

J. Absinthia Vermut: Early Burning Man Photographs **Collection CAE1716**

Introduction/Abstract

This archive contains photographs by J. Absinthia Vermut and ephemera related to Burning Man, the annual art event and temporary community program held every year in the Black Rock Desert during the last week in August. Materials include participant and program ephemera, slides, photographs, negatives, and press materials.

Biographical Note: Absinthia Vermut (aka Jennifer Vermut)

Vermut earned a degree in photography from NYU in 1992, then an MBA from Babson College in 2018. She has worked as an account manager and business consultant and is the founder and owner of Absinthia's Bottled Spirits, LLC. and co-founder and COO of NickelDime LLC, producers of Caged Heat Cocktail Syrup. She also ran her own marketing agency, Peridot Marketing, from January 2007-December 2012. She also built the timeline on Burning Man's Facebook page and co-managed and co-MC'd the Global Leadership Conference in 2013.

Vermut attended Burning Man in the early years and was one of the first photographers to document the event. Photography of the event started with casual snapshots, but by 1990, while still on Baker Beach, the nighttime celebration was beginning to attract both photojournalists and artists. The move to the Black Rock Desert opened photographic possibilities, abetted by the presence of artists such as William Binzen, Richard Misrach, and Peter Goin, as well as Larry Harvey's brother, Stewart Harvey, who had been photographing the event almost from its inception. She still attends the Burning Man event.

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 70,000 in 2017.

The roots of the event began with the burning of objects on the summer solstice by sculptor Mary Graubeger, on San Francisco's Baker Beach in the early 1980s. In 1986, Harvey and his friend Jerry James erected a 8-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.

As Wikipedia describes it (accessed May 1, 2013): "Michael Mikel, another active Cacophonist, realized that a group unfamiliar with the environment of the dry lake would be helped by knowledgeable persons. He took the name Danger Ranger and created the Black Rock Rangers. Thus the seed of Black Rock City was germinated, as a fellowship, organized by Law and Mikel.... Drawing on experience in the sign business and with light sculpture, John Law prepared custom neon tubes for the Man in 1991 so it could be seen as a beacon at night." Materials include photographs, 35 mm slides, video, photo albums, journals, book manuscripts, masters theses, unique art objects, plans, design documents, press materials, administrative materials, and

festival ephemera including posters, entrance tickets, newsletters, wrist bands, bumper stickers and calendars.

This archive is currently in process