN. PHOTO BY STEWART HARVEY

tiful and compelling, a catalyst and a galvanizing point for the community. People interacted with the other and the environment. It was a gift. It was art. It was there, now it's gone. Mission accomplished.

The Black Rock Arts Foundation has, with each new project, been forging a new path into the world of civic art. Over the course of the last year the Black Rock Arts Foundation has worked to bring interactive artworks to communities across the nation, as well as our hometown of San

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WHY I'M HERE BY TOM PRICE

Last year at Burning Man, immediately following news of Hurricane Katrina, our community began to spontaneously organize a response. A relief fund was collected at the event, initially totaling \$35,000, but during the ensuing weeks this soon swelled into many thousands more. One of the largest and longest lasting of these efforts eventually became what is known as Burners Without Borders, providing disaster relief with a decidedly playa flair — learn about their work at www.burnerswithoutborders.org. Below is a dispatch from the field written earlier this year by Tom Price, a part-time Burning Man Project staff member.

(LATE FEBRUARY, PEARLINGTON, MISSISSIPPI)

My leather gloves sag with sopped up diesel, sweat, and the black water that oozes off rotting garbage. Under the cypress trees in the swamp out back, an oily sheen coats the water, smothering the snapping turtles, but having no impact on the clouds of gnats and mosquitoes. Every night, after a day of working in a morass of twisted and broken homes, there's a dull ache in my throat from breathing mold spores and the smoke boiling off the fire from across the street, where an old man burns the insulation off downed copper wires. We have no electricity or plumbing, no running water, and it's a 15-mile drive to buy anything. Someone asked me the other day why I'm here. The answer's simple: there's nowhere else on earth I'd rather be.

For the better part of the last five months, I've been living in "Camp Katrina," helping clean up after the hurricane. I'm a journalist, and I've witnessed suffering before: Pacific islanders losing their homes to climate change's rising tides; Kalahari Bushmen dragged off their homelands to rot in resettlement camps to make way for diamond mining; land mine victims hobbling on crutches through Angkor Wat.



CLEANING UP KATRINA. PHOTO BY TOM PRICE

But this is different. This is supposed to be archetypal small town America; the sort of place where on Sundays Mom wrings her hands dry on her apron after baking a pie while Dad watches NASCAR with the kids, where in the evening families sit out on their porches as the fog slips through the Spanish moss bearding the oak trees. This was that place, but not anymore. Virtually every home, business, place of worship, and public facility that lies within one mile of the Gulf of Mexico between New Orleans, Louisiana, and the Alabama state line is either damaged, destroyed, or simply gone. Think about that for a minute. Some stories you report, some you live — for me, this became one of the latter.

Five months on, and the residents are still sitting on their porches — if they still possess one. Only now they're waiting for help, for a shelter besides a tent or flimsy trailer, for someone with machinery to help them remove the wreckage of what was and create space for something new to take its place. And for many, the help they're getting isn't from the government they've paid and fought and bled for; it's from a bunch of Burners, artists widely derided for the self-absorbed pointlessness of their behavior. The dissonance is amusing sometimes, but beside the point. Why am I here? The better question is: where else should I be?

It seemed unreal on the playa, another one of those random rumors that swirl through Black Rock City. "I'm serious," my late-arriving girlfriend insisted. "New Orleans is gone, a hurricane blew it out to sea." Conversations bloomed everywhere — what would we do if something like that happened to us? At Burning Man there is a lot of talk about intentional communities, the sort of self-made social infrastructures Ethan Watters wrote about in his book "Urban Tribes" as being the defining social characteristic of the future. Just in time, it seems; all around us

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THE HUNGRY WIND BY LARRY BREED

There's a hungry wind beyond the playa. It waits for us to drive away, our vehicles filled and with bags, tubs, and odd materials tied to luggage racks, in truck beds and on open trailers. On the long drive home, the hungry wind – the 70MPH wind that agitates your outside stuff while all is serene within – is tearing at your rig from every possible direction. It will take whatever is casually attached. That might be a bag of trash, or it might be something precious.

Packing after Burning Man 2005, one participant filled a plastic tub with his playa attire, snapped on the lid, and secured it with bungee cords to the roof of his Subaru. The tub stayed put, but somewhere on the 6-hour drive home the wind lifted the snap-on lid and sent it flying down the road. Item by item the wind pulled out his clothing and transformed it to roadside trash: MOOP, matter most unhappily out of place. The last to go was a prized red white and blue jacket, a friend's gift from the Black Rock Boutique.

Far too many of us feed the hungry wind. On the road to Gerlach, and onward to Interstate 80, trash from departing vehicles is everywhere. A small part of it is intentionally jettisoned by attendees that really do not get it. But, most of the trash appears when slippery plastic bags slide free from their tethers, twine or string breaks, knots untie, or in some other way the wind demonstrates that we have underestimated its rapacity. A bag falls to the road. Vehicles behind either swerve (on a two-lane highway – yikes) or run over the mess, grinding it into the asphalt. It's an appalling sight. To local residents, it's like dumping garbage cans on the neighbor's doorstep.

Chris Petrell, a longtime Burning Man staff member, has seen a lot of cargo come loose, and he knows how to prevent it. He and his crew also know the road – its shoulders, culverts, pullouts, blind spots – better than most people. Post-event they monitor every route from the playa: south to I-80, north to the Oregon border, west to Pyramid Lake and to Alturas, east to Winnemucca. Their mission is to find and remove every piece of trash, leaving the roadsides as close to pristine as possible. Southward, the main route, is the toughest. The crew can restore about ten miles per day of Route 447; that's a week of stop, walk around and pick up, drive 100 feet and repeat, until they reach I-80. Chris has some ideas for shortening their job by saving your cargo.

- First, trash bags are cheap. Underfilled is better than overfilled. Use double-bagging, especially if the contents are sloppy or smelly. Tie the first bag shut – knot the neck, or use cord or duct tape, not those flimsy pull-tie ribbons. Then put it inside a second bag, and tie that shut.
- Twine shreds and string breaks. Use heavy cord or light rope to close bags and to tie down your load.
- Don't expect knots to stay tied in the wind. Wrap short lengths of duct tape over



RUBBER HORSES BY DOROTHY TROJANOWSKI, PHOTO BY ANTHONY PETERSON

knots and loose ends. Duct tape in contact with both rope and bag will help keep bags from slipping free.

- Secure snap-on lids with rope or duct tape.
- Find a neighbor with packing skills. Ask them to look your rig over and help make it windproof. (Hey – do you have those skills? Helping to windproof is a sweet playa gift! Bring extra materials!)

- Take a rest stop early, at the entrance gate, at a wide pullout, or maybe at the Empire store. Check your load. It is most likely to fail early in the trip.

