

Building BURNING MAN

The Journal of the Burning Man Project

Summer 1997

The Living Land

By Darryl Van Rhey

To describe Burning Man, the great upwelling of creative energy that occurs in the Nevada desert every year preceding Labor Day, is like describing the abundance — the sheer, prodigal, and superfluous fertility — of Nature itself. Costumes seem to be everywhere, strange, various and wonderful as blossoming flowers — prodigious sculptures heave out of the earth, appearing overnight — and everywhere there is a constant thrumming buzz, this electrically intense exchange of energy, like bees in a meadow. It has been called a festival of excess, a potlatch of useless gift-giving, an orgy of random kindnesses — for all of these things have been freely contributed, fashioned from inner necessity, and none of it, astoundingly, is for sale.

The new setting of Burning Man in 1997 will be a study in contrasts: the rugged land, a vast and featureless playa, an abundant oasis. The site of our new campground is the shoreline of Hualapai [WALL-A-PIE] Playa. It forms an alluvial apron, a spreading plain of sandy soil. This terrain, though generally flat, is pocked with small irregularities and sparsely covered by a crouching growth of shrubs and salt grass. There are new hazards here: spiked branches that project from bushes, snakes, rabbits, owls, centipedes, ticks — an entire cast of living characters. They are diligent forces and bent on their business (which might not be yours).

Beyond the pale of our campsite, to north and south, there are marshes laced with quicksand. Make no mistake: Nature's challenge is more than a metaphor here. And yet this land is equally the scene of new abundance. The pools of Fly Geyser are among the most vivid and amply comfortable hot springs you will ever experience. (A separate fee will be charged by the landholder for their use). This is a living land, a place of many presences. Come here prepared to camp and cope in a wilderness setting.

Secondly, there will be civilized rules. They address our collective survival and we have made them very simple. Don't use fire in our campground (except for warmth and cooking). Don't drive your car around — anchor it to your campsite. Our town is for people, not engines. (We suggest you bring a bike. We'll also provide some public transportation). In order to reduce traffic passing in and out of our settlement, supplies can be directly ordered and delivered daily at our frontier store. With the exception of special service vehicles, **no cars** will be allowed on the playa. Lastly, there will be **no rave** at our event in 1997. If you accept these public rules, then Burning Man is definitely for you.

The city that awaits you is being planned on a prodigious scale and will retain the name of Black Rock City. Although we occupy the shoreline of a playa that is neighbor to the Black Rock Desert, we have inherited a new "black rock." It is upon this distant somber peak, located to the east of our city, that we'll align the

central axis of the new metropolis. Marked by flags and monumental spires, it will extend outward onto Hualapai Playa, forming the ceremonial gateway that connects our city center to the temple and towering figure of Burning Man. [Note: In answer to an often asked question, Burning Man will be immolated, as always, on Sunday night of our festival.] A second great avenue, the Grand Boulevard, will extend upon right angles at a bearing north and south, traversing the edge of the playa. Here participants may stroll like vacationers at a seaside resort. To the east, the desolate plain of the desert will contain one of the world's largest open-air art galleries. Immediately to the west, along the picturesque "beach front" of the fossil lake, we will locate many of Black Rock City's colorful theme camps. The main residential district of our community will extend landward, occupying an area more than twice the size of last year's central encampment, and will be serviced by a system of satellite roads. These will be plotted as concentric circles, like planetary tracks, that orbit our cafe and central plaza. In addition, Hualapai Playa may be *unsuitable for landing planes*. However, one of the nearby private roads may be serviceable for setting down aircraft. Contact us for more information.

