

B.U.I.L.D.I.N.G.

Burning Man

The Newsletter of the Burning Man Project

Summer 1995 • 10th Anniversary

Out There...

By Darryl Van Rhey

Imagine a completely abstract space, a world without context, a place that is no place at all apart from what you bring to it. Anyone may enter this arena. Distinctions of race, class, age, and wealth are irrelevant here. Participants are free to reinvent their own identities. Reality is what you make it on this ultimate frontier. It is a world wherein the boundary that divides the inner from the outer disappears.

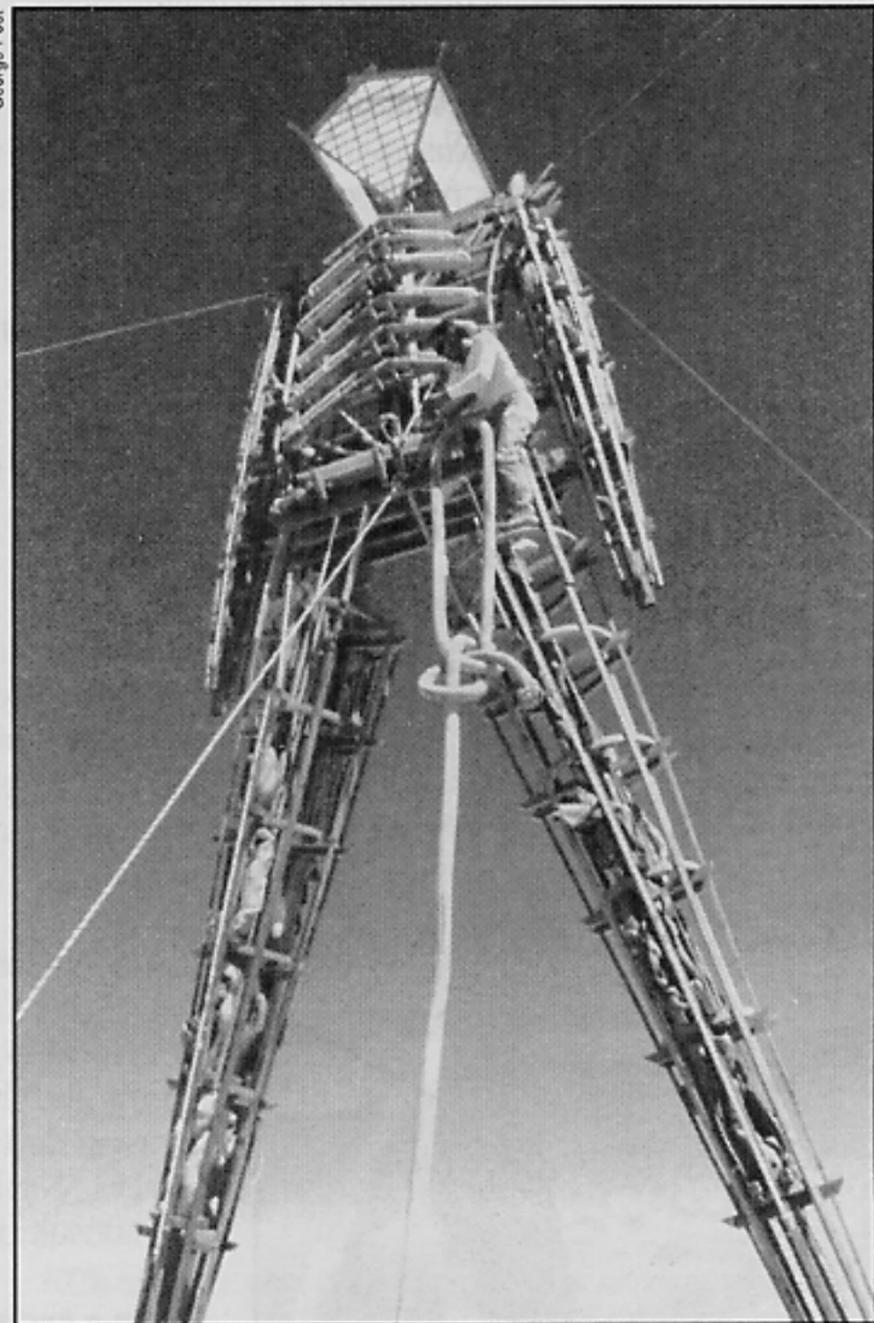
The place is Northern Nevada's Black Rock Desert — the largest flat expanse of land in North America. The event is Burning Man. Since 1990 members of the Burning Man Project have crafted a 4-story tall wooden man and installed it in the vastness of this awesome space. Erected by participants, it presides over an instantaneous community; a miniature civilization complete with clubs and cabarets, several radio stations, and a daily newspaper, *The Black Rock Gazette*. The masthead motto of this journal sets the tone of the ensuing weekend. "Welcome to Nowhere," it reads, "Its name is whatever you name it. Its wealth is whatever you bring. Next week it will be gone, but next week might as well be never. *You are here now.*"