Desperation at departure time produces unstable loads, and home preparation can head it off. So, include these items in your pre-desert planning:

- Allow for vehicle space for the trash you'll generate over the week. (And minimize the trash: delete excess packaging beforehand, then during the event burn paper, and dehydrate kitchen scraps in mesh bags.)
- Consider whether you want to get rid of your trash before you reach home. If so, look up directions and hours for the waste disposal sites along I-80. (On the Burning Man website, a search for "take trash" will zero you in.)
- Bring packing materials: heavy-duty contractors plastic bags, 1 to 3 mils thick; light rope or stout cord (NOT twine or string); duct tape; maybe a 5-gallon bucket with locking lid for wet waste.

Then, may you drive gently, arrive safely with all your gear, and leave the empty wind behind.



HYPHA BY MICHAEL CHRISTIAN, PHOTO BY JON ROSS

BLACK ROCK ARTS FOUNDATION, FROM PAGE 1

Francisco. While the Burning Man Project continues to fund art created for exhibition at the annual Burning Man event in Nevada, the Black Rock Arts Foundation concerns itself with facilitating the creation of interactive projects year round – in places other than Black Rock City. These off-playa projects embrace Burning Man's familiar ideals, such as communal effort, civic responsibility, Leave No Trace, participation, and immediacy, and bring them home to local stomping grounds with the hope of changing how communities think, interact, and even dream. In 2005 BRAF granted five projects, each of which inspired and required community, were radically inclusive, participatory in nature, and grounded in a heartfelt vision.

A lot of people are curious about the kinds of projects we support (more than once we have been mistaken for an organization in exclusive support of African-American pop stars) and there is often a gap that must be spanned in order to explain what we consider to be interactive art. For our purposes, it is art that prompts people to interact with one another, art that engenders community, art that responds to participants and to its environment. In 2005, Anne Kristoff, a NY based artist, answered our call for submissions and created an in-transit art car as she toured juvenile correction facilities in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Youth in each facility were asked to arrive at a design and process for painting their portion of the car. Wanting artist-participants to own the project and process, Anne provided neither direction nor theme requirements. "My intention with ArtCarTraz," she says, "was to show these kids that art is not just something that hangs on a wall. Art can be created using any medium – in this case, a car and paint." Anne explains that the transformed car served as a symbol of freedom, and that through this project participants could release a part of themselves into the world as they worked toward a life beyond incarceration.

We strive to support art that inspires a sense of civic identity, and that causes people to reflect on their larger community. We want to inspire art that belongs to the public and exists for the benefit of all. A community endeavor in Tucson, Arizona brought together some sixty participants over the course of several weeks to create a legacy fire piece, the Urn Project, for their annual All Souls' Procession, which occurs in early November. The procession is loosely based

on the Dia de los Muertos holiday, a Meso-American tradition celebrating death as a new stage of life, and proceeds much like a cacophonous funeral through the city's streets lined with elaborately costumed onlookers in a sea of masques and painted faces. Constructed around a steel armature, this enormous papier-mache-covered urn was carried the entire 1.5-mile length of the parade. It blurred the line between participant and observer as onlookers and passersby were encouraged to contribute offerings each time the attending Spirit Group brought the piece into a new viewing area. It arrived at its destination with the prayers, affirmations, and heart songs of those honoring lost loved ones piled some three feet deep in its giant interior, waiting to be released into flame.



THE HAYES GREEN TEMPLE BY DAVID BEST & CREW. PHOTO BY MARK MCGOTHIGAN



MAYOR GAVIN NEWSOM DEDICATES THE HAYES GREEN TEMPLE. PHOTO BY HEATHER GALLAGHER

At BRAF, we like art created by and for the people; we like art that people can touch. "Swap-o-ramama", a new twist on the age-old clothing swap, aims to put fashion back in the hands of the wearer, and promotes art and a way of life that are driven more by community than by commerce. Longing for an era when clothing was made by hand, craft, or trade rather than industry, Wendy Tremayne has created a series of swaps that aim to extricate personal image from the arms of the corporate world. The swaps started in NYC, and the only requirement is that participants bring unwanted vestments for re-invention. Seamstresses, silk-screeners, graphic designers, and embellishers are on hand to help, teach, and learn from participants during the process. During the first swap several of the ideas posited by the project were met with overwhelming success as over 500 people participated and some 3,000 lbs. of clothing were recycled!

We are working hard to craft a vision of how the Black Rock Arts Foundation can best serve our community. These granted projects, in concert with San Francisco-based efforts, are the first substantive steps towards creating a model for generating new interactive art that will convene public participation in communities across the country. As a part of this effort, we'll be embarking on a new project that speaks to BRAF's role as civic cartographer and tool-builder. The Re-Cycled

Garden is a project designed to bring together disparate groups with a goal of educating the public about the importance of reuse and recycling through art. Organic shapes created out of inorganic material otherwise destined for the waste stream, will, through a collaborative process, be transformed. School children, area artists, neighborhood associations, parks councils, and anyone else who wants to participate will be invited to create garden-inspired sculptures, from the very whimsical to the very considered, for a group installation in San Francisco. As this model succeeds, we plan to plant it elsewhere. Already, conversations with community representatives in Detroit, Seattle, and San Jose are underway.

Sit in the open playa, a small wind blown garden shack hunches left, bracing itself against the desert wind. Grey-weathered wood casts a slatted light shadow on the cracked earth floor. A corrugated tin awning, like a hand lifted to a brow, eclipses the hot afternoon sun, as someone steps up to relieve you of the plant, or worm, or insect sculpture you have lovingly brought from Idaho, Washington, Oregon, or Ohio.

Your contribution is made of reused and recycled bits and bobs of any sort. The soft fleshy fruit of a flower might be replaced by nuts and washers; a mosaic of street-shattered reflectors could serve as petals. Forgotten baby doll arms for leaves reach out from a stem now made of galvanized soda straws and slats of wood once used for stirring paint – this flower is ready for planting in the Re-cycled Garden.

Welcome to Black Rock City's first Community Garden! As part of the larger Re-cycled Garden Project, the Black Rock Arts Foundation intends to plant an inaugural garden at the Burning Man event this year. We invite all of the citizens of Black Rock City to bring garden-inspired flora and fauna sculptures, crafted from inorganic material previously destined for (or rescued from) the trashcan, recycle bin, or scrap yard to contribute to BRC's first ever Community Garden! For more information on how you can participate please visit www.blackrockarts.org or call the office at 415.626.1248.