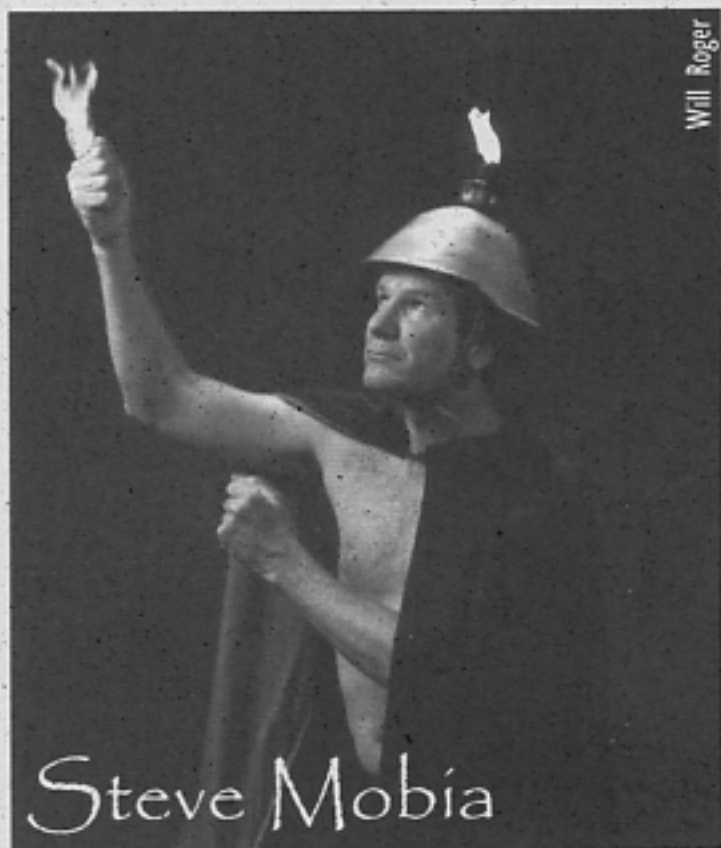
There is majesty in this conception that is equal to the place itself. It is our hope in coming years to create a space that will be home to many of the farflung creative activities that our festival has inspired. If you would like to aid us in this effort, please call the Burning Man Hotline. Strenuous and exacting, this is labor: we want only workers. We have discovered a new land; it is a place, a home, a living earth we can possess. And just as surely as our sweat will saturate this soil, it will possess us. ☺



~ BURNING MAN HOTLINE 415-985-7471 ~

The Burning Man Project is a society of activists... Join Us!

Attired in a cape and fire-spouting helmet, **Steve Mobia**, the community lamplighter, has become a familiar figure at our festival. Steve is a composer and filmmaker. Since 1994 he's led his dedicated helpers through the dusty boulevards of our metropolis. Clad in costumes that suggest a membership in some mediaeval guild, they carry chains of glowing lamps as they glide mysteriously through the dusk. Their mission is to hang these swinging lanterns on the many wooden spires that define the boundaries of our city. "These lamp posts," Mobia says, "give the sense of a urban space to what might otherwise be a haphazard camp. The lamps are controlled flames as opposed to the passionate flames of the Man: a balance of fires." The task is simple, but peculiarly satisfying. Each lantern must be regularly cleaned of soot, refueled, then reignited and returned to its perch. "This has been a fulfilling job," says Steve, "a quiet ceremony suggesting a tradition that has been going on for centuries."



night can appreciate what Steve Mobia and his crew of lamplighters have accomplished. He's given our community the gift of light, and like Prometheus before him, the blessing of civilization. If you are interested in this position, please contact our website or call our Hotline and talk to the Lamplighter yourself.

