

MAPS Celebrates

“The Future: Hope and Fear” Burning Man 2006

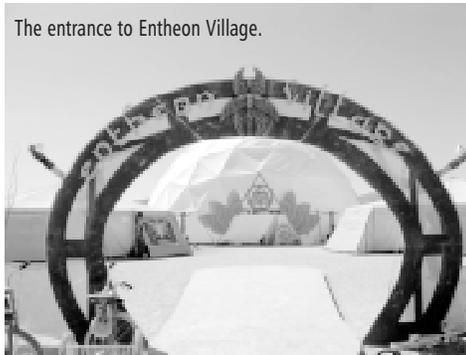


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As MAPS’ 20th anniversary approached, we thought about renting out a hotel conference hall to throw an event, and even looked at a few places on the beach in Sarasota, Florida. But, after our inspiring growth at Burning Man in 2005, we decided instead to celebrate at a place where many of our members already converge, and where many more would like to—had they the chance. This year, we expanded our multi-faceted Burning Man project to include a theme camp with 400 people, a new and improved volunteer psychedelic emergency service team, a more comprehensive lecture series, and breathtaking visionary art—all in the middle of the desert. Moreover, it was a place for pro-active community-building and networking for MAPS members, friends, and allies. Appropriately enough, the theme for this year’s Burning Man was “The Future: Hope and Fear,” as this year also marked the 20th anniversary of the Burning Man festival itself.

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The entrance to Entheon Village.



ENTHEON VILLAGE

Entheon Village was one of the largest theme camps at Black Rock City this year, five times more populous than last year’s camp. Campers at Entheon Village each paid a registration fee that covered the camp’s costs. The same group of Chicago Burners led by drug policy reformer Matt Atwood who hosted us last year organized, built, and coordinated the infrastructure for this colossal undertaking.

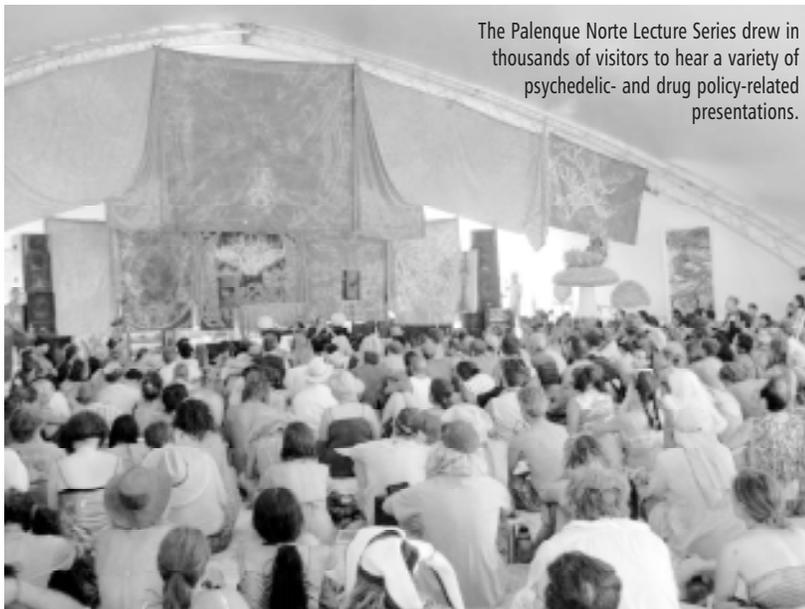
This year, in addition to hosting hundreds of MAPS members, Entheon hosted Alex and Allyson Grey’s Chapel of Sacred Mirrors (COSM) and many leading visionary and psychedelic artists. Looking

across the Esplanade, Black Rock City’s main boulevard, Entheon Village featured some of the largest and most distinct structures. Entheon’s esteem and popularity was attested by the steady throngs of visitors who came to gaze at paintings in the three large art galleries, listen to psychedelic- and drug policy-related lectures, and meditate in the cardboard zendo built by a group of Swiss Zen Buddhist monks including MAPS Patron Member Vanja Palmers. After the lecture series finished each day, the tent transformed and crowds danced to hip-hop, IDM, and breaks into the early hours of the morning.

Many people at Entheon had not experienced Burning Man before, including psychedelic elders Ann and Sasha Shulgin (authors of *PIHKAL* and *TIHKAL*) and drug policy reform leaders such as Marijuana Policy Project (MPP) Executive Director Rob Kampia, Drug Policy Alliance (DPA) Executive Director Ethan Nadelmann, and Marsha Rosenbaum, Director of DPA’s San Francisco office and Safety First. Each gave presentations and fielded questions to hundreds of visitors at the lecture series. The presence of so many

Burning Man virgins created an air of excitement, to say the least.

Of course, in arranging a project of this size, there were some logistical nightmares: registration was complicated, the showers weren't built until mid-week, several of the RV's ran out of water, and bikes went missing. These challenges allowed us an opportunity to work together as a community on survival issues, as practice for working together on



The Palenque Norte Lecture Series drew in thousands of visitors to hear a variety of psychedelic- and drug policy-related presentations.

Event Photos: Lorenzo Hagerty

issues of social justice back in the default world. MAPS would like to acknowledge that the volunteer work of the core group of Chicago Burners to build a theme camp of this magnitude was greatly appreciated and went above and beyond our expectations in creating a comfortable home for our community and a celebration of MAPS' 20th anniversary in the most adverse of circumstances. MAPS would also like to thank the people who donated resources to Entheon Village, making it possible for our staff to have such a comfortable and exciting home on the playa.

