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Treasurer's Report

Bruce MacDermott

As of September 24, the SiW has 43 members. Locations break down as follows:

- Japan - 1
- CA - 20
- AZ - 3
- FL - 1
- IL - 1
- KS - 1
- MA - 2
- MD - 2
- MN - 1
- NJ - 3
- NY - 1
- OH - 1
- OK - 1
- PA - 3
- TX - 1
- WA - 1

We currently have \$1497.76 in the bank, with \$ 495.13 in Checking and the rest in Savings. Year to date surplus income has been \$191.47.

Kostume Kult

Dana MacDermott

In mid July, during the lead up to Burning Man this year, a notice appeared in Burning Man's on-line Newsletter, *The Jack Rabbit Speaks*. It was titled: KOSTUME KULT NEEDS DONATIONS FOR COSTUME GIVEAWAY.

Along with the general information about how and where to contribute was this interesting tidbit:

As many of you know, Kostume Kult freely gives hundreds of pounds of donated costumes and colorful fashion items to all comers, every day from our esplanade Kostume Dome. No returns necessary, no barter, no favors requested--- just gifting... Based in NYC, we throw numerous fundraisers and collect stuff all year in pursuit of this mission and would dearly appreciate your help.

I decided to follow up on this, and after bringing three large boxes of costumes to the group's site on the Esplanade (the major "street" of Black Rock City), I sat down briefly with the founder and central personality of the organization, Jim Glaser, aka Costume Jim.

What I discovered was not just a Playa theme camp with an interesting core figure, but a thriving costume oriented cluster of organizations with a unifying social philosophy. The organizations include The Kostume Kult, the Costume Network Community Arts Project, and the Action Arts League, a 501 (c) (3) organization.

Jim is the son of a Sociologist and an Art Conservationist, and he has clearly developed his world view influenced by this fertile cross pollination. Professionally, Jim was at one time a CEO level head hunter, and he feels he has taken the skills he had in that career in an entirely different direction.



Costume Jim, and the organizations he is a part of are deeply focused on *participatory culture*. Wikipedia: "*Participatory culture* is a [neologism](#) (*new but commonly accepted term...ed.*) in reference of, but opposite to a [Consumer culture](#) — in other words a culture in which private persons (the public) do not act as consumers only, but also as contributors or producers." Wikipedia ties this concept to media and publications on the web, but in the organizations we are discussing and in the Burning Man event and community, *participatory culture* has become inextricably involved with Art.

The concept that we are all involved in the creation of art, and that furthermore we are all/each an active part of building/remodeling our culture and society to our liking is an essential element of participatory culture. This explains in part why Jim chooses to state that his groups intend to "Change

the World through Costumes". He and his organizations are teaching participatory culture using the costuming art form.

Kostume Kult's web site asks three questions:

- Do you enjoy creativity and absurdity?
- Is Halloween your favorite holiday?
- Are you bored with normalcy?

Kostume Kult's presence at Burning Man is some 80 persons strong. The center of the camp is a tented dome where the large stash of costumes is gradually unloaded from the Kult's truck and given away. The costumes themselves are of all types, from full and elaborate one-of-a-kind, to commercial outfits, to intriguing bits and pieces from which to put together an ensemble. This year, they added an outdoor runway to show off the results.



Burning Man is only one of Costume Kult's projects. Among the Kult's other activities are Masquerade Balls, art fair participation and an annual involvement around the NYC Saint Patrick's Day parade. The Saint Patrick's Day event takes the form of a satiric protest against the "boring" no costume rule the official parade maintains. There are also a series of other cultural happenings of various degrees of outrageousness (Leprecon, Zombiecon, the Horned Ball, etc). Costume Kult has recently received its own non-profit status, and has grand plans for the future. For more details and pictures, see: <http://www.kostumekult.com>

In 1987, Jim discovered the New York City Halloween Parade. This major Halloween event in Greenwich Village now attracts approximately 50,000 costumed participants and the spectators are estimated at 2,000,000. (*I had no idea...ed*) Costume Kult has the largest (possibly the only) krewe for the Halloween Parade. The following pictures of the 2007 parade float were taken from the Costume Network web site. <http://www.costumenetwork.com/>



The Action Arts League is the more serious arm of the affiliated organizations. With an impressive Board of Directors from high tech, arts, finance, and costuming, the group's mission includes Art's advocacy, community outreach (bringing Artist's into the communities for creative events) and health related issues. The Action Arts League is producer of Figment, a large and still growing participatory Arts festival located on Governor's Island in New York Harbor. <http://figmentnyc.org/2008/about.html> The organization is also part of the Healthy Halloween project, which seeks art related activities and healthy alternatives to the high sugar focus that Halloween has become. For more information on the Action Arts League and its events and projects, see <http://www.actionartsleague.org/>

At the moment, from what I understand the cluster of Costume related organizations is active solely in New York City with their additional presence at Black Rock City (Burning Man). The various web sites hint at extending beyond these locales into the rest of the country. I will be waiting.