SYNAPSES BY CHARLIE SMITH & JAIME LAUDET, PHOTO BY MIKE WOOLSON



LIFE-SIZE MOUSETRAP BY MARK PEREZ, PHOTO BY WALDEMAR HORWATT

★ THE 10 PRINCIPLES

Complete the crossword puzzle to test your knowledge of the 10 Principles of Burning Man. Learn more at: http://regionals.burningman.com/network_principles.html

ACROSS

2 Interactions in the default world often lack this.

5 No spectators! Black Rock City thrives on _____.

6 Anyone may be a part of Burning Man (2 words)

10 The freedom to do and be whatever the heart wishes. (2 words)

DOWN

1 Money is not exchanged in BRC because we are a _____ culture.

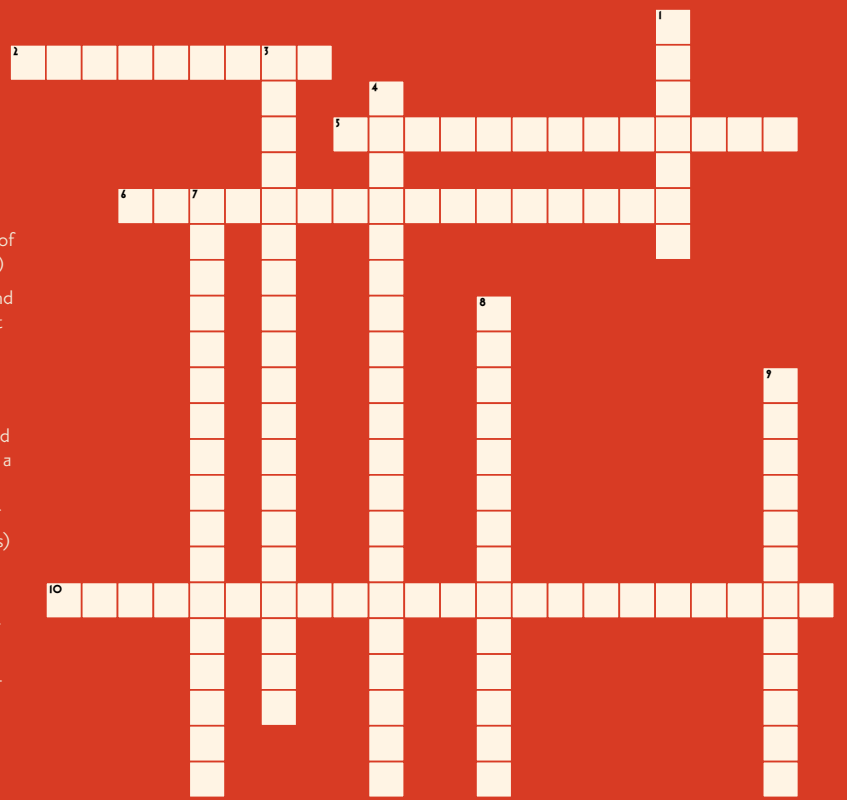
3 Duty to take charge of one's society. (2 words)

4 Duty to rely on one's own inner resources and take care of themselves. (2 words)

7 BRC is free from sponsorship, transactions and advertising.

8 Extreme cooperation. (2 words)

9 Tenet of the Earth Guardians. (3 words)



Solution on page 7

COMMODIFICATION AND COMMERCE, FROM PAGE 1

world, as does Black Rock City, or is it possible to radically reinsert the core values of our culture into what is called the default world? What is the relationship between commerce and community?

Fortunately, someone has already thought long and hard about a crucial aspect of this question, and before I tackle our practical rationale for selling coffee, I'd like to share with you the insights of Zay, the Burning Man Project's regional contact in Kansas. What he says was originally published on our Regional Contact list and shared with fellow organizers. This text has been edited and shortened, but it contains some very important ideas. His thoughts concern the hopes and fears we must confront as our community faces the future. The reader should consider what he says quite carefully, and be forewarned: this really is philosophy and well worth reading twice.

"On my community's Yahoo group, we've been talking about the intersection of commerce and community. What is the nature of the relationship between the two? As one person pointed out, it is natural to view people as a resource, as a means to an end, when operating in a system of commerce. I think it's okay to take this view as long as you can step out of the commercial context and realize that there are other dimensions to people, other values, and other ways of interacting. Commerce is okay if we simultaneously view the world in the context of other values that affect our attitude towards commerce.

"Let me use a personal example to illustrate my point. When my family plays our annual Thanksgiving soccer game I view the family members on the opposing team as opponents to be defeated. In that context, my classification of them is natural and appropriate. That view is the true nature of our temporary relationship in the context of the game. They are people with the capacity to physically compete with me. Yet, I should always be ready to view my family members in other contexts. If my Dad stumbles and falls, I don't run over him in my rush to score on his team. My love for him and the value of human life causes me to suspend the game, help him up, and check to see if he's alright. Likewise, I don't continue to view my family as mere competition after the game is over. Thus far, I think we're on the same page with community conditioning competition and vice versa.

"This brings me to the issue of the relationship between community and commerce. We are all concerned about not selling out the culture of Burning Man. I believe that selling-out implies a certain relationship between End Value systems that is like the potential for



THE INNER MIND BY GARY STADLER, PHOTO BY RICK EGAN



"PSYCHE SHOW" FUNHOUSE PAINTINGS BY JENNY BIRD, PHOTO BY GABE KIRCHHEIMER

conflict between competitive play and love of family. For instance, it would be inappropriate if my father used our family ties and relationship to persuade me to pass him the ball in the soccer game so he can score against my team. I would be betraying the values of the game for my family value. If my father used my family values to achieve game value, he would be betraying family values for game values.

"This muddling of values becomes inappropriate and futile because value ceases to be authentic outside of its context. When one value becomes merely a means to the other, both value systems are corrupted. Family love is not created by agreements to help each other win soccer games. Likewise, winning in soccer games does not entail making so many personal relationships that everyone passes you the ball. Value in a soccer game is achieved by physical and mental skills in competition. If I help my dad score because he's my dad, he doesn't win as defined by the rules of soccer. In other words, both value systems are corrupted when one is allowed to subsume or exploit the other.

"So, how about when we use business models to run our [regional] events? Isn't business the means to community in this relationship? Couldn't this relationship be considered corrupt? I don't think so. I disagree with the idea that when people buy a ticket to Burning Man they buy immediate experience, or community, or even art. Business provides the Burning Man Project with the means to amass goods, hire services, and pay its workers. The Project uses this business model to create a social and logistical framework (land surveying, infrastructure construction, information dissemination, porta potties, permits and fees, a sensible city design — an entire year's worth of planning by its staff). The Project annually sells this effort and these resources to ticket purchasers as a commodity.

"But... people buy this framework in which they can create immediate experiences for themselves! The framework does not create immediate experience, although it helps support it. After the purchase occurs, the framework is transformed by us into a communal value, namely a city. Even if everyone bought a ticket and just came out to the desert without participating, the event framework would still be there, but it wouldn't be a city. We create the communal value through our participation. The same goes for the practice of gifting. To get down to it, material things don't have the meaning 'commodity' or the meaning 'gift' until humans instill these meanings in them. A thing's meaning changes depending on the context in which we choose to place it.