In spite of his affection for this role, Mobia is retiring this year, and seeks a new lamplighter to replace him. Ideally, he suggests, ten people might assume this role; a group of friends who camp together. The task, once organized, may easily be performed in less than one hour every night. Mobia has developed useful skills he wishes to impart to his successors. Consistency, he tells us, is of paramount importance in the task: it must be done regardless of the weather, and on inclement evenings some lamps must be lit a second time. Anyone who has ever been lost in camp at



If there is any social service as crucial to Black Rock City as the bringing of light, it is the making of coffee. For the past two years, **P Segal** has presided over our salon in central camp. As the gracious hostess of this crossroads cafe, she has provided lattes and espresso to participants 24 hours a day. P is a caterer, as well as editor and publisher of "Proust Said That" — a magazine that celebrates the life and times of Marcel Proust. She is devoted to the culture of cafe society. Her establishment is our sole concession and her mission is to provide a gathering place where the entire community can mingle and meet. It's here you'll find the denizens of any coffee house. They lounge on hay bale benches in the soothing shade: writing in their journals, reading our daily newspaper, greeting friends and practicing the almost vanished art of repartee. Last year, P's cafe spontaneous-

Thank You!

The Burning Man Project wishes to thank the following individuals for making an **OPTIONAL EXTRA CONTRIBUTION** to Burning Man. [see our Registration Order Form on the back page.] They are community benefactors. The name of anyone who wishes to contribute in this way will appear in the Spring Edition of next year's Building Burning Man.

Lesley Evensen	Gary Sowinski
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Brian Morris	Jonathan Chatlin
Clarence Dodge	Rob Dweyer
Virgina Chatlin	Meri Harli
Stephen Bissinger	Ron Roach
Dave Inanuzzi	Raul Essig

ly became a center for spoken word events, and this year it will once again be the site of our annual cocktail party before the Burn.

The cafe needs professional personnel around the clock, working shifts at the usual urban cafe wages. The extreme gratitude of coffee achievers for a latte in the wilderness, and the opportunity to host our community, make this job worth working. Late night and early morning shifts qualify for particular gratitude. To sign up, contact our website — or call our Hotline and meet P.

(continued on page 5)

Editor: Darryl Van Rhey
Layout: Rusty Blazenhoff
Thanks: P Segal, PDQ Print + Copy,
Darryl Ember, Eric Pouyoul
Photos: Will Roger, Barbara Traub, Lynn Marsh

BUILDING BURNING MAN
THE JOURNAL OF THE BURNING MAN PROJECT
SUMMER 1997

Website: www.burningman.com
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Burning Man Hotline: (415) 985-7471

THE YEAR OF COMMUNITY

YOU ARE A FOUNDER

Participants in Burning Man are not defined according to deficiency or passive need. You are neither client nor consumer here. Ours is a society of activists and your experience of our community will be defined by two essential elements: **radical self-expression** and a **shared struggle to survive**.

THE STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE

Participants in Burning Man must bring all necessities to the desert: food, shelter, water, fuel — *everything* that they require for survival in an environment that is often harsh and always challenging. These needs are detailed in the Survival Guide, which you will receive with your registration packet. But, above and beyond these requirements for *individual survival*, we ask that each participant aid in the task of *collective survival*. We are not merely asking that you do a job. We're asking that you fill a role that will relate you to our community.

Build a HEARTH AND HOME.

Our new home on the Hualapai Plain is very different from our former site in the Black Rock Desert. Although this year's settlement will align along the shore of a dry lakebed that is barren and devoid of vegetation, the land that forms our campground is covered by grasses and shrubs. These tracts of greasewood, sage and rabbit brush are a potential *fire hazard*. Accordingly, we are zoning our encampment for fire use. We are making a basic and simple distinction: play with fire (flares, home pyrotechnics, burnable art or any form of flame) **ONLY** on the playa. Our campground will be fire free except for *carefully contained* campfires and these fireplaces must conform to certain safety standards.

As pilgrims to a new land each of us becomes a founder. No task can be more symbolic of this action, or more primally and potently satisfying, than the building of a hearth. Should

you plan to maintain a fire, we request that you bring or build a fireplace that will *prevent the spread of windborne sparks or embers*. We also plan to provide caches of rock that participants may use for this purpose. (Where better to meet your neighbor than at the community rock pile?) Before you use your fireplace, we request that you read the Survival Guide provided with your registration kit. You may also ask a Black Rock Ranger for advice.