Basic Cabaret Bra and Belt Construction

Gail Wolfenden-Steib aka Rukshana

(Second part of a series)

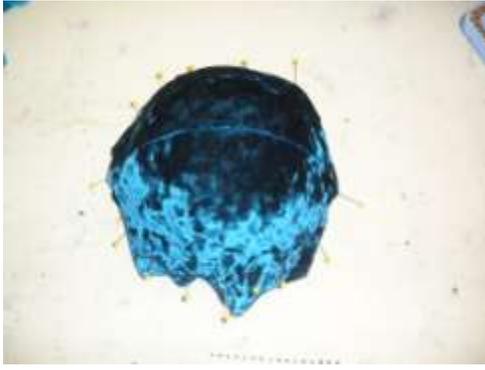
6. Decorating the cups

This is the fun part of the process (or the most time consuming and tedious depending upon what you select for the materials)! You do not have to spend a lot of money on decorations if you think outside the box and watch for sales. Also consider your personal limitations—how patient are you and how fast does the project need to be completed? For your first bra, don't get carried away with hand beading and fine details. These forms of embellishment are best saved until you are comfortable with the process. I highly recommend using purchased appliqués, jewelry and/or trims in a layered effect to create a visually interesting garment your first time. Pre strung beaded trim is also preferable to making it yourself at this stage (instant gratification is going to help move you forward in the process). I am speaking from experience having done both varieties of beaded trim/decoration.

Before I begin a new costume I go shopping to see what supplies are available locally and 'on the cheap'. I might have a color scheme in mind or I might not. The sample pictures in this section are the result of one of these trips—when I left the house I just wanted to see what was at a store across town. I had no idea what color I was shooting for or what style (other than 'cabaret glitz') I would be making. I came home with four of the appliqués seen in the picture.



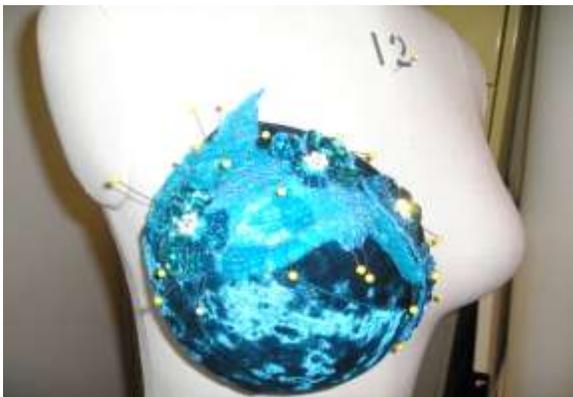
The appliqués provided the jumping off point on the design. Next I went through my collection of fabrics, beads, trims, fringe and other appliqués to see if anything I already had in stock matched or coordinated with the purchased appliqués. This is a great way to use up odds and ends from other projects and save money. Then I went shopping again with a color in mind and appliqué in hand. Again, I was looking to what was available and in my budget. Be sure to purchase enough materials to complete the project—more is better, not enough can really hurt. Eventually I found a base fabric that coordinated with the appliqué, complemented my skin tone, and was visually interesting.



Once the cup was covered and sewn securely in place I started to design with the appliqués and the additional supplies I had on hand. On a general note, **all the stitching on the back of the appliqués should be fray checked and be thoroughly dry before continuing** (this also applies to any trim with knots or loose stitching on the back). I then used a razor blade to cut the appliqué into segments and began to arrange the pieces on the cup. Layering the appliqués provides depth and interest. Below is my first try.



Don't be afraid to move the pieces around. Nothing is permanent at this point. The second picture shows a change or two I made to break up the ground color on the cup.



The same process applies to all types of decorations at this point. Pin them in place and look at the results. Let it sit overnight and see if you still like it in the morning. At one point there was 6 inch fringe

on the example cup that was later changed to another style in the finished product. Do samples if you aren't sure you're going to like the design or medium.

