



SHED RECKONING

The WONDER VALLEY HOMESTEAD CABIN FESTIVAL captures the mystique of those historic huts that dot the High Desert. **By Frieda Noone**

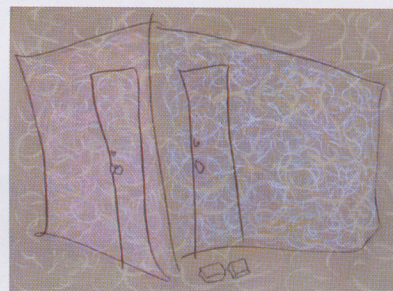
The tiny, often forlorn-looking and dilapidated buildings—many of them abandoned or never used—stand watch over arid five-acre parcels. But don't mistake them for mere shacks. They are hallowed totems of High Desert culture. And they are being celebrated throughout the months of February and March by the Wonder Valley Homestead Cabin Festival (www.wondervalleyarts.com).

The ubiquitous shanties have a unique history. In an effort to distribute roughly 1,800 dusty, rock-strewn acres that the Bureau of Land Management deemed disposable, the US government enacted the Small Tract Act of 1938. This legislation granted free homesteads to those willing to inhabit and improve the barren landscape of Southern California. The resulting homestead cabins typically were one-room boxes with a single door and a few windows. Many were erected in Wonder Valley, at the more remote eastern end of the Morongo Basin.

Seventy years later, the High Desert is anything but barren; it is teeming with free spirits and creative folks who have earned reputé as artists locally, regionally and well beyond. And some have made the homestead cabins a peculiarly magical focus of their work.

Sponsored by Wonder Valley Arts, Homestead Cabinet and the Morongo Valley Cultural Arts Council, Inc., the festival is exploring the cabins' legacy with two commemorative exhibits free to the public. The Palms Restaurant,

Highlights include works by the fest's three founders: "Untitled" by Andy Woods (above), "Cabin with 2 Doors" by Chris Carreher (right) and "Wet Wonderland" by Scott Monteith (below).



83131 Amboy Road, is hosting "Homestead Show'n Tell"—a gallery and stage tribute in which artists, writers, performers and musicians

present original pieces on the theme. Visual art is on display daily (except Tuesdays). "Homestead Obsession," open weekends at Fi-Lox-See Gallery, 7215 Fi-Lox-See Avenue, features art from Robert Arnett, Chris Carraher, Perry Hoffman and Scott Monteith.

Arnett, for one, has long been fascinated with the cabins. "I felt a satisfaction in documenting the time of the homestead years," he notes of his work. "Long after the elements have collapsed them into piles of weathered wood and shingles, the painting will preserve the facts."

For fellow artist Scott Monteith, the structures symbolize not only the lives of their past inhabitants, but our collective dreams and hopes for the future. "The cabins share a theme of starting fresh," he says. "They are artifacts of the human condition—of particular points in time that occupy a most definitely curious space." ◀

dune

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from the executive editor

There's a bracing change afoot in Southern California. The once dismissive attitude shown toward the Desert by many of our neighbors in the more populous towns and cities between the Coachella Valley and the coast is dissipating. No longer are we easily shrugged off as aimless tumbleweeds or urban refugees molding sand into imaginary castles; we're actually realizing spectacularly cutting-edge and sustainable constructs that are setting trends. Our cover story on organic architect Ken Kellogg is all the evidence one could need that the creative locus in this half of the state has shifted east, and why artists of all types are flocking here.



Indie producer Andreas Wood documents High Desert artists for his film *The Road to Wonder Valley*.

Hollywood talent brokers would do well to pilot their limos in the same direction—and not just for our spas and special events. As writer Trish O'Shea has discovered, the Desert is abloom with young independent filmmakers who are mining the area's varied social and geographical terrain, and their own imaginations, for compelling stories. They're certainly enterprising enough to find a few inspirational artifacts inside the High Desert's creaky yet colorful homestead cabins, which are being feted during February and March by the Wonder Valley Homestead Cabin Festival.

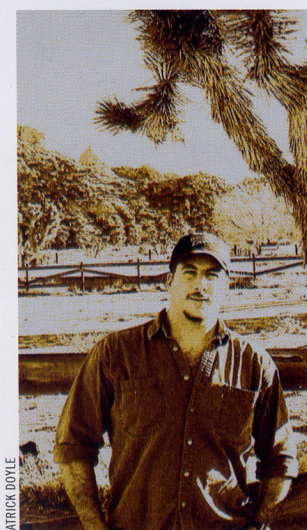
It's with a sense of aesthetic-historic juxtaposition, and a bit of mischief, that we've placed our story about the cabins adjacent to writer Lydia Kremer's beautifully illustrated feature on renowned architectural photographer Julius Shulman. The subjects of these two articles aren't so mutually exclusive: both are observing 70-year anniversaries, and they've contributed substantially in their respective ways to local culture. It's worth noting that some folks have taken to remodeling their old High Desert homesteads in the Mid-Century Modern style exalted by Shulman's brilliant Palm Springs record. The Desert may be a study in contrasts, but its underlying interrelationships and shared influences keep it fascinating.

Beyond our pieces on art and adventure, *Dune's* special reports have been focusing awareness on issues of special interest and urgency to this region—spurring other, more established media to follow suit. And some of our celebrity profiles have been stirring buzz on blogs from coast to coast, including such popular dotcoms as *The Huffington Post* and the *New York Post's* Page Six. Meanwhile, we've been strengthening the magazine's Web presence through gradual design and navigational upgrades to our official site, www.dunemag.net. Log in for a look-see when you have a chance.

Dune itself is improving and growing, too, and since last issue our new art director, Ken Boyer, has been adding kick to the magazine's layout. We can't help but find these developments—and the gorgeous three-dimensional ones depicted throughout this, our first annual architecture issue—pretty exciting. We hope you will as well.

A stylized, handwritten signature of Dean Lamanna in dark ink.

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PATRICK DOYLE