To fully understand this experience— described by San Francisco's CitiArts magazine as "one of the most unique annual events in late 20th Century culture" — one must contemplate the desert. The Black Rock Desert is the relic of a prehistoric lake bed. It forms a featureless alkaline plain

devoid of both landmarks and lifeforms. At the bottom of its sky are distant mountains; in the foreground is the tip of one's nose. Between these two extremes lies an ambiguous zone. Advancing objects in this void loom suddenly as one approaches, as if magically materialized out of nothingness. The dancing dot that hovers indistinctly in the space ahead might instantly become a giant neon eyeball, a huge fiberglass dog head, or an oasis surrounded by paper palm trees. Visions such as these are common here. For nothing else exists on this unbounded plain apart from what people bring. It is a realm of virtual reality to which anyone can contribute. Participants mask and wear costumes, construct elaborate theme camps, extemporize new games and participate in spontaneous theater. Aided by a few expressive props, they program worlds entirely of their own devising.

But this is only half the story. There remains the Burning Man. Its towering presence looms above and beyond this postmodern carnival of the absurd. Located at the end of a monumental avenue of spires, it stands swathed in an eerie blue nimbus of neon light. And there are moments, as one wanders through this nighttime world, when earth and heaven seem to merge and Burning Man becomes the only orienting landmark. Car lights veer and drift at disconcerting angles, fireworks flash overhead, and the Man becomes a beacon — the ultimate gathering place and ceremonial center for this society suspended in a void. On Sunday he will perish in a cloud of pyrotechnics as a riotous throng laughs, cries, shouts and stands awestruck at his feet.

George Post



There is no single interpretation of this event. It is a unique product of our postmodern age; pluralistic and complex, skeptical and yet completely open-minded. Pressed to explain their intentions, organizers cite a simple doctrine: "The Project," one is told, "never interferes with anyone's immediate experience." Only by direct participation, through one's own unique involvement, can any answer be found. Or to quote Danger Ranger, legendary protector of the Playa, "In the desert there are as many paths to heaven as there are stars in the sky."

This year's Burning Man Festival will take place over Labor Day weekend, August 31-September 4, in Nevada's Black Rock Desert. See back page for registration details.

H • O • T • L • I • N • E
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Darryl Van Rhey is a San Francisco based writer and artist. His article, "Burning Man, A Modern Mystery," appears in the June 1995 edition of GNOSIS Magazine.

FAQ.LIST

Frequently Asked Questions
from the Burning Man hotline

Q: How can I get on the mailing list for Burning Man events?

A: Call our Hotline at (415) 985-7471.

Q: How far is Black Rock?

A: It's about a hundred miles north of Reno— roughly seven hours from San Francisco.

Q: What should I bring?

A: *Everything* — including food, water, shelter— that you will need to survive. This is not a consumer event. Instructions are included in our Desert Survival Guide.

Q: Once I'm in the area is it easy to find the campsite?

A: Not without a map. As always, this year's campsite will be in a different spot from last year's. Conditions on the Playa can be hazardous. Once you've registered, we will mail you a map and detailed instructions. Do NOT attempt to find us without it.

Q: Where does the money go?

A: Burning Man is 100% participant funded. Registration fees and those few items we sell pay for BLM land use fees, portable toilets, printing, postage, insurance, construction, transport, equipment rentals— *everything*. With that in mind, please register as early as possible. Burning Man needs your support.

