

MARYLAND

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Festival: In its 20th year, Baltimore's annual outdoor eclectic arts extravaganza continues to draw crowds.

By MARIA BLACKBURN
SUN STAFF

Stationed between a lemonade stand and the light-rail tracks and surrounded by the sound of jazz and the scent of barbecue smoke, Kathleen Monroe stood in the heart of Artscape on Mount Royal Avenue yesterday afternoon and waited for The Question.

She knew it would come.

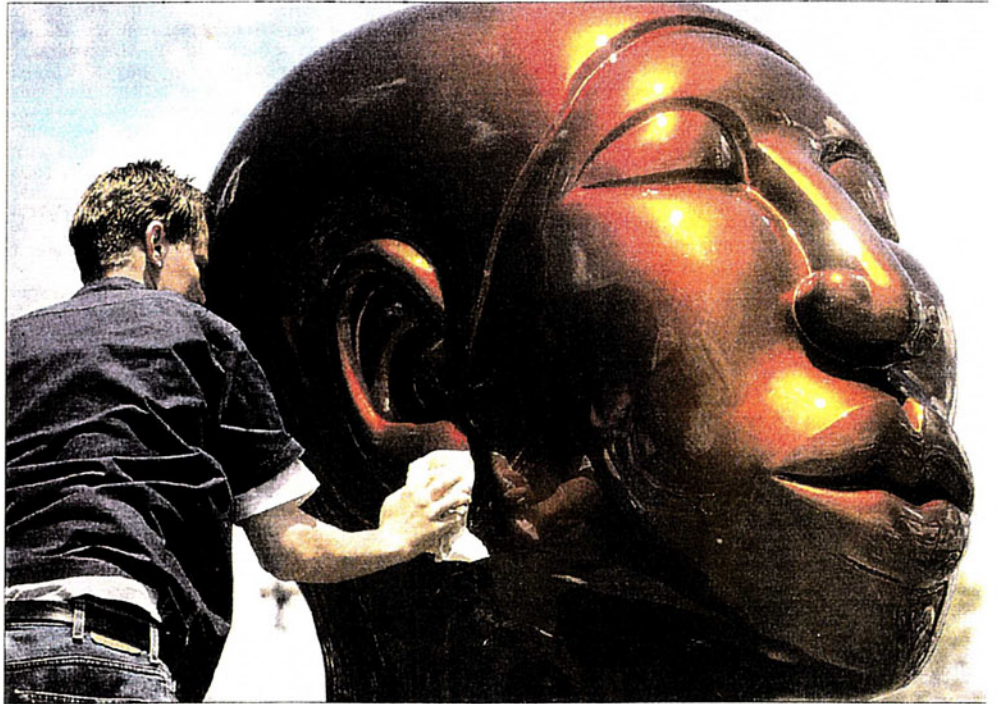
It always does.

Monroe, a volunteer at the information booth of the free city arts festival for the past 15 years, is used to being asked about the locations of bathrooms and pit beef, the start times of poetry slams and pop concerts. But the inquiry the 38-year-old manager of a veterinary practice likes best is the one that gets to the heart of the event: "Where's the art?"

"I tell them to look around," Monroe said, gesturing at the 10-foot-high gleaming copper sculpture of a woman's head by Amana Johnson that loomed behind her. "It's everywhere."

Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets yesterday for the perennially popular extravaganza of visual and performing arts known as Artscape. Senior citizens and infants, suburbanites and city dwellers, black and white joined for the 20th year to listen to music, survey paintings, photographs and sculptures, eat food on sticks and gulp \$4 lemonades.

"There's [See Artscape, 6B] nothing like it," Gene Broussard, a software engineer who lives one block from the festival site, said as he watched a parade of eclectically



DOUG KAPUSTIN: SUN STAFF

Shining moment: Artscape staffer Jason Bryant cleans a sculpture by artist Amana Johnson.

It's July in Baltimore? This must be Artscape

decorated cars — part of the Art CARavan — motoring down the street. "It's the atmosphere," he said, trying to explain Artscape's appeal. "This is a good crowd."

And a big crowd. According to organizers, more people than usual attended Saturday's events. The increase likely was due in part to the unseasonably dry, cool weather, said Artscape spokeswoman Jane Vallery-Davis.

Today's events, which start at noon, include a marathon reading of works by Edgar Allan Poe, a performance by Ray Charles at 5:40 p.m. and an 8:30 p.m. concert by salsa superstar Ruben Blades.

Artscape was founded in 1982 as a way to promote the arts

among the city's residents. During the past two decades, the event has grown from a small downtown arts fair drawing about 100,000 people to a sprawling al fresco arts circus spread over 12 blocks along Mount Royal Avenue and attracting up to 1.5 million people over three days.

Claudia Bismark, director of development and marketing for the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Art and Culture, attributes the event's success to its diversity. "We've always been able to get a new roster of curators and jurors to work with us," Bismark said. "It's a different perspective every year."

Not to mention a different perspective every few feet.