NO SPECTATORS: THE ART OF BURNING MAN

Each August in Nevada’s inhospitable Black Rock Desert, a thriving metropolis rises from the dust for a single week. During that time, many societal norms are put on hold as a civic structure emerges based on personal accountability, radical self-expression, collaboration, and a gift economy. Lights and music fill the empty desert. Multi-story buildings and massive, interactive art installations are erected; some are burned to the ground. Then at the end of the week, the city disappears like a mirage.

Burning Man has always been difficult to characterize. Various called an arts festival, a bacchanal, and a utopian experiment, it exists outside the boundaries of everyday life, where immediacy and serendipity reign. Its organizers describe it as “a city in the desert, a culture of possibility, a network of doers and dreamers.” Now, just over thirty years since it originated as a small bonfire on San Francisco’s Baker Beach, it draws 70,000 participants annually, rivaling the largest art fairs worldwide, and has evolved beyond its temporal limits into the largest year-round “intentional community” in the world.

Though artistic expression has always been a part of the Burning Man experience, the past decade has seen the artwork grow in scale and complexity and draw global attention for its imagination and ingenuity. More significantly, though, the work of Burning Man resembles that of past artistic movements—from dada to land art—the unique environment of this event, the ethos behind it, and its link to contemporary maker culture and industry, make it wholly unique. Today, Burning Man is a hotbed of experimentation, a creative laboratory attended by many of the world’s most innovative minds, where ideas are inspired and tested, free from the confines of the market.

For the first time in our nation’s capital, No Spectators presents a comprehensive display of the stunning, participatory work that has emerged from this annual gathering by many of the artists and collectives who have become synonymous with the event, celebrating its importance to the American story as one of the most influential cultural events of our time.

No Spectators: The Art of Burning Man is organized by the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The Renwick Gallery especially thanks colleagues from Burning Man Project, a nonprofit public benefit corporation, for their close collaboration and assistance throughout the preparation of this exhibition.

Intel has provided generous financial and in-kind support as the lead sponsor of the exhibition. Additional financial support has been provided by:

Carolyn Smale Alper Exhibitions Fund
Anonymous
Sarah and Richard Barton
Bently Foundation
Diane and Norman Bernstein Foundation
The Bronner Family
Elizabeth Broun Curatorial Endowment
James F. Dicke Family Endowment
Ed Fries

No Spectators: Beyond the Renwick, an installation of outdoor sculptures and related programming in the Golden Triangle neighborhood, is made possible by a collaboration with the Golden Triangle Business Improvement District and support from Lyft.

Intel  
Golden Triangle Business Improvement District
Michael Garlington and Natalia Bertotti  
*Paper Arch*  
2018  
plywood, hardboard, bond paper, fabric trim, and found objects  
Courtesy of the artist

Since 2013, Michael Garlington and his partner, Natalia Bertotti, have teamed up to create large-scale installations based on religious structures, incorporating Garlington’s elaborately framed, signature photographs, which explore the range of human experience between “the horror and the wonder,” the two extremes of being. Two of these—*Photo Chapel* (2013) and *Totem of Confessions* (2015)—were created for Burning Man and burned at the conclusion of the event. Though influenced by David Best’s temples, one of which Garlington helped build, these installations are meant as places of raucousness and whimsy rather than solemnity and silence.

*Paper Arch*, commissioned specifically for the Renwick, expands the pair’s canon into secular architecture and evokes the symbolic threshold participants cross as they enter Burning Man. Exploding into a plume of paper flames that rises to the ceiling, the piece also suggests the ritual conclusion of the weeklong event and calls attention to the sculpture’s ephemeral nature.

Marco Cochrane  
*Truth Is Beauty*  
2018  
stainless steel rod, stainless steel mesh, and waterjet-cut metal  
Courtesy of the artist

In 2007, Marco Cochrane’s first trip to Burning Man inspired him to enlarge his work to monumental proportions. Together with his wife and partner, Julia Whitelaw, and with the help of dozens of volunteers (the Bliss Crew), he embarked on a series of three colossal sculptures of singer and dancer Deja Solis for the playa—*Bliss Dance* (2010), *Truth is Beauty* (2013), and *R-Evolution* (2015), collectively known as *The Bliss Project*. For each sculpture, Solis chose her own pose and expression. Haunted by the abduction and sexual assault of a childhood friend, Cochrane intends the project to bring attention to the issue of violence against women, demystifying the female body and portraying the “feminine energy and power that results when women feel free and safe.” Around the base of the *Truth is Beauty* installation this question appears in multiple languages: "What Would The World Be Like If Women Were Safe?"

Cochrane first sculpts his pieces by hand before constructing them from steel triangles at grand proportions. Built using a mold of the original clay sculpture, the version of *Truth Is Beauty* in the gallery is one-third the size of the fifty-five-foot tall figure that appeared at Burning Man in 2013.
Duane Flatmo
*Tin Pan Dragon*
2008
recycled found objects
Courtesy of the artist

*To invent, you need a good imagination and a pile of junk.*
--Thomas A. Edison

Duane Flatmo built his first kinetic sculpture in 1982 for the Grand Championship Kinetic Sculpture Race, an annual event in which human-powered art sculptures race for three days and forty-two miles over land, water, and sand from the city of Arcata to Ferndale, California. With longtime friend Jerry Kunkel, Flatmo has since created more than thirty-three mutant vehicles, usually from recycled scrap metal and other found objects, including several entries for Burning Man. His unusual tinkering has also garnered attention in television and film: in 2001 he and his team, Art Attack, competed on the series Junkyard Wars. In 2006, he became a finalist on America’s Got Talent, playing a guitar with an eggbeater, then a weed whacker.

The pedal-powered *Tin Pan Dragon* (2008) was the first contraption Flatmo brought to Burning Man, and led to more grandiose works. In La Penita, Mexico, a show at a local art gallery inspired Flatmo to create the three-foot prototype for *El Pulpo Mecanico* (2011), a giant, flame-blowing octopus that would become one of the most beloved mutant vehicles ever on *playa*. After bringing it to Black Rock City for six years, Flatmo then mined the vehicle for parts for his most recent creation, *Rabid Transit*, which debuted at Burning Man in 2017.

**Richard Wilks with Michael Conn and Victor Rodarte**

*Evotrope*
2009
steel, Baltic birch plywood, acrylic paint, unicycles, and motorcycle hub
Courtesy of the artist

*Evotrope*, a giant mobile zoetrope, is just one of several imaginative vehicles Richard Wilks has designed for Burning Man, working primarily with steel and aluminum and using a combination of physical and digital tools. Participants animate the artwork using the hand-crank and, in the dark of night, strobing lights bring the spinning images to life.

A Los Angeles–based artist, graphic designer, and builder/maker, Wilks received his B.F.A. in 1988 from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, then got his start with Walt Disney Imagineering, conceptualizing environments for theme parks. Today, he works as a creative hybrid: artist, graphic designer, builder/maker, inventor, and seeker. A sense of connection to the natural world inspires him, and he often focuses on environmental themes, which he translates with a distinctively human touch influenced by Burning Man, the maker movement, and 1970s bike culture.

