

Robert Rogers: Burning Man
Collection CAE1707

Introduction/Abstract

This archive contains materials from early Burning Man as well as the progenitive Neo-Dada groups on the west coast. Materials include scans of newsletters and other documents, and digital images.

Biographical Note: Robert Rogers

Robert Rogers is the founder and owner of Broadcast Tower Services in Portland, Oregon. He was a member of the Cacophony Society in San Francisco, and an early participant at Burning Man, where he helped form what would become its Department of Public Works. He set up the first gate to the event in 1996.

Scope and Content

Burning Man is “an annual art event and temporary community based on radical self-expression and self-reliance,” according to its website. The festival is held annually during the last week of August on the Black Rock Desert playa one hundred miles north of Reno. Attendance has grown from the low hundreds in the early 1990s to more than 80,000 in 2015.

The roots of the event began with the burning of figures on the summer solstice by sculptor Mary Graubarger, a friend of Larry Harvey’s girlfriend, on San Francisco’s Baker Beach in 1986. In 1986 Harvey erected a 9-foot tall wooden figure. In 1990 the then 40-foot figure was drawing so many attendees for the burning of “The Man” that police outlawed the event. A separate event had been planned by members of the Cacophony Society on the Black Rock Desert for that year, “Zone Trip #4, A Bad Day at Black Rock,” which was billed as a dadaist and situationist performance happening. Harvey joined forces with the Cacophony Society and the first burn of the Man was held on the playa in 1990.

Robert Rogers, who was a member of the Cacophony Society, first went to the playa in 1990 and became an increasingly important figure in the event up until 1996, after which he attended only sporadically. He famously made a vault with John Law for the cash collected at the gate, an old water heater that was buried under the desert.

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This archive is currently in process.