When attaching the decorations, sew through all the layers of the bra whenever possible. If you only catch the fashion fabric your designs may shift. The more you sew through the cups the more stable the end product. It is easier to decorate the cups separately. If you are going to add a decorative center section, do so right after you connect the cups, before you add the straps and the bands. The less fabric you have to control the faster the project and the lower the frustration level. Do as much decorating as possible before proceeding to the next step.

7. Connecting the cups:

- a. Cut a 12 inch piece of gross grain ribbon (if you are using scraps, two 6 inch pieces the same width will work)--double it over so it is 6 inches long (your actual length depends on how wide set your breasts are and the type of cup selected—you want at least 1 ½ inches to sew to each cup interior—the 6" length should accommodate a majority of people)

-Note that if you are dealing with a d cup or larger, narrow cotton canvas strapping covered with your fashion fabric is a more stable choice than grosgrain ribbon. It is also suitable for neck straps and side bands when a heavier weight material is desired.

- b. Stitch the ribbon together along the edges so it doesn't shift while you work with it
- c. Cover the ribbon with your fashion fabric
- d. Pin approximately 1 ½ inches of the ribbon/fashion fabric unit into the cup where the original CF piece of the bra was located and hold it up to your breast

Does it look like the CF piece is parallel to the floor when you place the cup in the correct position? Is the CF piece falling at the bottom of the cup? Adjust the CF piece as necessary. Think about how a well fitting bra looks and feels on you while doing this step.

- e. Hold up the second cup and see how much of the new CF piece is visible when the cups are in the correct place on the body—mark the distance if possible (an extra set of hands is desirable for this step) or just make a mental note of the placement
- f. Pin the CF piece in place so you have two connecting cups and hold them up again to check placement and adjust as needed



- g. Stitch through the CF piece and through the cup--you want to 'nail' the pieces together so they do not shift or pull apart --***be sure to catch the casing of the underwire at the inside edges and not just your fashion fabric!**
- h. Whip around the edges of the 1 ½ lap on the inside of the cup—if you can hide the stitches on the front of the cup go all the way through to the front—if not, just catch the plastic canvas layer and some padding

*Hold up the connected cups to your breasts. Do the cups still 'feel' correct? Does the tilt and distance apart look natural? Be sure your center front piece did not shift as it was sewn.

8. Constructing the neck strap(s)

- a. determine the style of strap—halter, over the shoulder, cross or 'X' straps or deep V back strapping (the cross strap and the V back provide excellent support for extra large cups)—and cut a length of gross grain ribbon twice the length needed for the strap(s)—be sure to add at least 1 inch seam allowance (too long is an easy fix, too short is not)
- b. fold the ribbon in half width wise and stitch together along the long edges (if you are using the cotton canvas strapping only one thickness is required)—this will prevent stretching and keep the ribbon from shifting while you work with it
- c. Cover the ribbon with fashion fabric
 1. Cut a length of fashion fabric twice the width plus $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and equal to the length of ribbon
 2. Place the gross grain ribbon on the edge of the wrong side of the fabric and stitch
 3. Wrap the fashion fabric around the ribbon and turn the raw edge under to create finished edge—pin and whip stitch in place
- d. Pin the strap to a cup—adjust the angle on the strap accordingly so it lays flat on the body—repeat for the other side
- e. Do not stitch the neck strap in place until you have pinned the back straps in the correct position as you may still need to adjust the placement and length
- f. When using the cross strap or the V back, sew the straps to the back band first, then bring the straps over the shoulders and pin to the cups. To insure perfect placement you will need to mark your center back prior to attaching the straps to the band.

9. Constructing the back straps

- a. Draft a pattern based on the typical bra band shape using your measurements and the band you removed from the bra as a guide—be sure to allow for a minimum of 2 inches in overlap center back (more is ok)—do not add seam allowance to the pattern
- b. Trace the pattern (one for the right and one for the left) onto heavy weight fusible pellaon and cut out
- c. Trace the pattern onto your flat lining (light weight canvas or twill works well) and add $\frac{1}{2}$ seam allowances to all sides except the curved edge where the band connects to the cup—add 1 inch there--***note: the bottom edge of the band pattern is your straight of grain—you do not want the band to stretch***
- d. Cut out the flat lining
- e. Fuse the pellaon to the flat lining—be sure to stay within your seam allowances
- f. Using the flat lining as a pattern, cut out your fashion fabric (remember to watch your grain line placement)
- g. Using the flat lining as a pattern, cut out your lining fabric
- h. Securely pin your flat lining fabric to the fashion fabric (pellaon facing up) and stitch in the ditch around the pellaon
***if you are applying decoration to the bands do so now—be aware of your seam allowances!**
- i. Place right side of your lining to the right side of your fashion fabric and pin securely in place and stitch together leaving the curved end open