Become a BLACK ROCK RANGER

The Black Rock Rangers were founded in 1990 by Danger Ranger, legendary guardian of our community. In years past it has been the principal duty of the Black Rock Rangers to seek out strays from the fold, and over the years they have mounted many search and rescue missions. They have rescued and guided the lost. Most importantly, they have saved lives. In 1997, however, the role of motorized vehicles at our event will drastically change. **No motorized traffic will be allowed on our playa.** Further, campers must agree to **park their cars at their campsites for the duration of the event**, using them only to enter and leave the area. We recommend the use of mountain bikes. We will also provide on-site public transit.

As a consequence of these changes, the mission of the Black Rock Rangers will also change. Rangers will have a more socially active role. It will be the duty of each Ranger to interact with the community: to introduce neighbors, to answer their questions, and to knit our instant culture into a fabric of responsible care. The mission of the Rangers will be to educate us all concerning every vital issue that affects our collective survival.

The second mission of the Rangers is to guard against the threat of fire. A prominent fire-spotting tower will be established in our camp and staffed at all hours. Rangers serving as look-outs will be vigilant guardians of our community. On the ground, fire crews will be ready to respond to emergencies. Additionally

volunteers will be needed to staff our Ranger Headquarters, which this year will serve as center for environmental information. Ranger training sessions will begin soon. Communities need heroes. Please contact our website or Hotline for more information.

Found a VILLAGE

The concept of a village has spontaneously emerged from the experience of Burning Man. Typically, several camps have co-located and evolved a social life together. Residents of these communal groupings have developed strong friendships and made future plans to live together during the event. A village is not merely a theme camp. It is a micro-model of community within the macrocosmic whole of Burning Man and its structure is in many way analogous to that of our greater city. It forms a useful model for the planning of any village. *The following description of the Blue Light Village was supplied to Building Burning Man by Eric Pouyoul. Further information concerning this village may be obtained at: eric@chdrus.com*

• What is the BLUE LIGHT DISTRICT?

The Blue Light District is a village within Black Rock City that will be composed of several theme camps (or even themeless camps). Each camp is designed and organized independently of the village structure and has its own personality. However, each camp will contribute to the building of the village's unique identity. This will be done through village-based social events, such as building a communal kitchen, producing some events, and providing a central area that can be used for gatherings. Some of these events will also link the village to the rest of the city.

• IDENTITY

A theme camp is dedicated to its theme: its identity is this theme. A village encapsulates all the themes of the camps that compose it. The Blue Light District will provide social events that will create enough internal social life to

(continued on reverse)

"Burning Man is a guerrilla war against the commodification of the collective imagination." — Erik Davis, The Village Voice

(continued from previous page)

create a feeling of belonging. The physical structure of the camp will also express a common identity. Camps will surround a central plaza called the Zocalo. The Zocalo will include a large blue mushroom (about 12 feet high) which will provide a shelter for the communal kitchen. About 50 smaller mushrooms (about 2 feet high) will be spread among the camps. These mushrooms will be symbols of collective unity.

• OPENNESS

Because of its small size, a theme camp is naturally open to the rest of the city. Theme camps are made to be shared. A larger scaled village incurs the risk of separating itself from the rest of the community. This is something to avoid. The Blue Light District will be open to anybody and will participate in the life of Black Rock City. Some space in the village will be reserved for people who decide to join the village at any time. Social events will also be open to anyone.

• SERVICES

The Blue Light District will provide services to its residents. Among these will be a communal kitchen, public lights, water, bicycles, and a public bulletin board in the Zocalo. Because of the nature of the land where Burning Man will be held this year, there are more risks from unwanted fire. The Blue Light District will be equipped with fire extinguishers.

• Burning Man and VILLAGES

All villages are invited to participate in our Burning Man Pageant on Sunday night. You may wish to create banners, costumes, a float (some object to be wheeled, carried overhead, or otherwise transported in procession to the Man, that is emblematic of your group identity). If you plan a village, please contact our Hotline or website. We will help you site your village and connect you to other village projects.