Q: How hot will it get?

A: Black Rock is a high desert and relatively temperate. However, Nature can be unpredictable. Dust storms and thunderstorms are not uncommon. On occasion daytime temperatures can approach 100 degrees. Nighttime can be chilly. Dress accordingly and consult our Survival Guide.

Q: I'm a performer. Who do I talk to about bringing my act to the desert?

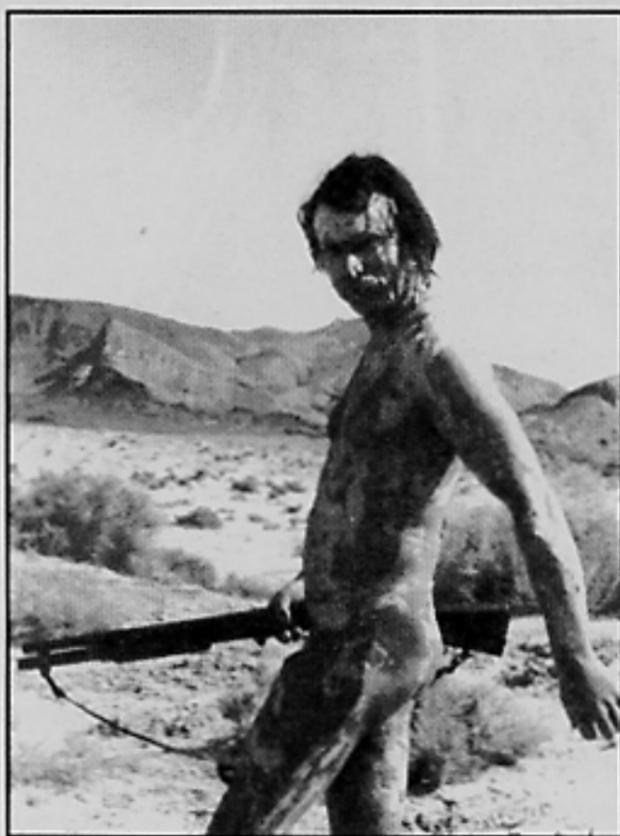
A: If you wish to be featured on our schedule, call the Burning Man Hotline at (415) 985-7471.

Q: Who the hell is Darryl Van Rhey?

A: Darryl Van Rhey has been associated with the Burning Man Project since its inception in 1986. A reclusive writer on the subjects of art and religion, he came to the Black Rock in 1990. Driven there by native devils (and pursued, it's claimed, by undercover agents) he found himself stranded, his water supply dwindling, crouched in the shadow of a creosote bush. It was here that he first encountered Danger Ranger, who brought him to John the Bathless— the mad (some say inspired) prophet of the Playa. But that's another story...

"One big cascading mass of fire, reckless luxury, the risk that makes you richer. Something huge comes to life when that Man is ignited. A grand extravagant gambler's god, Barbarian King of the Real American Desert. We're burning up our fortune, all together saying, 'We can afford to lose. Pull the handle. Take a shot.'"

—Al Cacophony



Chris Radcliffe

John the Bathless, mad Playa prophet and alleged friend of Darryl Van Rhey

Out There

(In Here)

An interactive art experience
evoking the Black Rock Desert

SOMAR GALLERY
934 BRANNAN ST, SAN FRANCISCO
FRIDAY & SATURDAY
AUGUST 4-5 & AUGUST 11-12
8:00-12:00 P.M.

WE will fill the gallery, hall, and theater of the South of Market Cultural Center with fire, dance, music, computer art, monumental sculpture, interactive performance, fashion and the BURNING MAN.

Come dressed as anyone or anything the desert might inspire you to be.

Check our Hotline this summer for details!