Beyond Burning Man, Wilks has exhibited his mobile art sculptures at museums, galleries, and art fairs in California and New York. His *Cupcake Car*, which appeared on the 2015 season premiere of The Bachelorette, has proven particularly popular both on and off the *playa*.
Scott Froschauer

*Start*
2015
DOT specifications street sign
Courtesy of the artist

Scott Froschauer

*Infinite Clearance*
2015
DOT specifications street sign
Courtesy of the artist

Scott Froschauer

*Ten Principles*
2017
DOT specifications street sign
Courtesy of the artist

Designed to be experienced firsthand, Scott Froschauer’s work explores new means of communication, and often carries a political message. In 2013, an interaction on playa with Burning Man founder Larry Harvey inspired his most recent project, *The Word on the Street*. Froschauer employs a strategy akin to “culture jamming,” a practice of using familiar elements of the urban environment such as commercial advertising (or in this case, DOT signs) to offer social critique. By transforming the messages on these street signs from prohibitive to life-affirming or comic language, Froschauer seeks to spread Burning Man’s Ten Principles while inciting people to look for magic in the world around them.

In addition to his solo projects, Froschauer has worked with renowned artists such as Lauren Bon, James Peterson, and Marcos Lutyens and has fabricated several prominent installations presented at Burning Man, including *MÚCARO* (2017) designed by artist El NiNo, and *Church Trap* (2013) designed by Rebekah Waites, which became one of the most iconic works to ever appear at the event. Froschauer received his B.A. in Theoretical Linguistics from Syracuse University in 1994 and has been creating art for Burning Man since the early 2000s.
Five Ton Crane

Capital Theater

2018

steel, aluminum, wood, reclaimed objects, and mixed media

Courtesy of the artists

The following members of Five Ton Crane contributed to this project:

- Al Falcone (Fabrication)
- Ake Grunditz (Sculptor)
- Allen White - Movie Director
- Andrew O’Keefe (Technical Designer)
- Ashleigh Heinichen (Volunteer Artist)
- Audrey Nieh (Newspaper Wrangler)
- Becca Henry (Poster & Film Canister Artist)
- Bonnie Heras (Metalsmith)
- Bree Hylkema (Lead Artist)
- Cate Boadway
- Colasuonno (Film Canister Artist)
- Cate Boadway
- Grant Diffendaffer (Theater Seat Designer)
- Ibex Innovation (Designer/Engineer)
- Imogen Speer (Muralist/Graphic)
- Jacquelyn Scott (Maker)
- James David Martin (Decorative Painter)
- jamie diy (Volunteer Artist)
- Jay Kravitz (Fabrication/Jack of All Trades)
- Jen Colasuonno (Film Canister Artist)
- Jodi Power - Performer
- Jody Medich (Advertising Painter)
- Joey Gottbrath (Assistant Sheep Herder)

John Hollis (Actor)

John Warmerdam (Crate Fabrication)

John Paul Young (Carpenter/Troubadour)

Jonathan Mills (Volunteer Sparkle)

Josh St. John - Railing Design

Joy Busse (Volunteer Artist)

Joyce Pedersen (Photographer)

Katie Keech (Candy Design)

Kellie Peach Nash - Volunteer

Kiki Anderson – Volunteer

Max Chen (Fabrication/Contributing Artist)

Megan Jones (Film Canister Artist)

Michael Sturtz (Dashboard Creator)

Mike Chiappetta (Lead Volunteer)

Mike Woolson (Candy Design)

Naomi Grunditz (Canister Artist)

Peter Platzgummer (Project Manager)

Rich Brown (Power Distribution Specialist)

Ronny Preciado - Volunteer

Sara Chieco (Ceramicist, Photographer)

Sean Orlando (Lead Artist)

Shannon Solano (Metal/Film/Volunteer)

Sheena McNeal (Graphics)

Stephanie Shipman (Lead Carpenter)

Tania Seabock (Painter)

Thom Puhek (Production Assistant)

Travis O’Guin (Volunteer)

Vera Eleanor Shipman ("Chicken") (Head of Security)

Wendy Rolon (Actor)

Founded by Sean Orlando, David Shulman, and Dr. Alan Rorie in 2007, Five Ton Crane is a team of more than 150 artists and innovators whose successes may be measured by the rewards of collaboration. By coming together, the artists of Five Ton Crane are able to take on more ambitious projects than they could individually, pooling resources, interests, and talent to create bigger, better, and bolder art, while providing a supportive network of skill sharing that feeds the Burning Man creative community.

Over the years, the combined talents of Five Ton Crane have given rise to a number of well-loved installations on playa, including the Raygun Gothic Rocketship (2009), a forty-foot tall spacecraft which now permanently resides at the Wings over the Rockies Air & Space Museum in Denver, Colorado; the Nautilus Art Car (2011), a land-based “undersea” mutant vehicle created in collaboration with Christopher Bently; and Storied Haven (2015), led by Bree Hylkema, “an enchanted home inside of a grand boot,” recently exhibited at the Hermitage Museum in Norfolk, Virginia. All of these are monumental, immersive pieces that originated with an appreciation for the importance of a boundless imagination and a shared story.

Commissioned for this exhibition, Capital Theater is Five Ton Crane’s latest large-scale work of art; it is a 1920s-30s art deco movie theater on wheels, replete with bespoke silent films. Like all of Five Ton Crane’s pieces, it has been conceived, designed, and fabricated with audience interaction and playfulness in mind, and displays a focus on craftsmanship down to the smallest detail.
Candy Chang  
*Before I Die...*  
2018  
chalkboard paint, spray paint, and chalk  
Courtesy of the artist

Drawing upon Michel de Montaigne’s proposition that “to philosophize is to learn to die,” the *Before I Die* project captures the ways we grapple with mortality and meaning as a community. After the death of a loved one, artist Candy Chang created the first wall on an abandoned house in her neighborhood in New Orleans. Since then, nearly four thousand such walls have been created in seventy-eight countries, including China, Iran, Russia, Brazil, and South Africa. These participatory installations serve as memento mori—chances for individuals to reflect upon mortality with neighbors and passers-by. Each response represents an individual’s unique desires and values and each wall offers a snapshot of our shared anxieties and hopes, our collective joys and struggles. By creating spaces where we can share our inner lives in public, *Before I Die* reimagines the walls of our cities as places where we can remember what really matters in an age of increasing distraction and flux.

In 2012, a version of the project appeared in Black Rock City, installed by Susan Moore with help from Lisa Gorman, Richard Johnson, and Maria Partridge.