"So what is the proper relationship between commerce and community? I think that real value of both commerce and community can be simultaneously created from the same event. I think this creation can happen without one value system being used merely as a means to sustain the other. This ideal is possible because commerce and community have peripheral effects that can be translated into value for each other. Think of all the stuff we end up buying to bring out to Black Rock City! All that stuff is purchased for use at the event and then transformed by our relationship to one another.



COLOSSUS BY ZACHARY J COFFIN, PHOTO BY JOHN ROSS

"To return to the soccer game example, playing soccer is fun and strengthens our family ties. But we only have fun if we play by the rules and authentically compete. A peripheral effect of the game's value system is used to support family value. Likewise, if I want to play soccer, I have to find enough people willing to form teams and compete without killing each other. Our family love and size assures me that I can achieve this. If we start hating each other, then folks will stomp off and the teams will fall apart, meaning the end of the game. In other words, a peripheral effect of our family value system is used to support game value.

"And this is not a corrupt or artificial relationship! Producing a competitive soccer game is not the goal of family. Producing family love is not the goal of soccer. Yet, each value system benefits indirectly and peripherally from the other. Neither value system's end goals are sacrificed, and thus both benefit from each other without corruption. My view is that the relationship must create value in terms of both commerce and community. If there is a communal investment, it must be for communal value. If there is a commercial investment, it must be for commercial value. If there is an investment of both, it must be for value in terms of both.

"So, I think one of the major goals in bringing our culture to the default world should be to show society how to simultaneously value commerce and community, and not corrupt the two. Let community and

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HOPE & FEAR: THE FUTURE

Where do we find ourselves? In a series of which we do not know the extreme, 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.

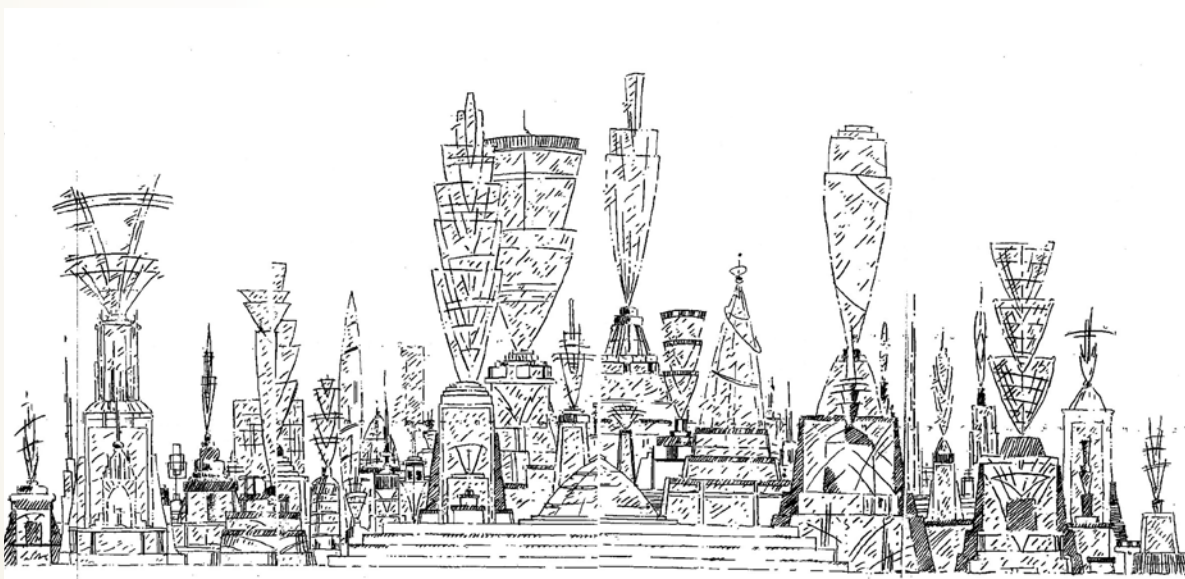
— RALPH WALDO EMERSON

WE TAKE COMFORT IN THE NOTION THAT WE HAVE A PAST TO GUIDE US, but we reinterpret history every day according to what happens in the present. The future, too, is a projection of our hopes and fears in what is called the here and now. But even what we term the here and now is largely an imaginary place and time. If we say that now exists exactly now, we already speak of the past. We are caught in a temporal slipstream, a state of perpetual flux. The present really narrows down into the thinnest slice of time. It is no wider than the span of a reflexive arc, that moment when the heart says to the mind: so shall it be. This year's art theme will allow us to explore how we create futurity. Express what you most hope for in the future! Express what you most fear! The Burning Man, as heartbeat of our city, will be made to rise and fall upon this tidal flow of our emotions and imagination.

THE ROAD TO U(DYS)TOPIA

The problem with the future is that it never seems to arrive on time. — Anonymous

THE centerpiece of Hope and Fear will be a sleek Art Deco palace, the Pavilion of the Future. Art Deco, arising in the 1920's and 30's, became a symbol throughout much of 20th Century for all that was considered modern. Its streamlined and dynamic forms derived from an industrial aesthetic that romanticized progress. They summoned up a sense of power, purpose, and velocity. As an art style, Deco stands as the West's last commonly held vision of a utopian



THE TEMPLE OF HOPE DESIGN. ILLUSTRATION BY MARK GRIEVE

future. Today, of course, this art form represents a retro-future: one that never came to be. The principle problems of post-modern life do not concern how we'll employ our endless leisure. Robots do not wait upon us hand and foot, nor do we jet from place to place in private rocket ships. Along the road to a utopia, these science fiction fantasies gave way to traffic jams. The future, it begins to seem, ran out of gas.

Within the Pavilion of the Future, participants will encounter a bewildering array of rooms arranged to form a maze. Each of these rooms will house art installations that are utopic or dystopic. Utopias are visions of our highest hopes. They paint a picture of a better world. Dystopias are cautionary tales and correspond to fear of what the future has in store. Artists will also be invited to install various kinds of voting devices in the Pavilion. Some of these devices will depend on chance, like slot machines. Others will allow participants to directly express what they immediately feel. Each such act will offer up a stark and simple choice: Will you vote for hope, or will you vote for fear? Voting booths will also be erected throughout Black Rock City. All of our citizens are cordially invited to vote early and often for either hope or fear, as their mood may move them.

All of these devices will be connected by a closed Wifi network, and linked to a secure computer equipped with a sophisticated software program. This futuristic technology will employ a complex algorithm to determine the statistical mean of

our participating community's hopes and fears at any given moment. As a result of these measurements, the Burning Man will either ascend while slowly raising its arms, as if to welcome all our hopes, or descend into a cage of fear located atop the Pavilion's elevated deck. This latter movement will allow participants who wind their way up to the deck to witness Burning Man close up through a chrome metal lattice constructed



HOPE TRIUMPHANT. ILLUSTRATION BY ROD GARRETT

from the gleaming remnants of discarded auto parts. Will the Man remain mired in fear, or will he rise and stretch his arms across the sky? Amid urgent currents of hope and surging riptides of fear, the result is sure to be unpredictable. As with the rotating of the Man of 2005, this daily drama will only occur during evening hours.