BUILDING BURNING MAN
Summer 1995

Burning Man Project (415)985-7471

Editor: Stuart Mangrum
Asst. Editor: Stew McKenzie

Thanks: Paizley Hayes, Richard Petersen
Timothy Liddy, Ms. Inxtr

A GALLERY without WALLS

By Stuart Mangrum

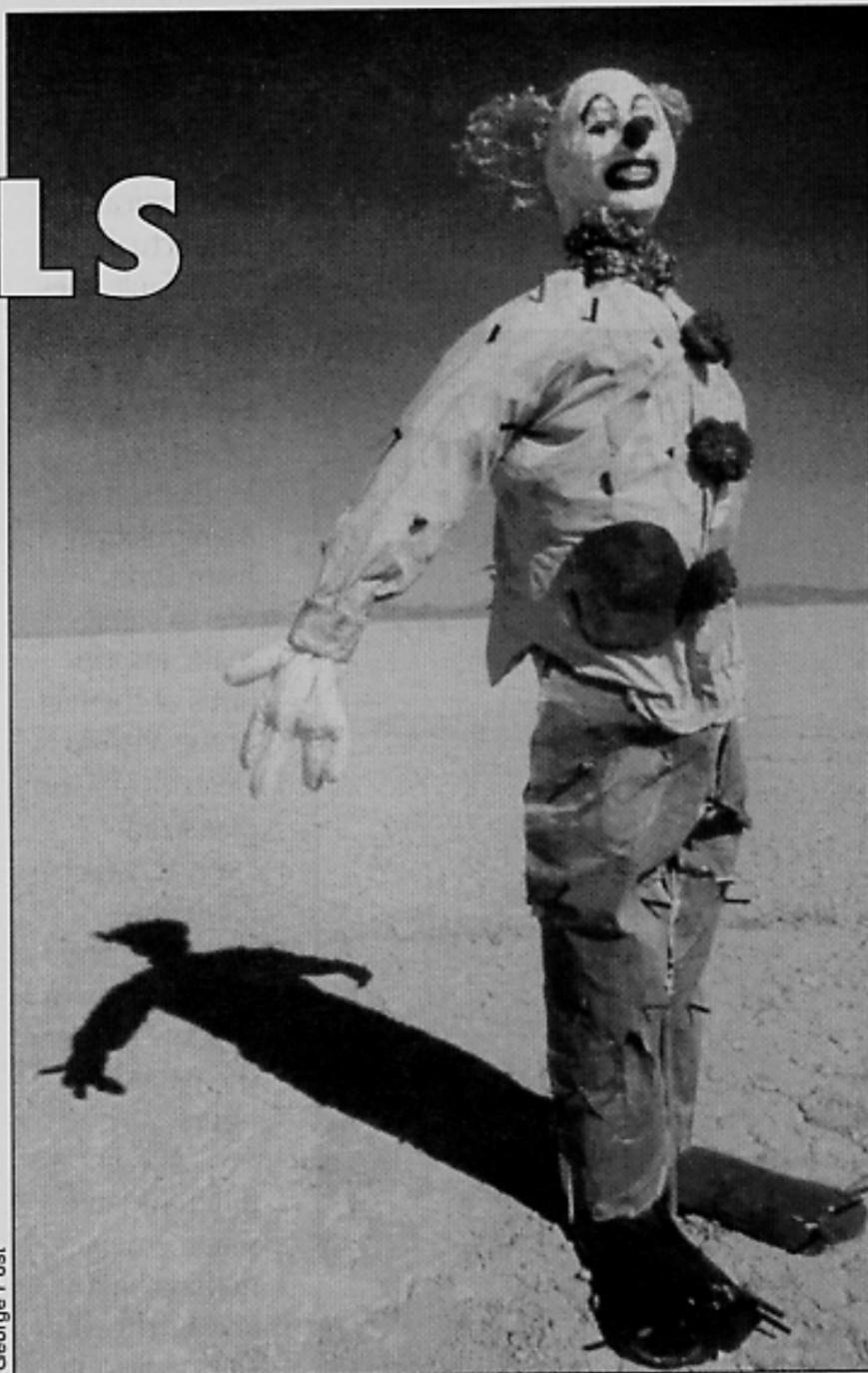
There's something about the desert. Maybe it's the lack of perspective, or the stark, unforgiving colors. Maybe it's the absolute rule of the elements, or just all that wide-open emptiness. Whatever the reason, since moving to the Playa in 1990 the Burning Man has attracted an ever-widening circle of artists and performers, and has become the focal point for a wild riot of creative energy that bursts up out of the desert floor each year like a crop of strange, beautiful wildflowers. Graphic artists, sculptors, storytellers, dancers, musicians; creative people in all the known genres and a few that haven't been named yet; out on the Playa their artistry defines space, inspires mood, and touches virtually every aspect of experience.