Android Jones  
based Lyons, CO

A longtime member of the Burning Man community, Jones is best known as a “digital painter” who uses a custom computer set up to create layered, psychedelic works and live performances. In addition to the work he has brought to Burning Man, he has contributed his art to events on six continents, participating in the Grateful Dead’s Fare Thee Well tour and projecting his work on the Sydney Opera House and the Empire State Building. At the center of Jones’s work is a fascination with spirituality and altered states of consciousness. Describing his style as Electro-Mineralism, he attributes his ability to create to the wonders of technology and credits the planet’s resources for advancements in art production. By manipulating light and energy, he aims to capture complex concepts and alter the viewer’s perception, pushing the boundaries of the imagination through the use of innovative media.

Andrew “Android” Jones began studying art at the age of eight. He attended the Ringling School of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida, where he trained in traditional drawing, painting, and animation. Jones interned at George Lucas’s Industrial Light & Magic and, in 2005, he began his career as an independent artist. He now lives in his home town of Lyons, Colorado, maintaining a large art studio in a repurposed barn.

Deep Playa Experience Placard  
*The Android Jones Deep Playa Experience* will transport participants from the Palm Court of the Renwick Gallery in Washington, DC, to the artist’s interpretation of the deep *playa*, where they can explore and experience the vast open canvas of the Black Rock Desert. While adventuring, participants will create and interact with an array of audio-reactive particles as they discover the unexpected mysteries of the *playa*.

Dance and spin with virtual fire, create temporary structures of shifting geometry, and discover the unknown as the twilight sun sets over the horizon.

*The Android Jones Deep Playa Experience* was created and developed by Android Jones, Scott Hedstrom, Anson Phong, and Evan Bluetech.
Leo Villareal  
*Volume (Renwick)*  
2015  
white LEDs, mirror-finished stainless steel, custom software, and electrical hardware  
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Janet and Jim Dicke, Tania and Tom Evans, Paula and Peter Lunder, and Debbie Petersen in honor of Elizabeth Broun, 2016.13

Leo Villareal’s works are composed of light-emitting diodes (LEDs) that are controlled by custom computer programs. These programs use simple, mathematical rules with no preconceived outcome that, when put into motion, create complex, organic patterns of light. The artist’s use of technology and numbers to evoke biological forms is influenced by mathematician John Conway’s *Game of Life*, a computer simulation of how cells live and die based on their proximity to other cells. Like Conway, Villareal is interested in the concepts of chance and “emergence,” or how complex behavior can develop from simple interactions. His work, which is often site-specific, includes *The Bay Lights*, a 1.8-mile-long permanent LED installation on San Francisco’s Bay Bridge, as well as many pieces that have been acquired by prominent museums worldwide.

Villareal is a prominent light sculptor based in New York City. He received a B.A. from Yale University in 1990 and an M.P.S. from the Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts in 1994. That year, he began working for Interval Research Corporation, a technology think tank based in Palo Alto, California, and attended Burning Man for the first time. Inspired by his initial, disorienting experience in the Black Rock Desert, Villareal brought his first light piece to the gathering in 1997 and has participated every year since.

David Best and the Temple Crew  
*Temple*  
2018  
wood  
Courtesy of the artists

Since 2000, David Best has designed and coordinated the construction of approximately half of the Burning Man temples. Established as sacred spaces of reflection and prayer, all of these have been massive, incredibly intricate, wooden structures. During the week of Burning Man, the Temples are adorned by participants with memorials and inscriptions. The structure is burned in a cathartic ritual to inspire healing and community. Since 2005, Best has also built similarly ephemeral temples in public spaces outside of Burning Man, within the United States and in countries such as Ireland and Nepal. Committed to the values of inclusion and participation, he creates opportunities for anyone who wants to take part in his projects, augmenting a core group of volunteers known as the Temple Crew with members of each community where he works.

Best received a B.F.A. from the College of Marin and an M.F.A. in sculpture from the San Francisco Art Institute; his paintings, sculptures, collages, art cars, and ceramics can be found in many distinguished public and private collections. He is, however, best-known as the Temple Builder at Burning Man.
HYBYCOZO  Yelena Filipchuk and Serge Beaulieu

*Deep Thought---Insight*
2015
powder-coated steel, LED lighting, and wood
Courtesy of the artists

HYBYCOZO  Yelena Filipchuk and Serge Beaulieu

*Inner Orbit: Lvov*
2017
painted steel, LED lighting, and wood
Courtesy of the artists

HYBYCOZO  Yelena Filipchuk and Serge Beaulieu

*Trocto*
2014
painted steel, LED lighting, and wood
Courtesy of the artists

In their work, Yelena Filipchuk and Serge Beaulieu, the artist duo behind art and design studio HYBYCOZO, investigate the influences of mathematics and geometry in the history of artwork, and human evolution, as well as the interconnections among contemporary physics, biological patterns, and ancient craft. Using advanced manufacturing and prototyping technology, their works generate tension between hard geometric surfaces and soft interior illumination, promoting a sense of contemplation and awe of the inherent beauty of universal forms.

In 2014, the duo brought their first collaborative installation, *Hyperspace Bypass Construction Zone (HYBYCOZO)*, to *playa*—three steel polyhedral sculptures that, by day appear solid and, at night, cast otherworldly patterns of light and shadow on the surrounding earth. Soon after, they took the name HYBYCOZO for their continued collaboration, focusing on installations that reflect patterns drawn from mathematics, science, nature, and culture. The moniker comes from Douglas Adams’s classic sci-fi novel, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, for which the artists share an affinity, and the titles of several subsequent works by the pair are drawn from that same source.

Aaron Taylor Kuffner

*Gamelatron Bidadari*
2018
32 hand-forged bronze gongs from Bali and Java, powder-coated steel, copper anodized aluminum and teak wood robotic mallets, and a physical computing system
Courtesy of the artist

Aaron Taylor Kuffner’s Gamelatrons are sonic, kinetic sculptures based on the Indonesian music tradition known as *gamelan*. For four years, Kuffner immersed himself in the study of the thousand-year-old musical tradition at the Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta and villages in Java and Bali, before embarking on this series, which combines traditionally crafted bronze gongs with robotic technology to create dynamic, site-specific installations.
Trained in painting and sculpture---but having also worked as a DJ and composer---Kuffner gives as much consideration to the aesthetics of his installations as to their sounds. Over the past ten years, he has created more than fifty Gamelatron sculptures, which enchant audiences with their elegant forms, movements, and music. They have been exhibited worldwide and make regular appearances at Burning Man; one was installed in the Temple of Transition in 2011, another was in the Temple of Whollyness in 2013, and a third formed the base of the Man in 2017.

In Java and Bali, it is customary to name your Gamelan orchestra; Kuffner carries this tradition forward with his installations. Gamelatron Bidadari draws its name from the Indonesian word for a forest nymph---a reference to its use as the artist’s traveling Gamelatron; in that role it was often set up in the woods. Completely reimagined for the Renwick, this work has evolved to represent the beauty of the trees that hold the bidadari soul; here the artwork has been assembled more vertically to evoke that spirit.

