

CHICAGO DECOMPRESSION 2010 AFTERBURN REPORT

Chicago's Decompression 2010: "Little Playa on the Prairie" was held on November 6 and produced by Bold Urban Renaissance Network, NFP (B.U.R.N.) in association with the Chicago Regional Contacts. We are grateful to all those who volunteered over a thousand hours of their time to making this showcase of artistic creations in many media a great success and welcome the approximately 750 adults and 20 children who joined the festivities for some portion of the day.

*If enough people think of a thing and work hard enough at it, I
guess it's pretty nearly bound to happen, wind and weather
permitting.*

– Laura Ingalls Wilder

PLANNING

The event's success was all the more notable due to the fact that the initially selected site became unavailable before a contract could be completed. The dedicated dozen or so Events Committee quickly found alternate locations, and a new site was selected, but the lease was unable to be finalized until after Burning Man.

While the original September 26 date became infeasible, the Event Committee members held trust that the community would support a delayed event on November 6 and believed that holding the event was a promise to the community that must be fulfilled.

A new date of November 6 was selected to minimize conflicts with other events and a site inspection inspired the committee and energized them to meet the new schedule. The community responded by meeting calls for volunteers, deejays, performers and art installations. Around 125 people gave their time and talents in one or more of these ways.

Members of the Event Committee included: Downtown Dave and Krueger (co-event leads), Breedlove, Crisco (Setup Lead), Devin (Fire Lead), Elysia (Art/Placement Lead), Flipit (Gate Lead), Foxy, Glenn, Mars (Kidsville Lead), Ms. K, Natty Pants, Poochie (Tech Lead), Richard, Steve the Ghost (Ranger Lead), and Tovia (Greeter Lead). The logo was designed by Brendan Luchik. Several B.U.R.N. Steering Committee Members also monitored the committee's e-mail list and offered advice.

FINANCES

The full final financial report for the event is available at <http://boldurban.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Chicago-Decompression-2010-Financial-Report.pdf>. Expenses totaled \$5369.33. Donations both online and cash netted \$12,686.04 (far exceeding the expectations of many – but not all committee members). This leaves net revenue of \$7316.71.

These funds go to Bold Urban Renaissance Network for its ongoing operations as a not-for-profit multimedia arts organization, including the B.U.R.N. 2011 Art Grants program and production of Decompression 2011. No individual was paid for anything other than reimbursement of expenses incurred; committee members donated same as all other participants.

I was born on the prairies where the wind blew free and there was nothing to break the light of the sun. I was born where there were no enclosures.

- Geronimo

EXPENDITURES

The majority of the expense was the venue itself, a 15,000 sq. ft floor in a former catalog warehouse building, (other floors are used for artist studios and self storage. Negotiations with management yielded permissions to allow gifted food and beverage instead of catering and use of the building's loading dock after 6pm as a venue for art and performances that had to be outdoors. (The stage was scheduled to close at midnight to avoid disturbing neighbors.)

The venue had hosted fundraising events for other not-for-profit organizations with on-site entertainment, assuring the Event and Steering Committees that the venue was aligned with the BURN and Burning Man principles of Civic Responsibility. (Fortunately, in Chicago, not-for-profit events have somewhat greater latitude in event planning than for-profit ventures).

Insurance, Porta-johns, and stage and lighting rentals were the only remaining regular expenses. Otherwise, Event Committee members bore some expenses only expecting reimbursement if the revenues were sufficient. They were. Much of the equipment was on loan from community members, including Poochie, Damien, and the members of Transmoeba and Catalyst Studios, and many others, all of whom we thank for their generosity.

One piece of loaned equipment was damaged and materials in an art studio below were damaged due to a leak through the floorboards. BURN is working with both owners to cover documented expenses. An allowance has been made for both. Were it not for these allowances, the event would have been less than 5% over the bare bones budget. (Lessons learned from the 2010 event will probably lead to greater budgeted expenses in 2011.)

After a slow start, pre-sale ticket donations surged the week before the event and made the event "in the black" 48 hours before the event started. Cash donations also exceeded expectations. In all 750 adults and 20 children (under age 13) were counted during the 14 hours of the event.

INCIDENT HANDLING

No medical issues were reported.

In the loading dock area, Chicago Police checked in as part of regular patrols, and the Fire Department visited briefly when a neighbor mistook fire art for a dumpster fire. Neither found any problems with what they saw and both left without incident after briefly enjoying the spectacle.

The only significant incident was failure of the elevator up to the main event space for approximately 20-30 minutes during peak attendance. Greeters and Rangers were able to eventually direct participants to an alternate route until building staff were able to restore service. Other minor operational issues, especially in managing re-entry and arrivals at gate, were recorded for improvement in future events.

*There's a place on the prairie where evil and goodness play
Daddy told me all about it but I don't remember what he said
Neil Young*

HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 20 art or theme camp-style installations were present. Three art works had been to Burning Man in 2010 including “*Sounds from the Urban Innerground*,” the soundscape by Search11te that played at the base of the Man itself and was replicated in the Decompression lobby in front of the elevator. At least one presenting artist was inspired by his first visit to Burning Man in 2010, while another presented two works in her first showing at a Chicago event.
- The mainstage featured 18 DJs (in 15-45 minute shifts) and two live acts at key times and The Firewater Lounge - a Lakes of Fire theme camp - hosted a second stage, which mixed seven burlesque, belly dance, and variety acts with two live bands and seven more DJs that played Country, Rock and 90s electronica. (They also fed the Saturday morning set up crew). The Pynecone-designed playbill is available at <http://boldurban.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Decomp2010-playbill.jpg>
- From 2-8pm, Kidsville occupied the main dome with a variety of activities. Around 8pm, Environmental Encroachment marching band (which has played in the Billion Bunny March at Burning Man) took the stage and led families and many other participants downstairs to the official opening of the Loading Dock fire stage. The dome was then converted to the main chill space for the remaining 18+ only hours of the event.
- Decomp was blessed with guests from out of the region. Black Rock Rangers came from Denver, Kansas City and Bloomington IL to assist local rangers. Feed

the Artists (from W. Va) was a late addition, bringing curry rice and fruit juice for all attendees. Our neighbors in Detroit was represented by Regional Contact Doxie, Brick's "El Diablo Zen Garden" fire art, and front stage closing act Dixon's Violin. Also, one major "Lost and Found" item had to be returned to a visitor from California.

- The event ended with live performances on both stages: Dixon's Violin on one and the trio Good Evening on the other.
- Cleanup began immediately after the performances and was completed by a dedicated crew on Monday. It was to the satisfaction of the venue manager, fulfilling our Leave No Trace objectives and leaving open the opportunity to return in 2011.

*Home is the nicest word there is.
- Laura Ingalls Wilder*

SUMMARY

Chicago Decompression was an overall success by many measures: attendance, opportunities for artists, volunteer participation, social alchemy, leave no trace, and yes, even financial. Members of the Event and Steering Committees look forward to building on this success with Decompression and other 2011 events and welcome more community members to participate in their creation.

Prepared by Flipit, on behalf of:

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Chicago's Burning Man Regional Contacts

and Devin, Krueger and Flipit
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