Just as images and gestures are amplified in the desert, so are the emotions they provoke; against an empty horizon, the smallest movement becomes ripe with meaning. Beauty edges into passion, ugliness into terror, and the full range of emotion may be exercised in the appreciation of a single image. Nowhere is this phenomenon more evident than in the Burning Man itself, whose graceful form serves as a sort of lightning rod for all manner of accumulated energies; a conduit that

can channel any aesthetic and absorb all expectations. It is both beautiful and utilitarian, superbly functional and ultimately useless. It blurs lines: between artist and audience, action and reaction, creation and destruction. It does more than just attract talented artists and passionate performers; time and again it inspires artistry in those who thought they had none.

If there is an overall aesthetic to this creative cacophony, it is aggressively populist: a sense of both boundless potential and enthusiastic encouragement. In the wasteland, anyone can be an artist. This is liberating for amateurs but even more so for professionals. Freed from the constraints of commerce and the politics of the gallery, they enjoy unparalleled creative freedom. Dislocated from the art world, they are free to fashion worlds of their own design.

While the Burning Man and its attendant torchlit spires, all based on the designs of project director Larry Harvey, clearly form the visual and emotional center of the Playa, these are not the only works of sculpture to embrace the skyline. The entire camp is, in a sense, a sculpted landscape, and one of its dominant landmarks in recent years has been Pepe Ozan's



George Post

lingam fire tower, a 30-foot spiral chimney of mud over steel mesh that invokes both the sky-piercing power of the phallus and the deep, earthy folds of the womb. Set ablaze by torch-bearing dancers, its towering flue sends an awesome column of flame to the heavens before the structure is itself consumed by the fire. Another distinctive landmark on last year's skyline was Chris DeMonterey's *camera obscura*, an interactive marvel crafted in the shape of a pyramid; from within the inner chamber, one could observe a magic lantern show of the surrounding camp, focused by a lens onto a disk-shaped viewing table. Reno sculptor Greg Schlanger fused form and function in another uniquely interactive way: his twin-stalled shower obliged would-be bathers to work in pairs, with one person climbing a ladder to supply water for the other from a cistern shaped like nearby Pyramid Lake. Maze maker Alex Champion fashioned a labyrinth of stones with a hidden walkie-talkie at the center, allowing intrepid explorers to converse with a disembodied oracle. English sculptor

Above: Clown prop from L.A. Cacophony Society's Spontaneous Human Combustion Theater
Left: Kimric and Heidi Smythe, the Incredible Exploding Couple



George Post

Serena de la Hey, in a nod to the ancient Britons' tradition of burning men, erected and incinerated three oversized wicker figures. These installations, while they may be technically described as sculpture, are actually much more than that; by default, they become the landscape itself. Even the bare desert floor lends itself to manipulation, from Lynn Marsh's enigmatic inscriptions at the feet of the Man to Dean Gustafson's oversized sundial, which cunningly employed the observer's own shadow to mark the passing hours.

At night a different landscape emerges, rich in shadow and bright with stars, edged in neon and limned with fire. Just as the Man dominates the daytime horizon, so does its blue

neon skeleton help define the edges of night. John Law is already well known for illuminating the Man, but he's not the only neon artist on the Playa. Karl Hauser's neon fishes, mounted on the helmets of dancers, appeared to swim in space; Vince Koloski's immense neon "crop circle" lit up 3,000 square feet of the lakebed in vivid, arresting colors.

Neon, with its distinctly urban associations, seems both startlingly surreal and oddly appropriate to this desert community, this nascent and transitory "Playapolis," but it is of course firelight that ultimately defines the event. From the comforting glow of the campfire to the raging inferno of the Man in full burn, fire is both the primal image and the dynamic process that unites this diverse group of artists.