RADICAL SELF EXPRESSION

Burning Man is an arena of visionary reality. Visions aren't defined by light that falls upon them. They are perceived by virtue of a light that shines out of them. A vision redefines reality in the world around it. We invite you to create such a vision: wear a costume, paint your body, invent some form of public art or performance — anything that means what you uniquely are, what you uniquely see or what you might become. Imagine the land and the looming lakebed of the playa as a limitless ground of being. Think of each partic-

ipant as burning with a fierce and self-proclaimed illumination.

Create a THEME CAMP

Theme camps are a mode of self-expression in the world of Burning Man: living fantasies that you create as a part of your campsite. They often involve costumes, props, and original architecture. Our only requirement is that you be ready to interact with other — actively include them in the fantasy that you create. Make your theme camp alluring, prominently available to fellow participants. The theme you choose is up to you. If you wish to be listed as a featured theme camp in our schedule of events and attractions, please contact our Hotline. Featured camps will also be eligible to be sited along our Grand Boulevard. The Boulevard will extend outward on an axis from our Central Camp. Like a seaside boardwalk, it will occupy the shoreline of Hualapai Playa. Residents along this strip will be afforded a sweeping unobstructed view of Burning Man and the large-scale artworks we will locate there. Please call to reserve your space.

Construct a LARGE-SCALE WORK OF ART

We will locate large-scale works of art upon a portion of the playa that parallels our encampment. They will float in the illimitable space of this desert like ships anchored offshore. Proposed installations for 1997 now include such works as "Das Ammoniten Projekt" — a giant ammonite, 70 feet in diameter and 10 feet high. Ammonites are nautilus-like shells frequently found in fossil formations. This giant fossil, created by Hendrik Hackl, a German artist, will be illuminated at night. Participants who penetrate its coiled center must devolve, crouching by degrees until they reach all-fours and finally wriggle like a worm. Look also for "The Cultivator Project". This 20 foot high sculpture will resemble a rocket, complete with launching pad. In keeping with this year's fertility theme, it is designed by artist Paul Windsor to store your DNA in a genetic ampoule. It will ultimately rendezvous, we are

told, with the Mothership. If you plan a large-scale artwork please contact us at our Hotline or website.

Perform in our PAGEANTS

Saturday night of the festival is devoted to our annual art pageant. The theme of this year's epic is fertility. It will climax in a performance conceived and directed by Pepe Ozan, and entitled "The Daughters of Ishtar". We will be guided to the temple of this Goddess in procession on the playa. Our route is designed to incorporate the work of many artists along its path. We are looking for both installation and performance art that fits our theme. We are also seeking performers who wish to participate in our Burning Man Pageant on Sunday evening. There are many opportunities for performance: our Cafe, theme camps, villages, travelling venues, spontaneous eruption. Interactive theater, dance, fire art, music and robotics are among the artforms we're seeking. Please call our Hotline, or visit our website. Specific proposals may be sent to: Burning Man Pageant, P.O. Box 29111, Oakland, CA 94604. Contact us by July 1st.

Parade your ART CAR

Art Cars are a tradition at Burning Man and form the sole exception to our anti-vehicular policy. A daily parade will be scheduled this year to display this unique American artform. You may also wish to join an Art Car Camp. Contact our Hotline for details.