Directly behind the Pavilion, located at the end of the great lamp lit boulevard that divides our city into equal parts, participants will encounter the Temple of Hope. The design of this towering complex, created by artist Mark Grieve, will derive from urn-like forms and other elements suggestive of the latter phase of Deco, Art Modern. The center of this sepulchral forest of altars and spires will contain a stupa. All of these exotic forms will be constructed as a latticework, thus allowing participants to inscribe cloth flags with messages that they may then attach to the structure. Fluttering in the wind, as if animated by intention, these banners will bear witness to the people we have loved and lost. On Sunday evening, one day after the burning of the Man, the Temple will be quietly ignited and consumed by fire.

Each of us is an emitter of the future, and hope and fear are both legitimate responses to the great unknown. Confronting fear, instead of fleeing it, requires courage and cool reason. This experience can lead to struggle and to change. Expressing what we hope for can inspire faith that opens up a path where none appeared before. In 2006, as the 21st Century rushes forward, the time has come to ask ourselves: Are we merely along for the ride? We encourage all participants to contribute to some aspect of this year's art theme. Create a theme camp that forecasts the future. Imagine alternative pasts which, branching off from what we know, create alternative realities. Immediately confront your own future or the world's future. Plunge into the time stream (and learn how to swim). If you are doing fire art or planning to install a work of art upon the open playa (whether it's related to our theme or not), please see our Art Guidelines (www.burningman.com/installations/new_guidelines.html) for more information. Any art by anyone is always welcome.



2005 BURN. PHOTO BY DON JACKSON

ART AT BURNING MAN A PREVIEW OF 2006

BY WILL CHASE, AKA PLAYAQUEST

ART GRANTS

Every spring, the Burning Man Project awards grants to artists. While examining each proposal, the 5-person Burning Man art grant team looks for interactivity, overall impact on the community, possible relevance to each year's theme, and originality of form and content. Funding is drawn from ticket revenues, and this year the pool was \$400,000, approximately the same amount awarded last year. In 2005, the team received 175 proposals, of which 30 were awarded funding. As LadyBee, a member of the art grant team, said, "We were very excited by the large number of well-thought-out and inspiring proposals, and it's clear that there is a lot of momentum for the creation of art at Burning Man this year. In particular, the 2006 theme, 'Hope and Fear: The Future', seems to have tapped a deep creative vein for many artists."

RETURNING ARTISTS

We are pleased to see some notable Burning Man artists returning this year, including Pepe Ozan, The Flaming Lotus Girls, Michael Christian, Gary Stadler, DoLab, Kate Raudenbush, Luke Egan, and Michael Matteo.

The Flaming Lotus Girls return with "Serpent Mother", a 168-foot long flaming snake guarding her egg. This installation is sure to evoke the same community-gathering atmosphere as their highly-successful 2005 offering, "Angel of the Apocalypse". Encouraged by the response they received, the Flaming Lotus Girls were moved to conceive a space that will again inspire participants to commingle and connect around the warming flames that flow from an enormous metal creature.

Renowned metal sculptor Michael Christian will bring his fifth large-scale creation to the playa, entitled "I.T.", allowing participants to climb and crawl their way up three curved tubular legs into an elevated central pod. Michael has become known for contrasting the strength of steel with the flowing forms of Seuss-esque fantasy.



THE HOPE FLOWER AND FEAR TRAP - 100' TALL MOBILE FLOWERS BUILT ON ARTICULATED MANLIFTS BY PATRICK SHEARN, ABUNDANT SUGAR, AND THE DOLAB OF LOS ANGELES, CA



THE STARRY BAMBOO MANDALA BY GERARD MINAKAWA

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION

It's gratifying to see more international artists bringing artwork to the playa, reflecting the globalization of Burning Man culture. Gerard Minakawa of La Paz, Bolivia will construct "Starry Bamboo Mandala", a 55-foot tall, 3-dimensional interpretation of an ancient legacy of sacred spaces. Mandala is Sanskrit for "container of essence," symbolizing a microcosm of the universe. Participants will be invited to climb the structure and view Black Rock City from an aerie observatory.

Diarmo Harkan of Dublin, Ireland will install Metalusela, a 10-foot tall metal sculpture of a wizened old man, peering down on participants who come upon him, his soul glowing with the inner wisdom of fire and electroluminescent light. Metalusela, Harkan says, "is a representation of mortality, come traveling to us from the far future to remind us that, though we will eventually die, we have started on a path... that will allow us to look back on a life well lived and feel only love and gratitude."

"Mondo Spider", brainchild of Jon Tippett, Charlie Brinson, Leigh Christie, Brad Buss, Ryan Johnson, and Tony Geluch of Vancouver,

B.C., is an 8-foot long, 8-legged robotic spider constructed of aluminum and steel that will roam the playa, giving rides to participants. It's just one of six mobile projects that were funded this year, including the return of The DoLab crew's beloved "Miracle Grow", informally known as "the flower", whose creative innovation made a deep impact on participants' psyches in 2005. This year, its uplifting energy will be countered by a fearsome venus flytrap dubbed "FearTrap".

INTERACTIVE INSPIRATION

Interactive art promises to play a major role on the playa in 2006, with a large number of installations offering opportunities to play with sound, light and fire through a variety of interfaces. Always

a standard of Burning Man art, interactivity serves to dissolve the barrier between artwork and viewer, fostering a deeper sense of immediacy and connectedness. With many of these installations, the viewer - cum participant - either enhances or, in fact, becomes the art.



MODEL FOR CONEXUS CATHEDRAL BY CONEXUS VILLAGE

San Francisco's Dan Macciarini will be constructing 20-foot long mobile "Dragon Smelter", featuring a can-crusher and a smelter, inviting participants to make aluminum castings from recycled cans. "Cat's Cradle" by Tomi Paasonen and KunstStoff Dance Theater of Helsinki, Finland, New York, and San Francisco, invites participants to work with dancers to weave a cat's cradle within four large-scale hands.

"ManIC" is an array of 13 poles upon which are mounted LED globes and a surround-sound system, with which participants will create collaborative audiovisual performances of their own devising. Several installations, including "Flame Dance" by Seattle's Michael Conner, "Burninator" by Bill Coddling of San Francisco, and "2PiR" by Nicole Aptekar, Reed Kennedy and Melissa Piercey, will enable participants to create fire performances by way of innovative bio-kinetic interfaces, including touch pads and infrared proximity sensors.

EXPLORATIONS OF REVERENCE

Turning from the exhilarating to the reverent, two temple structures will offer modernized takes on traditional themes this year. Mark Grieve's temple crew return to construct the "Temple of Hope", a complex grouping of Moderne-inspired structures surrounding a central stupa, manifesting an art deco take on Buddhist and Hindu traditions.