No one on the Playa is more intimate with the mystery of fire than

Kimric Smythe, a pyrotechnic artist who has worked with San Francisco's Survival Research Laboratories. As the Incredible Exploding Man, he attaches a small arsenal of fireworks to his body, dons a protective helmet and breathing apparatus, and lights up. In the second year of this act, he was joined by his fearless wife, Heidi, to form the Incredible Exploding Couple; last year he brought his father, Bill, into the act as well.

Another veteran fire performer is Crimson Rose Indigo, a dancer who has been with the festival since 1991. Dancing in the nude, she brushes fire over her body so that it seems to envelop her like a second skin. With and without partner Will Roger, she has led participants in ceremonial fire dances at the feet of the Man.

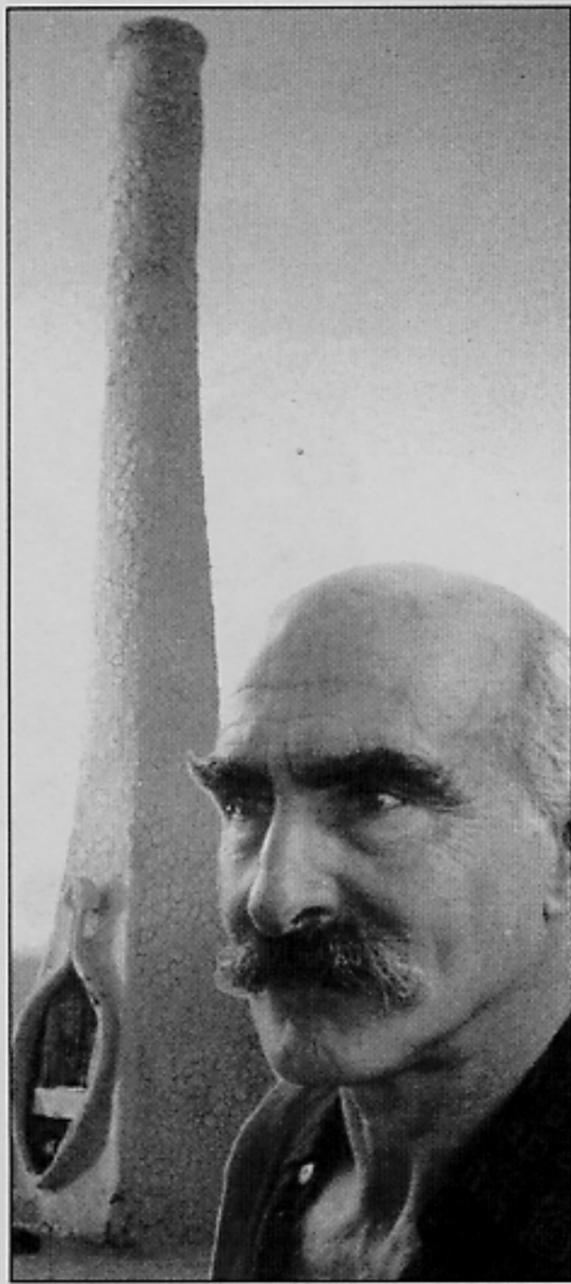
Also incorporating fire into the dance are Terrance Graven, Indra Lowenstein and Reneé Jojola of Collapsing Silence, a Butoh-inspired troupe that highlighted last year's pre-burn festivities with their haunting, stylized moves. L.A.-based Mona Jean Cedar, on the other hand, used the Playa itself in her Kali-Ma dance, as though making love to the very ground.

Of course there's so much more: the music, the art cars, the theme camps, the indescribable performances like L.A. Cacophony's Spontaneous Combustion Theater; describing all the extraordinary artists who help make the Burning Man festival a reality is, of course, an impossible task in this short space. So, with profound apologies to those I've left out, I would at this point simply invite you to come out to the desert and see for yourself. Or, if you'll be in the San Francisco area during the first two weeks of August, come experience "Out There," an interactive exposition at the SOMAR Gallery featuring the Burning Man itself and a wide range of contributing artists, including many of those listed here and many more who are

joining the Project for the first time.