THE BURNING MAN PROJECT
P.O. Box 420572
SAN FRANCISCO, CA
94142-0572
HOTLINE: 415-985-7471

(Activists...continued from page 2)

Danger Ranger is the legendary protector of our desert society. Some say he's a seventh son born of the scion of a seventh son. Others claim he possesses near-borderline supernatural powers, including the ability to bi-locate and appear at two places simultaneously. This seems plausible, given his penchant for pervading the playa. In reality, Danger is the founder of the Black Rock Rangers and grew up on the plains of Texas. The institution that he leads is patterned on the Texas Rangers and their historic role as

guardians of a dispersed pioneer society. In addition, Danger is also a visionary. After the event in 1995, he informs us, he discovered a fertility amulet, a rounded female form, lodged within a fissure of the playa surface. He scooped up a handful of dust, depositing it and the small figurine in a container. "It could have lain there for eons", he says. Danger wore the talisman around his neck at our event in 1996. He felt that it protected him like a companion amid the "cathartic fires of Hell" generated by our art pageant — "one of the most difficult

and transformative periods of my life." After the event, he traveled on a pilgrimage alone to Fly Geysir. Here, he immersed himself in a pool, when suddenly the metal token slithered from its string beneath the muddy water and was gone. "I immediately felt a kind of panic," he recalls, but this was soon succeeded by a sense of vast and encompassing calm. "I felt as if it was supposed to be there. As if, by passing from me, it had seeded the waters. The amulet had guided me, in some way guided everyone, to our new home."

Danger will reappear in the desert in 1997. He is seeking recruits to join with him on his patrol of our event horizon. It is a demanding job [see BLACK ROCK RANGER on page 3].

Danger Ranger



Buy a Burning Man T-shirt or cap!

Our shirt is screen printed on black in sizes Large and Extra Large.



The cap is high quality, adjustable, and embroidered with the Burning Man logo. Always fashionable, makes a great gift!



Available by mail order \$10 (form on back page)

If you wish to become a Black Rock Ranger, volunteer for medical service or serve on our Fire Brigade, please call our Hotline or contact our website immediately. You may write to Danger Ranger at: P.O. Box 309, Gerlach, Nevada 89412.



Mysteria

CELEBRATE THE SUMMER SOLSTICE

**THE THEME OF BURNING MAN IN 1997
IS FERTILITY, THE LIVING LAND.**

Join us for the

The Secret Rites Of Burning Man

FRIDAY & SATURDAY

JUNE 20 - 21 & 27 - 28

8 PM - 12 PM \$10 ADMISSION

SOMAR GALLERY 934 BRANNAN STREET

SAN FRANCISCO

**VISIT OUR NEW
WEBSITE AT:
WWW.
BURNINGMAN.
COM**

Our website is a gateway to hundreds of individual websites created by participants to celebrate the Burning Man experience. Self-connect your website to ours! It is also a connective environment which includes ride share information and theme camp and village updates. Sign up for our announcement list. It is dispatched weekly by our web mistress, *Maid Marian*.

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Burning Man 1997
Registration
Materials

BURNING MAN FESTIVAL

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27 THROUGH MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1997

The annual celebration of BURNING MAN will take place over the Labor Day weekend at Haulapai [WALL-A-PIE] Playa in 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 ticket, 1997 map, survival guide, and schedule of events) approximately one month before the festival.

~ ORDER NOW TO ENSURE YOUR PLACE AT BURNING MAN! ~

Tickets: Purchase a ticket for Burning Man, August 27 - September 1, 1997 now! **Space permitting,** ticket price at our gate will increase to **\$75 per person.** **Order now to ensure your place at Burning Man!** We will mail you a ticket, your survival guide, map, and a detailed schedule of events approximately one month before the event.

T-shirts & Caps: Buy a Burning Man t-shirt or cap. Color on black. Shirt sizes available in sizes Large and Extra Large, caps are adjustable. Design appears on page 5 of this publication. Shirt Price: \$15 Cap Price \$10

NAME: _____ PHONE: (____) _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

BURNING MAN T-SHIRTS

QTY: _____ LARGE _____ EXTRA LARGE
TOTAL SHIRTS-QTY: _____ X \$15.00 = \$ _____

BURNING MAN CAPS

TOTAL CAPS-QTY: _____ X \$10.00 = \$ _____

REGISTRATION TICKETS

NUMBER IN PARTY: _____ X \$65.00 = \$ _____

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.