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SANCTUARY

Sanctuary is a safe space created by the Black Rock City Rangers, Burning Man's girl/boy-scout-like non-confrontational mediators, to temporarily shelter people who are having a tough time at the event, including many having challenging or difficult psychedelic experiences. This was MAPS' fourth year facilitating Sanctuary by bringing together psychiatrists, therapists, experienced peers, and researchers who work on government-approved clinical studies with psychedelics, to assist the Rangers in assisting Sanctuary visitors. Sanctuary operates 24 hours a day for six and a half days.

On Monday I facilitated a training program for a pre-screened group of 60 Sanctuary volunteers, where we learned therapeutic techniques, shared experiences, and became acquainted with one another. In addition to this more-structured training program, other improvements this year included the creation of a standardized procedural manual for volunteers working in Sanctuary, log-books for collecting information about the types of visits that occur in Sanctuary to help us prepare better for next year, and a clear definition of volunteers' roles that allowed for new volunteers to apprentice by sitting in the space and recording each visitor's information in the log book.

One of the primary purposes for bringing MAPS-sponsored researchers together at Burning Man is for them to have a chance to work alongside each other and share techniques. First and foremost, though, we are providing a valuable and much-needed service to the community by bringing some of the most qualified people in the field to provide help for those in need, and teaching this information to those who are interested. The working environment in Sanctuary is more analogous to a teaching hospital than to a research facility. Therapists trained in psychedelic-assisted therapy share their techniques with other therapists, doctors, and psychedelic-using peers who may know the theory, but have less real-life experience with this particular type of work. Of course, because this is such a small field and so much of the knowledge exists underground, we often

find that everyone plays the role of both teacher and student during their time in Sanctuary. So far we have only had extremely positive feedback from Sanctuary visitors on the quality of our services. MAPS would like to thank the many people who volunteered their time to work in Sanctuary, as well as those who donated money and resources to enable the MAPS staff to organize this project.

CONCLUSION

We chose Burning Man as the site of our 20th Anniversary gathering since it was a comprehensive example of MAPS in action, with lectures about our scientific research, a demonstration of our psychedelic harm reduction model at Sanctuary, the honoring of our psychedelic elders, and a community-building gathering. We're deeply grateful to everyone at Entheon Village who donated their time, resources, and sweat to bring this magnificent celebration to fruition.

Although it may seem like going to a festival in the middle of the desert with all kinds of crazy art, music, and entertainment would be like a vacation or at least a departure from our work lives, for the MAPS staff, Burning Man is one of our busiest, most productive, and exhausting work weeks of the whole year. Our schedules are full of important meetings, long shifts in Sanctuary, lectures and workshops. It's a great time to network with colleagues and people doing affiliated work, and we even used it as an opportunity to scope out potential staff members. In the midst of all the hard work, we were also able to accomplish this year's unique mission, celebrating 20 years of MAPS' existence, and bringing many of the people together who have helped to make each year even better and more productive than the last. In doing so we shared the vision, hopes and fears of a possible future where the psychedelic experience is not just legally accessible, but also re-integrated into the fabric of our local and global communities. •

Letters to MAPS

I worked as a Sanctuary volunteer this year, and offering a safe haven from the chaos abound was obscenely satisfying. Regarding said chaos, while I do enjoy having it wash over me (the frenzied intensity of it all can be quite yummy), it's hard not to succumb to over-stimulation. When substances are added to the mix, even experienced users may feel the sensory onslaught drown out notions of set and setting. There is a clear need for what Sanctuary offers; a space to integrate and transform difficult experiences into positive ones. It was at times discouraging to witness drug use reflecting the larger societal association of self-destruction, rather than self-awareness and personal growth. As the distinction there can be hazy and rather subjective, we need to acknowledge the whole spectrum of experiences and intentions that folks have.

– Ahsan
Portland, Oregon

Although I could go into great detail about all the wonderful facets of Entheon Village (such as beautiful, fresh salads every day - wow!), I believe the most important aspect was that we all came together and the experience was influential to ourselves and others on a life-changing level. My life was changed from the first moment I set foot in Black Rock seven years ago. The evolution I have seen take place and the evolution of my own personal journeying as I intersect with the pathways of others all seems to now be tangibly fitting into place like puzzle pieces. Entheon Village is a big piece of that puzzle for me. I thank everyone who was involved and hope they all know how special they are.

– Claire Lipton
Palm Desert, California

As I expected, Entheon Village felt very much like home. I commend you for all the work that obviously went into it. I'm certain that it took much more effort than even what was obvious. I so much enjoyed Rick's opening keynote which centered on the Entheon vision and the John Halpern issue. Several times during the talk and later, I was struck by the thought that indeed "this" is why I have so much respect for the MAPS organization. The integrity, the open-mindedness and honesty that you bring to face issues of this kind is inspiring and I want you to know that. I *love* the way that MAPS has directed itself to embrace the celebratory, artistic and spiritual aspects of our evolving culture when it would feel so much safer to embrace only the scientific.

Warm Regards,
Jeff Mease
CEO, One World Enterprises
Bloomington, Indiana