Bringing their talents from their theme camp out onto the open playa, Gunther Jones and Dan Dunkle will work with members of their Conexus Camp to build a stunning open-air gothic cathedral, dubbed the "Conexus Cathedral". Juxtaposing evocative traditional religious iconography with the expanse of the playa, it recasts the common conception of "church" as being wherever one finds oneself in the world.

PLAYA SERENDIPITY ABOUNDS

Other surprises await the wandering Burner on the playa, including a field of robotic sunflowers that automatically turn to track the sun as it traverses our sky. At night, they will rotate to follow the myriad lights (blinking and otherwise) of bypassing participants. Watch out also for an articulated el-wire praying mantis roaming the playa, as well as "Dragon Love", a 45-foot long, illuminated sea dragon with a soaring 20-foot wingspan, pulling a glowing heart, and surrounded by four radiant dragonflies buzzing at its side. This is the craftwork of DoLab crewmember Sean Sobczak of Los Angeles, CA.

Pepe Ozan, creator of the giant sunken head dubbed the "Dreamer", continues his tradition of devising stunning installations for the playa by bringing to Black Rock City "Manigotes", featuring a variety of colorful surreal creatures, from 5-feet to 14-feet tall, surrounding a central fire pit.

With their piece "Exothermia", Oakland's Vince Cearley and Andrew Sano (of the Therm crew, creators of "Thermocraken") explore humanity's internal conflicts through the juxtaposition of fire and ice. To represent how our best intentions are so often foiled by the workings of our inner struggles, their installation will feature large blocks of ice, melted by flames buried within. As the artists note, "To be seduced by the beauty of things that may ultimately prove our undoing seems a fundamental human trait. [We are] stone in love with our own doom."

JUST THE BEGINNING...

These are merely the installations that we know of as of this writing. Spurred on by the creativity displayed on the playa in 2005, many other participants will be moved to create art for Burning Man. And remember, creativity is not limited what you craft from physical materials. It's also about how you are in the world, the gifts you bring to it, and the ideas you make manifest. In this sense, all of us are artists. Perhaps you hope to be such an artist and express yourself, and, maybe, you fear that you might fail. Just remember, at Burning Man, you'll never have a better chance to try.



MANIGOTES DE ESPERANZA BY PEPE OZAN

COMMODIFICATION AND COMMERCE, FROM PAGE 3

commerce do their thing freely and naturally within their own contexts. When they exist in an organic rather than a corrupt or artificial relationship, they'll naturally benefit each other."

Using Zay's analysis allows me to address the coffee question, but I must begin with a little history. Our original motive for creating a café was to attract people to the civic plaza at the center of our city. Although I am aware that some old-timers say that they avoid this public space, I am equally struck by how many first-time participants seem to flock to it. They often write glowing accounts of their experience there, and this seems only natural. Many years ago, when I first arrived San Francisco, my girlfriend and I haunted such public places. It made us feel that we belonged to our new home and eased our entrance into a world full of strangers.

I also remember one memorable trip to Oaxaca in Mexico, and how we loved visiting public gathering places, called Zocallos. Lounging in the shade of the Portales that frequently surround such squares, we would consume our coffees as we watched the world and all its business saunter by. Consuming food or beverages with others can be bonding, and we managed to make friends. This really wasn't about consumption; it was a mode of communion. It helped us to fit into the exotic world surrounding us. Eventually, I came to feel that every great city should provide these kinds of spaces where communal and civic life blend.

Such, then, is the nature of the Center Camp Café. As I often tell people, over the years we've tried to create alternative attractants — something other than a cup of coffee — that might lure folks into this enormous public plaza in the heart of our city. We experimented with large-scale stages, for example, only to discover they induced passivity. People simply stared at the provided entertainment; they failed to interact. The longer that they loitered as an audience, the greater the number of beer bottles they'd drop to the ground. This is why we settled on our current formula. We furnish only coffee and a few other beverages. A cup of coffee's a sufficient prop, a convenient foil, a means to gain a sense of social poise, and really doesn't interfere that much with self-reliance in the desert. I suppose, to put this in Zay's language, the "end value" in this scheme of things is a communal one.

And yet, even this explanation inevitably provokes a second question: Why not simply give this coffee away? Why not make it a gift? The answer is that we originally did exactly that — but, as our city's population grew, this soon became impractical. In Zay's terms, we were now confronting a different value system. Constructing a giant coffee house that is larger than the Roman Coliseum, trucking the entire apparatus of that coffee house, complete with espresso machines, to a remote desert, and serving thousands of cups of coffee during eight days and nights isn't cheap.

Indeed, the "end value" from this particular point of view is profit — at least, enough to meet our costs. Our café is not exactly Starbucks: we actually want people to linger, loiter and interact, not just consume a product and depart. And yet, we also need to run the Center Camp Café as an effective enterprise. To do otherwise, to give out coffee to our many friends because of personal relationships, for example, would corrupt the process that produces the café. It would be bad business, and our efforts to create a functional environment would fail.

Another alternative, of course, would be to raise ticket prices in order to subsidize coffee sales. Then no one would be troubled by the sight of money changing hands. Undoubtedly, this would help to sustain the illusion that Black Rock City



PROJECT X BY BOB MARZEWSKI & CREW. PHOTO BY ANTHONY PETERSON



THE DREAMER BY PEPE OZAN, PHOTO BY GABE KIRCHHEIMER



TEMPLE OF DREAMS BY MARK GRIEVE & THE TEMPLE CREW, PHOTO BY ANTHONY PETERSON

is a moneyless utopia. It would satisfy those critics who advance a kind of puritanical dogma that despises commerce. Yet, I'm glad we've never resorted to this. It's true, when looking at a line of people waiting to buy coffee, it can appear that the only end value involved is the flash of cash which takes place at the counter — especially in Black Rock City, where all other forms of vending have been banned. And yet, to follow these consumers as they seat themselves and talk to others or walk about and interact with art, is to enter into what Zay might call a "peripheral" zone where the consumption of coffee has begun to generate identity and culture. In fact, I really don't mind this provocative contrast, especially if it prompts us to begin to think about much greater issues.

Every year, thousands of people return from the desert and ask themselves how they might take what they have learned from Burning Man and integrate it into daily life. Increasingly, they are surrounded by communities of other burners — people, like themselves, who are accustomed to cooperating and collaborating with one another, not merely competing. These are folks who know that there are certain values that depend on one's immediate experience — essential spiritual values — that should never be commodified. However, the most important questions to consider are not those that are most frequently asked: will the Burning Man ethos be absorbed and commodified, exploited by the so-called mainstream; will the identity that we've achieved together be perverted into just another branding device? The answer to these questions is a simple and emphatic *no!* The Project and our regional contacts diligently work to prevent this. You'll not soon see Burning Man Gear™ featured at a store near you.