*Model of the Man*

2017

wood, paper, and wire

Collection of Burning Man Project, courtesy Nevada Museum of Art

*The trickster’s function is to break taboos, create mischief, stir things up. In the end, the trickster gives people what they really want, some sort of freedom.*

—Tom Robbins

**FoldHaus Art Collective**

*Shrumen Lumen*

2016
corrugated plastic, steel, aluminum, industrial linear actuators, RGB LEDs, and MiniMAD units and PixLite controllers running custom lighting sequences

Courtesy of the artists

FoldHaus is a collective of engineers, designers, and makers based in the San Francisco Bay area, that is dedicated to creating interactive kinetic art. A small core team focuses on the design and engineering of these complex pieces, while a large number of volunteers contributes to the time-intensive build process. FoldHaus builds its art at the design firm IDEO, where many of its members are current or former employees. The group is currently led by Joerg Student and Jesse Silver.

The collective started to form in 2010, when a small group of designers built a yurt for Burning Man based on a collapsible emergency shelter design Student had created during his time at the Royal College of Art in London. The yurt’s lightweight, folded construction proved to be efficient and durable on *playa*, and inspired the group’s subsequent art pieces at Burning Man: Blumen Lumen (2014) and Shrumen Lumen (2016).

The elements of this sophisticated, interactive cluster of fungi each has its own particular character and all delightfully respond to human interaction. As participants step on the footpads located beneath each cap, the mushrooms gently grow and “breathe.zzzz” In daylight the grouping appears ethereal white, while at night, it magically transforms with embedded LEDs that glow through the translucent outer skin to bring the installation to life.
Christopher Schardt

*Nova*
2016
LED installation laser-cut aluminum, RBG LEDs, Raspberry Pi running custom software, and speakers
Courtesy of the artist

In 1998, Christopher Schardt’s first Burning Man experience inspired him to apply his engineering and computer skills to art and he has participated in—and brought a major art project to—the event almost every year since. After four years making kinetic fire sculptures, in 2013 he switched to works using light-emitting diodes (LEDs), echoing the same gradual shift that has taken place in the larger Burning Man culture.

A breakthrough in Schardt’s work came with *Firmament* in 2015, when he hit upon the power of creating “art places” as opposed to art pieces. *Firmament* is a massive canopy of programmable LED lights that dance in celestial, earthly, and psychedelic patterns to classical musical accompaniment. In the vastness of the open *playa*, amid the sea of techno-rave music that dominates Black Rock City, the work becomes a transcendent environment where participants gather, relax, and linger. Closely related to *Firmament*, Schardt’s *Nova*, featured here, runs on the same program and features the same number and configuration of LEDs, but is in a condensed format suited to smaller spaces.

Schardt is a sculptor, musician, and computer programmer who earned his B.S.E.E. from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1985. Now widely known for his LED sculptures, he is also the author of LED Lab, an iPhone/iPad app used by thousands of LED artists worldwide.

*Roy Two Thousand with Crystal Dawn Davis*

*Lake of Dreams*
2017 (featuring footage from Burning Man 2011, 2013, and 2016)
Courtesy of the artist

*Duane Flatmo*

*Tin Pan Dragon*
2008
Filmed and edited by the artist and Dmitri Zdorov (“Dimka”)
Courtesy of the artist and Dmitri Zdorov (“Dimka”)

*Duane Flatmo with Jerry Kunkel*

*El Pulpo Mecanico*
2011
Filmed and edited by Mark Day
Courtesy Mark Day

*Duane Flatmo*

*Rabid Transit*
2017
Filmed and edited by David Julian
Courtesy David Julian
Richard Wilks with Michael Conn and Victor Rocarte

Evotrope
2009
Filmed by the artist
Courtesy of the artist

Wilks ensures that all of his work has a distinctly human touch, and aims to inspire participation and a sense of connection to the natural world. His creative process has been shaped by 1970s bike culture, the Maker Movement, Burning Man, and his interest in social, environmental, and political issues. Wilks has brought several of his mobile art sculptures to Burning Man and has also exhibited them at museums, galleries and art fairs in California and New York. His Cupcake Car, which appeared on the 2015 season premiere of The Bachelorette, has proved to be particularly popular both on and off the playa.

Richard Wilks is a Los Angeles–based artist, graphic designer, and builder/maker. He received a B.F.A. in 1988 from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, graduating with honors in packing (painting) and graphic design. Wilks began his career working for Walt Disney Imagineering, where he conceptualized environments for the Disney theme parks, and is now the creative director at Studio Wilks, a multidisciplinary design studio that specializes in exhibit, graphic, and identity design. He also creates mobile sculptures, working primarily with steel and aluminum and using a combination of physical and digital tools.

Beyond Burning Man, Wilks has exhibited his mobile art sculptures at museums, galleries, and art fairs in California and New York. His Cupcake Car, which appeared on the 2015 season premiere of The Bachelorette, has proven particularly popular both on and off the playa.

From Burning Man Project

Guided by its six founders—including Burning Man’s original founder Larry Harvey and the group of key partners, Harley K. Dubois, Marian Goodell, Michael Mikel, Will Roger Peterson, and Crimson Rose, who later joined him—the Burning Man organization has evolved into a non-profit entity supported by a 100+ year-round staff, seasonal staff of over 700, and thousands of volunteers, who together manage the event in the Nevada desert as well as 80+ official “regional events,” to advance its global mission.

The role of process and collaboration among the Burning Man organization’s many participants on and off the playa cannot be overstated, and is essential to the spirit and reality of steering what has become an important contemporary cultural movement. The six founders ground this crucial ethos in their relationship to one another, developing a reciprocal system of learning, listening, and sometimes arguing their way forward to seek the best path. As inherent risk takers, they continue to let time inform this process, and encourage the community to contribute its diverse voices to the event and the culture that lives on in the world. Without this vivid, vibrant, and additive approach to working together, Burning Man as we know it today would not exist.
GOLDEN TRIANGLE INSTALLATIONS:
Jack Champion
*Untitled*
2017
Bronze
Courtesy of the artist

In 2016, Jack Champion brought his first solo artwork to the *playa* at Burning Man: a group of five resin crows collectively called *Murder*. Champion later cast this pair of sturdier, oversized bronze birds in the image of the originals.

Observing how the vastness of the desert landscape at Burning Man has a tendency to fool the eye, Champion began making the crows to play with perspective. The birds appear small from afar but then overwhelm viewers with their unexpected scale up close. Crows play a meaningful role in Champion’s life: his grandmother kept a pet crow when he was five, and later at Burning Man, an uncanny encounter with the creatures in the desert spurred the creation of this series. He still feeds the crows outside his house in Oakland.

Mischell Riley
*Maya’s Mind*
2017
cement

Mischell Riley brought *Maya’s Mind* to Burning Man in 2017; this work followed a ten-foot tall bust of Leonardo da Vinci that she created for the event in 2016. With their rugged finishes, Riley’s works blend with the dusty surrounds of Burning Man and have the patina of ancient ruins.