Collapsing Silence will perform with the Sirens of Saturnalia and the musical ensemble Hollow Earth. Magenta Crowe will dance with a galaxy of candles orbiting her head. Timothy North will construct a "hover drum" - a 3-story drumming platform suspended from flexible cords. Beverly and Hans Reiser will premier their interactive *Voice Garden*, a "labyrinth of desire" featuring a computerized/realtime maze and big-screen projection. Sculptor Wayne Scott will combine mud, metal and fire in an enormous brazier that shoots tongues of flame, and Pepe Ozan will install sculpture that combines, in his signature fashion, elements of monumentality and voluptuousness. Ape Theater will engage in interactive performance art, John Law and Vince Koloski will install neon, and *Synapse* will create a ritual environment of media immersion entitled "Ancestor Stones." And once again, participants will be invited to talk to the Burning Man - they may either be the voice of the Man or ask it their secret question while suspended three stories overhead in a bosun's chair.

The schedule will also include afternoon lectures by UC archaeologist Billy Clewlow and Burning Man Project director Larry Harvey. See the "Out There" notice on page two for more information, and call the hotline in late July for a more detailed schedule.



Above: Pepe Ozan and his fire tower.
Left: Collapsing Silence

John Gray



Stuart Mangrum is the pen name of cultural desperado Lloyd Vaid, Interim Minister of Propaganda for the Burning Man Project and publisher of the zine *Twisted Times*. Send him e-mail at stuartmangrum@aol.com

S • U • R • V • I • V • A • L

Burning Man is entirely supported by participant contributions. Bear this in mind: there is no "they." They have never funded us, nor will they pick up garbage off the desert floor. They have refused to help us build the Man, construct our camp, provide electricity, or help publish and mail this newsletter (You know, of course, that they won't supply your car with gasoline, stock it with water, or provide you with food). Only when they become "us" does anyone contribute. Burning Man is about survival: survival of each individual, of our community as a whole, and survival of the Burning Man Project itself. Here are ways you can help:

CONTRIBUTE

Send in your registration fee today. Buy a Burning Man t-shirt or video while you're at it. Copy this newsletter and pass it on to your friends.

VOLUNTEER

You can become a member of the Burning Man Project by *doing* something. It is a society of activists. There are hundreds of tasks which sustain our community. Greet people at Black Rock Station, our desert outpost. Be a lamplighter in camp. Staff our town newspaper and radio station. Become a Desert Ranger. Help out at our Cafe and Information Booth. Aid in the construction and help us load trucks. *Join in camp clean-up on Monday.* To volunteer for these tasks or others of your own design, call our Hotline.

THEME CAMPS

Theme camps are an evolving mode of expression on the Playa, a unique genre of interactive installations that give our community much of its color and flair. Among this year's many planned theme camps will be:

Dinosaur Camp: Learn the arcane science of Sauriantology. Get in touch with your Inner Dinosaur. Channel dinosaurs. Learn about Sapiosaurus—the last and most advanced dinosaur who built the bomb which led to dinosaur extinction.

Tiki Camp: Tiki returns! Learn to hula (vamp left/vamp right) Linger at a luau.

Bring blender fodder for the BYO happy hour and savor the tallest, frostiest cocktails on the Playa.

Manhattan Camp: Direct from the Big Apple. Attempt to hail a cab as you push through its crowded streets. Witness the incipient creeping expansion of the urban megalopolis.

These and many other camps are being readied. If you wish to create a theme camp and have it featured on our Main Street, call us now! Our sole requirement for featured camps is that they be interactive. Be ready to invite others into your fantasy. To reserve a site and be included in our map and schedule, call Harley at (415) 522-9093.

RITUAL

Theatrically inclined? Help organize our Burning Pageant. Torches - costumes - masks - procession - choreography. Call the Hotline: (415) 985-7471

DRUMMING

Calm-Excitement-Tension-Release... these responses are hard-wired to the physical being and can be triggered by many things both internal and external, from beating hearts to pounding surf. Primal rhythms are everywhere. Unconsciously they affect us... move us...drive us. Drumming can elevate any emotion through pulse, power and passion. Join our ongoing workshop to explore some of these avenues. Let's take a collective primal organism to the Black Rock and move thousands of people as one. Contact Chris Campbell at (415) 873-8380.