Instead, I think the question we must contemplate is whether our community can learn to apply its unique culture to the world while using worldly tools. How can we do this without muddling our value systems and corrupting both? The choice of how we might achieve this is entirely ours to make. We ought to welcome (and very carefully scrutinize) such experiments. And, by the way, should you visit Black Rock City's Center Camp Café, please feel free to enjoy a cup of coffee. It might be instilled with more than just caffeine.

WHY I'M HERE, FROM PAGE 1

the social structures we were raised to depend on — stable jobs, guaranteed pensions, Social Security — are collapsing. And as the winds and water of Katrina have shown, the once reliable federal government should now be counted in that unreliable number.

But real life is a hell of a lot harder than just building a theme camp. Could the people that Rolling Stone recently derided for having, as their only shared value, "a collective dedication to self indulgence" actually do something for someone else? Had we learned something in the desert that would be valuable in the real world? As the news of the hurricane seeped into Black Rock City, the natural, organic, spontaneous response was a resounding yes. In the middle of the final weekend that people had planned and worked for all year, people came by the dozens and then hundreds and thousands. They dropped what they were doing to find out how they could help. They opened their freshly drained wallets with a generosity that made me weep. And since then, many have streamed into the Gulf Coast to help out, doing so with an élan that leaves locals wondering, just who the hell are these people?

As Burners began arriving in Mississippi, any debate over whether Burning Man is more than just a big party in the desert ended — for good. This is about as real as life gets, and in places like this, people like us are exactly what's needed. Down the road from me there's a 65ish toothless man named Morgan Collins who's had to stare at the rotting morass of what used to be his mobile home for five months, because no one from the government or anyone else would help him get rid of it. And today in about five hours a friend and I broke it up and bulldozed it out of the way. Meanwhile, at the other end of town, a half dozen other "Burners Without Borders" humped salvageable wood out of broken homes, so they could rebuild a new one a few doors down for a 71-year-old retiree who was left with only the Harley on which he'd outrun the storm.

It turns out that what we'd learned in the desert has very practical implications. Sure, there're the topical things — Burners tend to be, in general, pretty creative, self-reliant types, who can handle being in a chaotic, unstable environment. So when they started hitting the Gulf Coast they were pre-wired to know what to do: Build Shelter. Make Food. Keep Cold Things Cold and Dry Things Dry. They also understood the bedrock value of water, diesel, and serviceable tools. But more than that, all the talk about radical self-reliance, cooperative effort, practicing a gift economy, thinking and acting from a place of civic responsibility — all that hot air crap turns out to be exactly what's needed when things fall apart. Partying in the desert, it seems, was in some weird way like boot camp for a disaster.

More than just surviving in this harsh environment, we're thriving, first making order, then creating art out of all the chaos and debris surrounding us. This morning I found that a campmate of mine, faced with looking out at oil-drenched swamp littered with debris, took a photo and created a laminated interpretative guide, pointing out the sites of the "Post Katrina Pearlington



BURNERS LEND A HAND. PHOTO BY KARINE WILSON

Nature Preserve," pointing out things like the Red Breasted Rubber Dingy, perched in a tree. Every Saturday, we take bits of debris, then nail, staple, and screw them together into artworks. In the evenings, we invite the locals over for drinks to watch us burn them. "I've never seen anything like this," a woman named Debbie told me last weekend, gesturing around at our comfortable camp while watching an elaborate sculpture of broken chairs, table legs, and twigs go up in flames, a glowing metaphor of the environment all around us, "but I love it."

Why am I here? Because this is one of those rare, pure moments when what you do immediately matters. There's no space here for the cynical ennui that often takes the place of intellectual discourse, no room for sitting on your hands because it might not be cool to show the naiveté of thinking you might actually make a difference. It turns out that under all the art and glitter and spangles in the desert, under that frivolous veneer of indulgence and self expression and that idealistic belief that there just might be another, better way our society could operate, there beats a thumping heart of practical expertise in creating community and culture. To bring it closer to home, when the next earthquake comes I'll bet your double Vente frappuccino that all over the Bay, Burners will be among the first busting out mini-generators and camp stoves, whipping up fruit pancakes to give away before the dust has even settled.

What's the connection between the desert and here? Why are so many people exchanging one harsh environment for another? Because the hurricane zone turns out is like the Black Rock Desert — vast, unsettled, frightening, but filled with an awesome beauty and a sense of infinite possibility — a place in which you can discover what you're made of. In the desert we start with nothing, and build a beautiful city. Back in the default world, the people and institutions that we used to rely on can't be counted on anymore. Maybe, it's time to decide what we're going to replace them with.

So, why am I here? I guess it's because this is a place where the values I have and share can actually be put to work. Remember that cheesy old story, about the young guy criticizing an old man for flinging back starfish that had been washed up by a storm? "It won't make any difference," he said. "There are too many of them." To which the old man replied, "It matters to this one," tossing another back, for a second chance at a life disrupted. That's what living in the Katrina Zone is like — starfish as far as the eye can see, some right at your feet. Do what you want with yours — I'm flinging mine.

Tom Price is a freelance journalist whose work has appeared in The New York Times, Mother Jones, and National Geographic Adventure, among others. Before the storm he lived in Salt Lake City and San Francisco. His current home, a 1978 Fleetwood Pace Arrow motor home, will appear in the August issue of "RV Living" magazine. He is currently exploring other parking options.

WHY LIGHTS ON BIKES & SCOOTERS ARE COOL AND OTHER BIKE TIDBITS

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING SHORT QUIZ:

Q: *Why should I light my bike at night in Black Rock City?*

- A So I can see others;
- B So others can see me;
- C To avoid injuries;
- D Because if I use Christmas lights or el-wire I'll be creating more art;
- E Because the Bureau of Land Management wants to see lights on bikes;
- F Because lights on bikes are cool and part of the Burning Man ethos.
- G All of the above.

It should be pretty obvious that the correct answer is G) All of the above. Nevertheless, every year there are plenty of lightless bikes roving the dark playa and creating safety hazards for everyone in our city. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has repeatedly asked the Project to get the word out to participants that lights are a good idea. Every year we put this information in the Survival Guide and on our website. But many participants are just not listening to our advice. It may be that they feel that the playa is a large and porous space; their trusty bike's sufficiently maneuverable. It doesn't occur to them that hundreds – in fact, thousands — of other participants have also made this same assumption. To go lightless on the nighttime playa or even down a darkened street is to be semi-blind and, sometimes, wholly invisible. And to be lightless in a dust storm or a moonless night— well, that's like paddling a coracle amid the shipping lanes. Sooner or later, you will collide with a t-stake, a pedestrian, another unlit cyclist, or with some mighty steamer of an art car. If truth be told, lightlessness in Black Rock City is akin to witlessness.