As a professional sculptor for more than three decades, Riley has received numerous public and private commissions for portrayals of wildlife, notable Americans, and people in profound circumstances. She is adept at capturing the emotional spirit of her subjects. *Maya’s Mind* is the first in a series of monuments—soon to include Jane Goodall and Amelia Earhart—aimed at increasing the representation of women of all races and religions in public sculpture. The sculpture features a cast twenty-foot bust of the late Maya Angelou set on a stack of books. Adding a layer of sensory experience, the artist added an audio component that recites excerpts from Angelou’s poem, *Still I Rise*, at the push of a button.

Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson
*Ursa Major*
2016
pennies, steel, Styrofoam™, and concrete
Collection of Judy and Steven Gluckstern

Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson met on a dance floor at Burning Man in 2008 and fell in love. Though she lived in Canada and he in the U.S. and neither was a trained artist, they began a long-distance romance and artistic collaboration, inspired by the DIY, can-do attitude fundamental to Burning Man. The couple was married at Burning Man in 2011 and Lisa moved to California in 2013.
In their working relationship, Lisa, a filmmaker, develops a concept for a piece, while Robert, a welder, determines how to execute it. Their work with pennies began in 2013 as the Canadian government began phasing out the coin. The durability and metaphor of the penny appealed to Lisa, as did its metaphorical connection to her journey; so she designed *Penny the Goose*, a Canada goose made of Canadian and U.S. coins. The Fergusons, with the help of friends, went on to create the much larger, penny-covered grizzly bears *Ursa Major* (2016) and *Ursa Mater* (2017). *Ursa Major* integrates 170,000 pennies and takes its name from the constellation, inviting those standing below the sculpture to look up at the night’s sky. The tactility, whimsicality, and absurdity of these painstakingly constructed sculptures have inspired a sense of awe and delight in Burning Man attendees of all ages.

**Kate Raudenbush**  
*Future’s Past*  
2010  
laser-cut steel, light, and hourglass  
Courtesy of the artist

Kate Raudenbush is a self-taught, Burning Man–bred sculptor, known for her large-scale, geometric works. Her immersive, experiential environments are spaces for exploration, human connection, and intellectual curiosity. Informed by a range of cultures, symbols, and myths, these otherworldly—even sacred—works serve as allegories for social and environmental concerns.

Visitors to Raudenbush's *Future's Past* encounter a temple to technology, abandoned and consumed by nature. Referencing both the roots of trees and computer circuitry, this modern ruin is a meditation on technology and the environment’s vital role in our survival. The black pyramid evokes a Mayan temple, an homage to a collapsed culture and a reminder of the frailty of our own, while the tree alludes to the vegetation around Angkor temples and the sacred Bodhi, the fig tree under which Buddha found enlightenment. An hourglass inside the altar signals the urgency of our current technological evolution.

**HYBYCOZO (Yelena Filipchuk and Serge Beaulieu)**  
*Golden Spike*  
2015  
powder-coated steel, LED lighting, and wood  
Courtesy of the artists

In their work, Yelena Filipchuk and Serge Beaulieu, the artist duo behind the art and design studio HYBYCOZO, investigate the influences of geometry on human evolution. Their works explore the connections between contemporary physics and ancient patterns, often Islamic, to convey an appreciation for the relationship between math and art. Using advanced manufacturing and prototyping technology, their works promote a sense of contemplation and awe for the inherent beauty of universal forms.

In 2014, the duo brought their first collaborative installation, *Hyperspace Bypass Construction Zone (HYBYCOZO)*, to *playa*. Soon after, they took the name HYBYCOZO for their continued collaboration, focusing on installations that embrace patterns across math, science, nature, and culture. *Golden Spike*, one of HYBYCOZO’s signature polyhedral forms, draws its title from Burning Man’s ceremonial golden spike, the initial marking post driven each year, from which all other measurements are taken. The golden spike marks the center of Black Rock City.
Laura Kimpton with Jeff Schomberg

*XOXO*

2017

steel and LEDs

Courtesy of the artist

Kimpton is best known for her monumental word sculptures, which she has been bringing to Burning Man since 2009. Kimpton often covers these works with laser-cut birds, a motif she uses to represent freedom from the weight of our words and thoughts. In addition to conveying this universal message, the sculptures have an intimate dimension for Kimpton, who confronts personal issues in her work ranging from her severe dyslexia to the death of her father, the hotelier Bill Kimpton, in 2002. The artist’s works have earned her six Burning Man Honorarium Grants, solo exhibitions in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, and commissions and permanent installations in cities around the world.

Artist Laura Kimpton works primarily in painting, mixed-media installation, and sculpture. She received a B.A. in Art Education from the University of Iowa in 1986, a B.F.A. from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1989, and a M.A. in Psychology from the University of San Francisco in 1994. In her work, Kimpton draws from this multifaceted background to question traditional views on social interaction and search for revelatory forms of communication.

Intro Text (Lobby, Entrance to Gallery 102)

*Welcome Home!*

–Customary greeting to Burners as they enter Black Rock City

Each August in Nevada’s inhospitable Black Rock Desert, a thriving metropolis rises from the dust for a single week. During that time, many societal norms are put on hold as a civic structure emerges based on personal accountability, radical self-expression, collaboration, and a gift economy. Lights and music fill the empty desert. Multi-story buildings and massive, interactive art installations are erected; some are burned to the ground. Then at the end of the week, the city disappears like a mirage.

Burning Man has always been difficult to characterize. Various called an arts festival, a bacchanal, and a utopian experiment, it exists outside the boundaries of everyday life, where immediacy and serendipity reign. Its organizers describe it as “a city in the desert, a culture of possibility, a network of doers and dreamers.” Now, just over thirty years since it originated as a small bonfire on San Francisco’s Baker Beach, it draws 70,000 participants annually, rivaling the largest art fairs worldwide, and has evolved beyond its temporal limits into the largest year-round “intentional community” in the world.

Though artistic expression has always been a part of the Burning Man experience, the past decade has seen the artwork grow in scale and complexity and draw global attention for its imagination and ingenuity. More significantly, though, the work of Burning Man resembles that of past artistic movements—from dada to land art—the unique environment of this event, the ethos behind it, and its link to contemporary maker culture and industry, make it wholly unique. Today, Burning Man is a hotbed of experimentation, a creative laboratory attended by many of the world’s most innovative minds, where ideas are inspired and tested, free from the confines of the market.

For the first time in our nation’s capital, *No Spectators* presents a comprehensive display of the stunning, participatory work that has emerged from this annual gathering by many of the artists and collectives who have become synonymous with the event, celebrating its importance to the American story as one of the most influential cultural events of our time.
Utopian Dreams (Gallery 102)

_The purpose of art is washing the dust of daily life off our souls._

—Pablo Picasso

In 1986, when co-founder Larry Harvey enlisted his friend Jerry James to help build and burn an effigy of a man on San Francisco’s Baker Beach to mark the summer solstice, no one attending that first Burning Man could have predicted the journey that would follow. From the first, the act of burning the Man had a distinct anti-establishment flair, intensified by association with anarchist groups like the Cacophony Society that would eventually lure the event to the Nevada desert. Despite—or perhaps because of—these mischievous beginnings, utopian thinking has always permeated Burning Man.