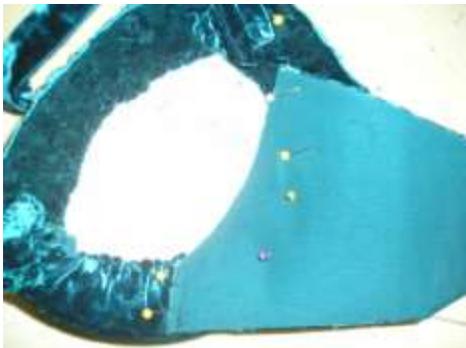
- j. Trim your seam allowances next to the stitching line to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and clip your corners (see white band in picture below)



- k. Turn bands to right side out and press (**check your fabric for heat sensitivity first!**)
- l. Top stitch the curved edge of the back bands (see teal band in picture above)
- m. If you decorated your bands after step h., you will need to apply the lining by hand—press under all seam allowances on both the fashion fabric and the lining, pin together and whip into place then top stitch the curved edge of the back bands

10. Applying the back bands

- a. Place the bands onto the cups as pictured below—the band should sit between the end of the top of the underwire and the base of the bra cup



- b. Securely pin the band in place—be sure and point the pins toward the back of the band—repeat on other side
- c. Check the fit of the bra—be sure the band is parallel to the floor and that all the breast tissue is in the cups and not sneaking out the bottom of the cup—adjust band placement as needed



- d. Pin securely in place and stitch through the band and cups where ever possible--***be sure to catch the underwire casing on the outside edge of the cup and go all the way through the band!**
- e. Mark the center back of the band (where it crosses the spine)
- g. If you used shoulder straps as opposed to a halter strap, mark the placement on the back band—you may attach the straps to the band as is or open up the seam in the lining/fashion fabric and slide the strap into the pocket and then stitch in place
- h. If you have any odd bits of decoration that could not be applied without the straps in place do so now

11. Lining the cup

- a. Cut two sets of the cup pattern out of your lining fabric using ½ inch seam allowances
- b. Stitch seams together
- c. Place the lining in the cups—be sure to align the seams
- d. Turn raw edges under and pin in place—be sure lining lays flat in the cup and doesn't pull—whip stitch down (note the sample's lining is cut in one piece and darted to allow it to lay flat)



12. Applying the closures

- a. Apply two large hooks to edge of right band—sew through all layers (if you can not hide the stitches on the right side of the fabric sew through the lining and the pellaon)
- b. Put the bra on and mark the over lap on the left band (have a friend help if possible)

- c. Line up the edge marking/edge and mark bar placement—sew bars in place through all fabric layers
- d. Sew a junior whooper popper (or similar size large snap) to the under lap area—this will prevent your hooks from slipping and prevent the under lapping band from hanging out below the over lapping band (see below)
- e. If you have a halter neck band with an opening, mark the over lap at this time (again, a friend is helpful for this step)
- f. Apply one hook and bar using the same process as the back band
- g. Add a second hook or a smaller snap (to fit the width of the strap) to the under lap area



This is the last step of the bra construction. Time for a well earned cocktail!

Another Look at Burning Man Costumes: 2008

Dana MacDermott



Each year that we have attended Burning Man, I eagerly look for the latest costuming trends. I think of this as a part of understanding the history and development of Counter Culture Costuming.

Although this year there were no new widespread styles in evidence, I did see some examples of a new material in headdresses. The tubular material in these two photos is called Crin, and it is available in a wide variety of colors, and a couple of diameters. It is a synthetic variation of an original horsehair material.

Crin is extremely lightweight, and can be purchased in lots of 5 yards at various on-line venues. It could have interesting and creative costuming applications.





For no apparent reason, another trend this year was a marked decrease in the numbers of nude and near nude participants. In this non-category, I did see a very clever interpretation of a corset that was supremely appropriate for the climate of the Black Rock Desert. →

The majority of the more elaborate costumes generally appear at Center Camp. Center Camp is a large tented gathering place with stages, entertainment, and coffee. It is somewhat protected from the extremes of Burning Man weather, allowing more complex costumes to be at less risk from the elements. In addition, it is well lit at night allowing outfits that are too warm for comfortable day time use to be worn and seen.

This year, for the first time, we brought a set of costumes created for a Costume-Con to Burning Man. We wore our Stargate elders into Center Camp one night. The environment pictured in the film seemed consistent with the Black Rock desert and the dust (in moderation) is only adding to the character of the costumes.



Bruce and Dana