If this problem is not corrected then the BLM will require bikes to have lights as part of our stipulations. This would have the force of law, which means BLM Rangers could issue citations for failure to have a lit bike at night. Let's have lit bikes because it is the right thing to do, and not because the BLM is making us do it!

Speaking of BLM regulations, motorized scooters and "go-peds" technically fit the definition of a motorized vehicle. Therefore, they are required by law to have front and taillights. The BLM Rangers have not enforced this yet, but they plan to do so in 2006. Be safe and avoid a ticket! They will, however, be flexible about what constitutes adequate lighting. Think function over form — a headlamp or flashlight, nearly any kind of light, on the front with a red blinky light or el-wire on your Camelbak will suffice. Many cyclists don't bother with these niceties because they've brought a junker bike that's unequipped with lights or reflectors, but when the solution to the problem is so



SPIRAL RANGERS, PHOTO BY HEDY SIRICO

simple and immediate, there's really no excuse for risking your safety or endangering others.

As long as we're on the subject of bike and scooter accessories, don't forget to bring a combination lock (bike theft happens), spare parts, tools, inner tubes, and a bike pump. Incidentally, all of these things make great gifts if you don't end up using them yourself. And get your bike tuned up before you reach the playa.

So what happens if you bring all of these parts and your bike breaks, but you don't know how to fix it? Or, what happens if you already gave away the exact part that you now need? Then come down to the Bike Guild where the Bike Gods will teach you how to fix your bike. How's that for radical self-reliance? Located behind Playa Info, the Bike Guild is always looking for experienced bike mechanics to become part of the Bike God Pantheon. Plus, they have free beer to entice potential bike mechanics. Interested? Check out the WhatWhereWhen for more information, or email bikes@burningman.com.

Okay, so you got your bike tuned up before you hit the playa, you brought a lock, tubes, parts, and tools. You're done, right? Wrong! The most important thing now is to make sure that your bike leaves the playa with you. After cigarette butts, bikes are the most common form of MOOP in Black Rock City. Don't leave your bike for others to deal with. Take it home, wash off the alkali dust, oil it, and keep it for next year.



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THE BURNING MAN PROJECT
P.O. BOX 884688
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
94188-4688
HOTLINE: 415/TO.FLAME
WWW.BURNINGMAN.COM

EDITOR
LARRY HARVEY

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
RAY ALLEN
LARRY BREED
WILL CHASE
KRISTIN HALE
LARRY HARVEY
MATT MORGAN
TOM PRICE
ZAY THOMPSON
BEX WORKMAN

PRODUCTION MANAGER
BEX WORKMAN

DESIGN & ART DIRECTION
ARIN HART FISHKIN

COPY EDITOR
ANDIE GRACE

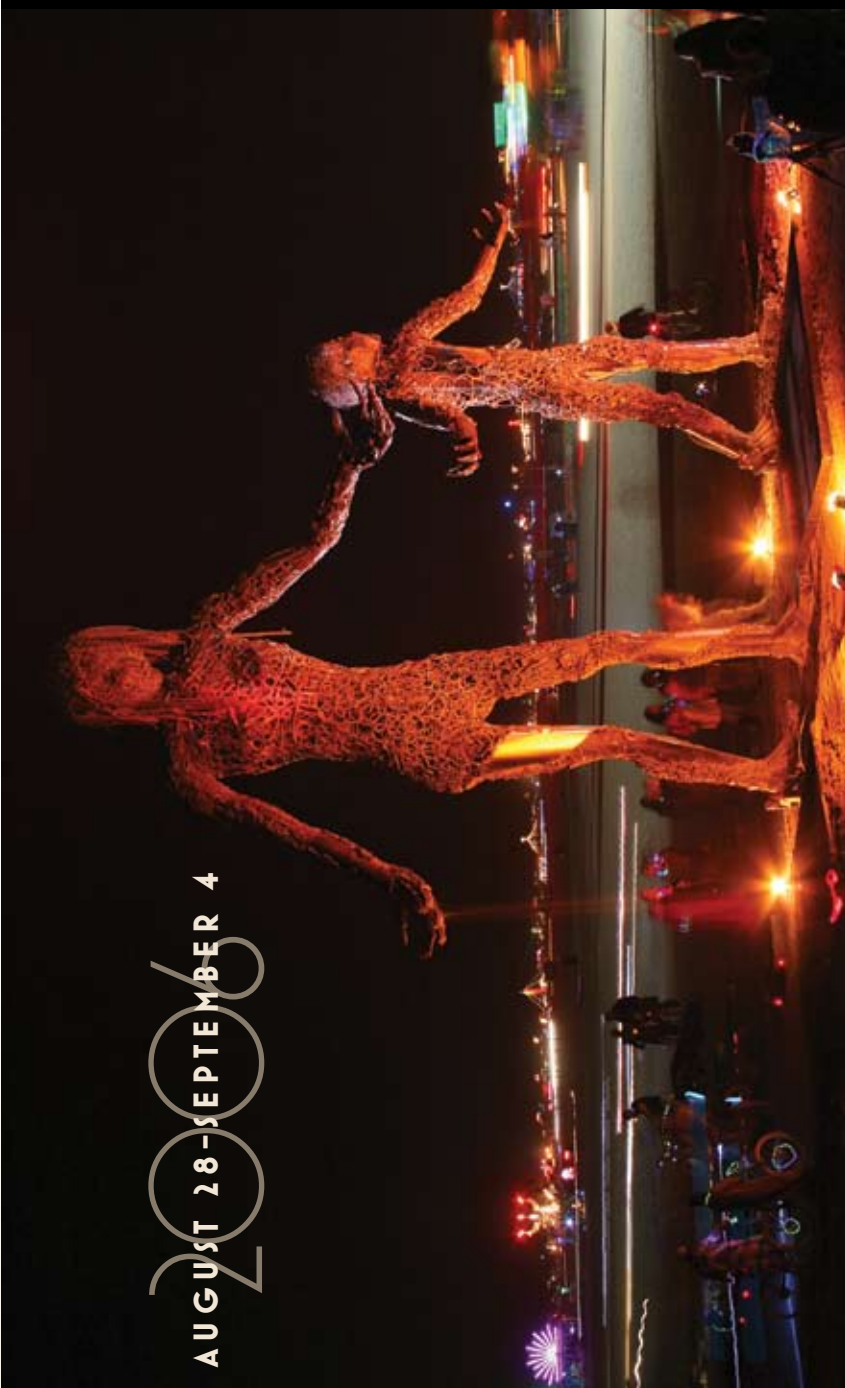
PHOTO EDITOR
LADYBEE

PROOFREADERS
RAY ALLEN
SPANKY

DEPARTMENT MANAGER
MARIAN GOODSELL

BULK-RATE
AUTO
US POSTAGE PAID
SAN FRANCISCO, CA
PERMIT NO. 3640

BURNING MAN



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**BURNING MAN
PROJECT**
PO BOX 884688
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94188-4688