INTERNET

Since last summer there's been a tremendous increase in the amount of Burning Man related material on the Internet, particularly the World Wide Web. If you have a Web browser, start your search at either <http://www.well.com/www/tcircus/Burnman> or <http://www.lh.com/burn> and go! [Note: you might want to free up some disk space first, because you're probably going to want to download. A lot.]

If you manage a Website that contains Burning Man related material, contact Richard Petersen (zpub@aol.com) to make

sure we're all linked. We are also exploring several possible approaches to establishing a realtime uplink from the Playa this year; if you have expertise in this area, or if you can help with equipment, contact stumangrum@aol.com or call the hotline.

BOOK PROJECT

What IS Burning Man? What does it mean to YOU? Submit your prose, poetry or artwork to BURNING MAN IS, Attn: Chad Scherman, 1072 Folsom, Ste.329, SF CA 94103.

Burning Man Video

Newly expanded 48-minute tape of Chuck Cirino's outstanding footage from BURNING MAN FESTIVAL 1994.



Available by mail order (form on back page) or at either of our S.F. retail locations. **\$20.00**

Burning Man T-Shirt

100% cloth for cool desert comfort. Screen printed on black



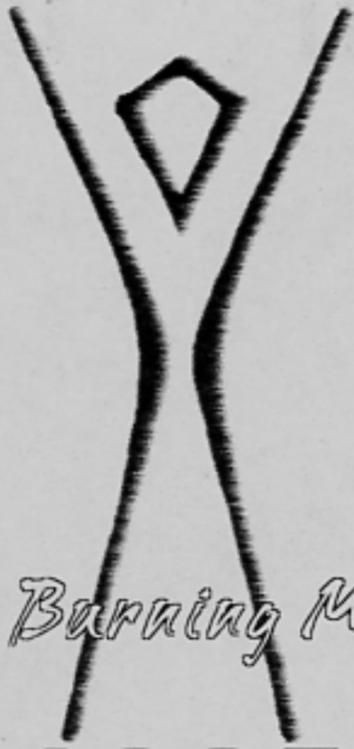
in sizes Large and Extra Large. Always fashionable, makes a great gift! Available by mail order (form on back page) or at either of our S.F. retail locations. **\$15.00**

RETAIL

Videos, t-shirts and registration tickets can be purchased by mail (form on back page) or in San Francisco at HELD OVER (1543 Haight at Ashbury, 415.864-0818) and CLOTHES CONTACT (473 Valencia at 16th, 415.621-3212).

Burning Man Project
P.O. Box 420572
San Francisco, CA 94142-0572

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Burning Man

1995

Registration Materials

Burning Man Festival

THURSDAY, AUGUST 31 THROUGH MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1995

The annual celebration of BURNING MAN will take place over the Labor Day weekend in the Black Rock Desert of Northern Nevada. This form can be used to register for the festival and/or order Burning Man merchandise. Feel free to make copies. If you are purchasing tickets you will receive your registration packet (including 1995 map, survival guide, and schedule of events) approximately one month before the festival.

Video: Be chased by a giant shark. See visions in a pyramid. Witness a jet-propelled rocket car. These are a few of the scenes you will see in our newly-expanded 48-minute video, "Burning Man Festival 1994." Price: \$20.00

T-shirts: Buy a Burning Man t-shirt. Color on black, available in sizes Large and Extra Large. The image that appears on the shirt is also displayed on page five of this publication. Price: \$15.00

Tickets: Purchase a ticket now for Burning Man, August 31 - September 4, 1995. We will mail you a ticket, your survival guide, map, and a detailed schedule of events approximately one month before the event.

NAME: _____ PHONE: (____) _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

VIDEO / "Burning Man Festival 1994"

QNTY: _____ X \$20.00 = \$ _____

T-SHIRTS

QNTY: _____ LARGE _____ EXTRA LARGE

TOTAL SHIRTS-QNTY: _____ X \$15.00 = \$ _____

REGISTRATION TICKETS

NUMBER IN PARTY: _____ X \$35.00 = \$ _____

OPTIONAL EXTRA CONTRIBUTION: _____ = \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____ = \$ _____

Make checks payable to
BURNING MAN

Detach this form and mail, with payment, to:

Burning Man
P.O. BOX 420572
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94142-0572

Burning Man is a 100% participant-funded event, entirely dependent on your support.