Of course, counterculture tendencies seed all utopian dreams. In the nineteenth century, utopian communities sprang up as part of the Arts and Crafts Movement—a response to the mechanistic forces of the Industrial Revolution. These groups chose to focus on hand-making—asserting values predicated on humanism rather than capitalist efficiency; their ideals resonate today in Burning Man’s Ten Principles, the guiding philosophies to which Burners adhere: Radical Inclusion, Gifting, Decommodification, Radical Self-reliance, Radical Self-expression, Communal Effort, Civic Responsibility, Leaving No Trace, Participation, and Immediacy. It’s worth noting several of these are direct outgrowths from the ethos of the Cacophony Society, and also shared by the maker community, an obvious cousin to the Arts and Crafts communities of yesteryear.

In the new industrial revolution, Burning Man counteracts the anxiety caused by the fast-paced American consumer lifestyle and combats the loneliness of the digital age and passivity of “convenience culture.” When the average person is alienated from production, the simple act of making becomes a symbol of empowerment and survival, and the act of letting go expresses a defiance of materialism.

The desert underscores this proposition by confronting participants with basic survival concerns—the opposite of “first world problems”—despite the inherent incongruity that most participants spend months planning and thousands of dollars to attend. In fact, it’s the stark disparity between these worlds that gives Burning Man its transformative power. While the environment is rife with irreverence and contradiction, it radiates a heavy idealism and questioning of the status quo; it is a remedy for cynical times.

More than an escape from the “default world,” then, Burning Man offers an invaluable lens through which to view it. Through the experience, participants gain an enlightening glimpse of the imperfect system in which they play a part, recognizing that every choice is a tradeoff: that not all value is monetary, that comfort often comes at the expense of freedom, and that they play an active role in building the society they want to live in.
Playing Dress Up: The People of Black Rock City (Gallery 103)

*Burning Man is where children are treated like royalty and adults act like children.*
– Sara, age 9

*When you see someone putting on his Big Boots, you can be pretty sure that an Adventure is going to happen.*
– A. A. Milne

The people of Black Rock City are the soul of Burning Man, and although massive installation art dominates imagery of the event, equally important to the culture are the smaller individual expressions of creativity, manifest in elaborate costumes, gifts, performances, and random acts of kindness. The “No Spectators!” mantra calls for individuals to step out of their shells to become leading actors in their own lives. At Burning Man, like nowhere else, you are the entertainment.

Burners love to play dress up and the ceremonial shedding of “default world” clothing in favor of a freer attire, or none at all, is an important part of the experience. Clothing on *playa* reflects a break from the cultural limitations of the outside world, and especially for men from many Western cultures, a place to safely experiment with fashion---often for the first time. Fashion choices must be functional as well as ornamental to meet the challenges of the environment: the intense sun in the desert can raise temperatures over 110 degrees, while nights may see dips below freezing. Lighting is a safety essential after dusk and survival equipment such as utility belts, back packs, goggles, and dust masks are standard uniform.

In a city of more than 70,000, not everyone makes their own costumes; store-bought “festival” wear such as light-up vests and bright faux-fur jackets proliferate to the point of becoming cliché. Still, many participants take their costumes as a point of pride, working year-round to create one-of-a-kind ensembles. Many a Burner has learned to sew for that sole purpose. Inspiration for Burning Man fashion comes from varied sources, including burlesque, Carnival, Day of the Dead, steampunk, and rave culture. Early theme camps also had a strong influence on the Burning Man aesthetic, from the theatrical costumes of El Circo’s Tiffa Novoa, which featured exaggerated headdresses and a lush, layered aesthetic, to the darker vision of Death Guild, which parodied the early Mad Max films, using black leather to promote a hard-edged post-apocalyptic vision.

As worldwide awareness of Burning Man has risen, its influence can also be seen on runways in the work of designers like Manish Arora, a regular Burning Man attendee, who has created clothing lines inspired by the event.

Gifting (Gallery 103 – case label)

*Burning Man has managed to construct a rather oddly enthusiastic culture of giving. The city functions on a gift economy, where both money and bartering are fiercely discouraged. Instead, everyone is expected to take joy by gifting something for free: art, food, or an experience.*
– Gregory Ferenstein, Forbes Magazine

Black Rock City operates on one simple, revolutionary idea: nothing is for sale.* While Burners interpret gifting broadly based on what they have to offer and what is needed, this system has given rise to a whole subculture of Burning Man jewelry and gifts created solely for the event and freely given.

Anything that could become MOOP, or “Matter Out of Place,” is heavily discouraged, so popular gifts are consumable (wood-fired pizza, grilled cheese sandwiches, shots of whiskey), small and portable (jewelry, patches), or intangible (a smile or hug, an offer of help, a meaningful interaction, a performance). Sometimes what you really need is a warm blanket on a cold night and on the *playa*, you’re bound to find it.
Many participants of all skill levels make pendants to hand out during the week, often customized to refer to Burning Man’s art theme for the year; some memorialize a particular art piece or impart a personal message. Burners collect *playa* jewelry and gifts as symbols of one-on-one social interactions and badges of volunteerism, reminders of the experiences and encounters of the week.

*Strictly speaking, this isn’t true. Ice and coffee can be purchased on *playa*, one of Burning Man’s many exceptions that seem to bring the rule into sharper focus. Nothing is as simple as it seems.*

**The Desert (Gallery 104)**

*The visionary starts with a clean sheet of paper, and re-imagines the world.*

--Malcolm Gladwell

In 1990, as Burning Man first arrived in the Black Rock Desert during the Cacophony Society’s infamous Zone Trip #4, in a mythic moment, co-founder Michael Mikel drew a line in the sand and announced, “On the other side of this line, everything will be different.” He was right.

The alien landscape of the Black Rock Desert has come to define Burning Man; the gathering’s distinctive culture can be attributed to this place. The ancient lake bed, nestled between distant mountains, is so flat it is rumored you can see the curvature of the earth as you look out across it. Nothing grows here. Its surface, dubbed, “the *playa,*” is covered with fine alkaline dust that clings to the skin and seeps into every crevice. The area is prone to high winds, white-out dust storms, and punishing temperatures. For the many city-dwellers who flock to the festival, the brutal environment seems designed to give pause, assuring only the serious make the trek. This is part of the essential character of Burning Man every participant must grapple with. No one wants to live in Black Rock City forever. It’s *hard.*

Yet co-founder Larry Harvey has also called the environment a *tabula rasa,* a blank slate where all things are possible. From the first step over the line, the frontier of the desert symbolized literal and figurative freedom. The early rules focused primarily on survival, and the emptiness invited the imagination to fill it. Here, where the featureless plain stretches out for miles in every direction, one can easily become disoriented and lose all sense of scale. Every element of the oasis that suddenly springs forth is manmade and must be carted in, erected, carted out---the result of necessity, passion, and ingenuity. This return to subsistence living, and absence of luxuries like cell phone connectivity and regular showers, defines the experience. The bond participants feel derives largely from overcoming the desert’s hardships together.

Finally, when the event concludes and participants disperse, the community is responsible to leave no trace, returning the desert to its pristine state until the next year.

**Mutant Vehicles (Gallery 104)**

The desert environment shapes the art made for Burning Man. Works must be portable enough to make the journey, rugged enough to withstand harsh conditions and audience interaction, stimulating in daylight and darkness, engaging without interpretation, and largely ephemeral, since they will either be consumed by flame or covered in dust. These limitations lend these works their unique beauty. In the vast, open *playa* where most work is sited, encounters with both monumental and intimate works feel dreamlike. Each artwork invites an investment of time, as participants stumble upon it or seek it out, following a dot on the horizon that grows gradually larger. As a result of this extended interaction, many artworks become meeting places, shelters, and landmarks throughout the week. Structures provide welcome relief from dust storms and midday sun, and fire effects help take the chill off the evening.
The surrealism of this environment extends especially to transportation, necessary to traverse the more than seven-square-mile area of Black Rock City. While daylight hours on playa are dominated by bicycle and foot traffic, the city comes alive at night with swarms of “mutant vehicles,” from the ominous to the absurd, an over-the-top extension of Southwestern art car culture. Early in the week, they must line up for a safety and creativity inspection from the DMV (Department of Mutant Vehicles); then they are free to roam. A Spanish galleon sails into the sunset across sandy seas, perhaps playfully chasing a white whale; a giant mechanized octopus belches flame in warm, popping bursts as it scuttles along; an armored rhinoceros, a disco-fish, or a PAC-MAN ghost made of pixelated light glides among a maze of bicycles. From the magnificent Mayan Warrior to the tiny Dung Bug, mobile parties zigzag from artwork to artwork, acting as a kind of random public transportation system, all the while pulsing with music, light, and flame effects that dissipate in the darkness.

**Spirituality & Ritual (2nd Floor Stair Hall)**

“Why do you burn the Man?”
“So we can build him again.”

--response from Burning Man co-founder Crimson Rose

Towering forty feet high, the mischievous effigy at the heart of the event, the Man, stands like a beacon at the center of Black Rock City. Further out in open playa behind him is the Temple, a sacred companion to the secular. In the media, Burning Man has earned a reputation for its excesses—extravagant parties, celebrity sightings, thumping rave music, nudity—but for many who attend, the pilgrimage to the desert is also an intensely spiritual experience, and the Temple best embodies this quest for meaning.

David Best and his crew built the first Temple, the Temple of the Mind, in 2000, from lacy wood remnants reclaimed from a toy dinosaur factory. When a member of the crew died in a tragic accident shortly before the event, the team dedicated it to his memory and invited the community to leave messages of mourning at the site. In recognition of the need for a space of reflection and healing, a Temple has been built each year since. Over the course of the week it disappears under a thick blanket of profound, personal messages in an emotional outpouring that can make the most stoic break down. The structure is then offered to the fire in a cathartic ritual on the event’s final night.

Even beyond the Temple, however, there is something inherently awe-inspiring and quasi-religious about this place. As one Burner put it, “If people can make this out of nothing, how can anything be impossible?” Days hum with the bustle of the city as strangers wipe away the cynicism of everyday life and engage each other, offering warm hugs, absurd performances, and showers of gifts. At night, the surreal landscape vibrates with lights, sounds, and unfettered human creativity, spreading as far as the eye can see. Wondrous, participatory art made for the sheer pleasure of others dots the open playa, rewarding those curious enough to walk or ride to it. Weddings occur several times a day.

Capping the week, the Man burns on Saturday in a huge, primal display, followed by the Temple on Sunday. These acts serve not only to mark the end of the event, but emphasize the importance of letting go, to recommit and renew the following year.
Maker Culture (Gallery 202)

*Burners devote themselves to the gloriously useless. Not unlike makers, they like to play and tinker for the sheer pleasure of seeing what will happen.*

–Richard Polt

One of the most overlooked questions about Burning Man art is, why do people make it? Regardless the size of project—whether a massive installation or a cache of pendants—certainly, there is no money in it. Most artists put in long hours year-round preparing for the event, yet of the hundreds of artworks placed each year, only a portion receive funding from the Burning Man Project and grants, while generous in resources, rarely cover the full cost of production. To supplement the assistance they receive, artists run crowdsourcing campaigns to help realize their projects. And at the end of the event, many artworks are destroyed, given away, or mined for parts to begin the next installation. So what is the motivation?

Simply put, Burning Man art may be the ultimate expression of the maker movement made by a network of enthusiasts that has risen in response to digital culture, who share passion for making and a custom of enthusiastic knowledge and resource-sharing. Digital tools and easy online communication have helped maker culture spread quickly, promoting a blend of handcraft and cutting-edge technology in an atmosphere that fosters ingenuity and learning by doing, and values every individual’s unique contribution. One of the beauties of Burning Man art is that so much of it is created by people who don’t identify as “artists” at all, but as engineers, programmers, architects, or inspired novices. These permeable boundaries give the work its engaging, populist character; it often lands somewhere between art and other realms.

Though most art for Burning Man is made in advance, the weeks leading up to the event provide a space for experimentation amid a supportive, talented community and under extreme test conditions. Many projects still fail, but the challenge is the pursuit. A cheerful slogan, “the *playa* provides,” reminds Burners that things have a way of working out through the kindness of strangers. Interestingly, some perennial artists admit they could forgo the actual weeklong gathering, but thrive on the preparation phase and the community built through it, with all its infectious energy. They enjoy sharing their skills, tinkering for the thrill of new discoveries, and creating for the pure joy of contributing to something larger than themselves as they entertain and inspire their fellow attendees.

The Tech Connection (Gallery 206)

The spirit of maker culture is very much alive in Silicon Valley and elsewhere at companies that have identified the link between play and innovation. Burning Man offers remarkably fertile ground for this kind of creative thinking. Moreover, the “Wild West” mentality inspired by this expanse of lawless desert parallels the thinking often found at internet startups. Burners, like tech entrepreneurs, are skeptical of the status quo: just because something has been done in a certain way doesn’t mean that’s how it should be done. An overwhelming sense of freedom pervades both environments.

In a now-famous interview from 2014, Tesla and Space-X founder Elon Musk equated Burning Man to Silicon Valley, adding, “If you haven’t been, you just don’t get it...” With Burning Man’s Bay Area roots, there has always been a strong connection to and overlap with the tech community. The first Google doodle, appearing in 1998, starred the Man as a “comical message” to Google users that its founders were “out of office” for the week; Musk brought an early version of a Tesla to the *playa* in 2007 in honor of Burning Man’s “Green Man” art theme that year; and many celebrities and titans of American business and industry from Silicon Valley and beyond have attended regularly for well over a decade. Burning Man is where many go to recharge.
Given this longstanding relationship, it’s not surprising that Burning Man has always embraced technology. But while LEDs have largely replaced fire on playa and outside entities occasionally attempt to put up cell-phone towers to service the city, attendees are still strongly encouraged to cast off the technological leashes that connect them to the outside world and immerse themselves in firsthand face-to-face connection during the event.

Indeed, much has changed since Burning Man’s founding in response to the growing pains of a city increasingly in the public eye and in need of civic order. The pursuit of danger has been toned down in favor of a kinder, gentler culture and, while the community still extolls the virtues of self-reliance, some participants opt for caravans of luxury RVs that pack in creature comforts from generators to cooking staff, making the event not quite the survival experience it once was. In classic Burning Man style, a constant tongue-in-cheek refrain of “Burning Man was better last year” finally even stimulated a “Museum of It Was Better Last Year” installation on playa. But for the many who venture to the desert annually, and maybe especially those who surround themselves with ones and zeros in their daily lives, unplugging to seek authentic experience can be an awakening, the ideal foil to an increasingly digital world.

The Ten Principles of Burning Man
In 2004, Burning Man co-founder Larry Harvey wrote the Ten Principles as guidelines for the organization’s newly-formed Regional Network. They were crafted not so much as a directive, but as a reflection of the community’s shared values and culture, which had organically developed since the event’s inception.

Radical Inclusion
Anyone may be a part of Burning Man. We welcome and respect the stranger. No prerequisites exist for participation in our community.

Gifting
Burning Man is devoted to acts of gift giving. The value of a gift is unconditional. Gifting does not contemplate a return or an exchange for something of equal value.

Decommodification
In order to preserve the spirit of gifting, our community seeks to create social environments that are unmediated by commercial sponsorships, transactions, or advertising. We stand ready to protect our culture from such exploitation. We resist the substitution of consumption for participatory experience.

Radical Self-reliance
Burning Man encourages the individual to discover, exercise and rely on his or her inner resources.

Radical Self-expression
Radical self-expression arises from the unique gifts of the individual. No one other than the individual or a collaborating group can determine its content. It is offered as a gift to others. In this spirit, the giver should respect the rights and liberties of the recipient.
Communal Effort
Our community values creative cooperation and collaboration. We strive to produce, promote and protect social networks, public spaces, works of art, and methods of communication that support such interaction.

Civic Responsibility
We value civil society. Community members who organize events should assume responsibility for public welfare and endeavor to communicate civic responsibilities to participants. They must also assume responsibility for conducting events in accordance with local, state and federal laws.

Leaving No Trace
Our community respects the environment. We are committed to leaving no physical trace of our activities wherever we gather. We clean up after ourselves and endeavor, whenever possible, to leave such places in a better state than when we found them.

Participation
Our community is committed to a radically participatory ethic. We believe that transformative change, whether in the individual or in society, can occur only through the medium of deeply personal participation. We achieve being through doing. Everyone is invited to work. Everyone is invited to play. We make the world real through actions that open the heart.

Immediacy
Immediate experience is, in many ways, the most important touchstone of value in our culture. We seek to overcome barriers that stand between us and a recognition of our inner selves, the reality of those around us, participation in society, and contact with a natural world exceeding human powers. No idea can substitute for this experience.

A Selected Burning Man Primer
The Burning Man community has developed its own peculiar lexicon over the years, a natural outgrowth of the event, the culture, and the landscape of Black Rock Desert where the event takes place. Below is a glossary of a few useful, irreverent, and colorful terms.

Black Rock City (BRC)
The annual, temporary metropolis that is home to the Burning Man event.

Burner
One who pursues a way of life based on the values reflected in the Ten Principles of Burning Man.

Cacophony Society
An influential source of many of the concepts and principles of Burning Man, the Cacophony Society was “a randomly gathered network of individuals united in the pursuit of experiences beyond the mainstream.” Many of Burning Man’s founders were members of the San Francisco group.

Darkwad
Anyone who walks or rides on the playa at night without adequate lighting on the front and back of his/her person or vehicle. See also: “Survival-challenged.”
DBS
Decorative Bullsh*t. A term coined by artist David Best to describe the layers of unorthodox ornamentation he and his crew apply to the temple.

Decommodification
One of the Ten Principles of Burning Man. “In order to preserve the spirit of gifting, our community seeks to create social environments that are unmediated by commercial sponsorships, transactions, or advertising. We stand ready to protect our culture from such exploitation. We resist the substitution of consumption for participatory experience.”

Deep Playa
In Black Rock City, the area of open playa beyond the Man and past the Temple in all directions, particularly the outer realms near the perimeter fence.

Default World
The rest of the world that is not Black Rock City during the Burning Man event.

FOMO
Fear of Missing Out, a harmless mental disorder caused by the overwhelming scope of things to do and see in Black Rock City. May lead to sleep deprivation.

Java Cow
Community legend of a man-cow who appeared with hot coffee at sunrise on the morning of the Burn, asking the question: “Do you want cream or sugar?”

MOOP
Matter Out of Place. Litter, debris, rubbish.

Mutant Vehicle
A motorized conveyance that is radically, stunningly, (usually) permanently, and safely modified. Larry Harvey likens Mutant Vehicles to “sublimely beautiful works of art floating across the playa like a Miro painting.”

No Spectators
A central tenet of the Burning Man philosophy. By blurring the line between audience and performer, everybody is a superstar at Burning Man.

Open Playa
The portion of the playa that is within the pentagonal event space, but is used for art installations and Mutant Vehicle cruising rather than camping space.

Playa
The Spanish word for beach, also used to describe dry lake beds in the American West such as the Black Rock Desert.
Playa Chicken
Community legend concerning a rare species of vicious, carnivorous poultry reputed to live in the Black Rock Desert. Any strange phenomenon that is not readily attributable to a known cause may be blamed on *Playa Chickens*.

Playa Dust
The dried silt of Lake Lahontan, the prehistoric lakebed that is now the Black Rock Desert. Its alkaline pH makes it corrosive and its extremely fine particles get into just about everything.

Playa Name
Originally spawned by the need for unique names on the staff’s two-way radios, *playa names* have become almost ubiquitous and are sometimes used to provide an individual with an “alternate” personality or persona. *Playa names* are traditionally given to a person, rather than taken on.

Sparkle Pony
Derogatory term for a participant who fails to embrace the principle of radical self-reliance, and is overly reliant on the resources of friends, campmates, and the community at large to enable their Burning Man experience. Often fashionably attired, since they packed nothing but costumes.

TAZ
Temporary Autonomous Zone, a term coined by writer Hakim Bey. Burning Man isn’t one.

Ten Principles
The ten core guiding concepts of the Burning Man project. These include: Radical Inclusion, Gifting, Decommodification, Radical Self-reliance, Radical Self-expression, Communal Effort, Civic Responsibility, Leaving No Trace, Participation, and Immediacy.

Theme Camp
A group camp designed to create an interactive experience for participants through art, architecture, and/or performance.

White-out
A violent dust storm producing near-zero visibility.