



Living

Homestead where the heart is



REBECCA UNGER / Hi-Desert Star

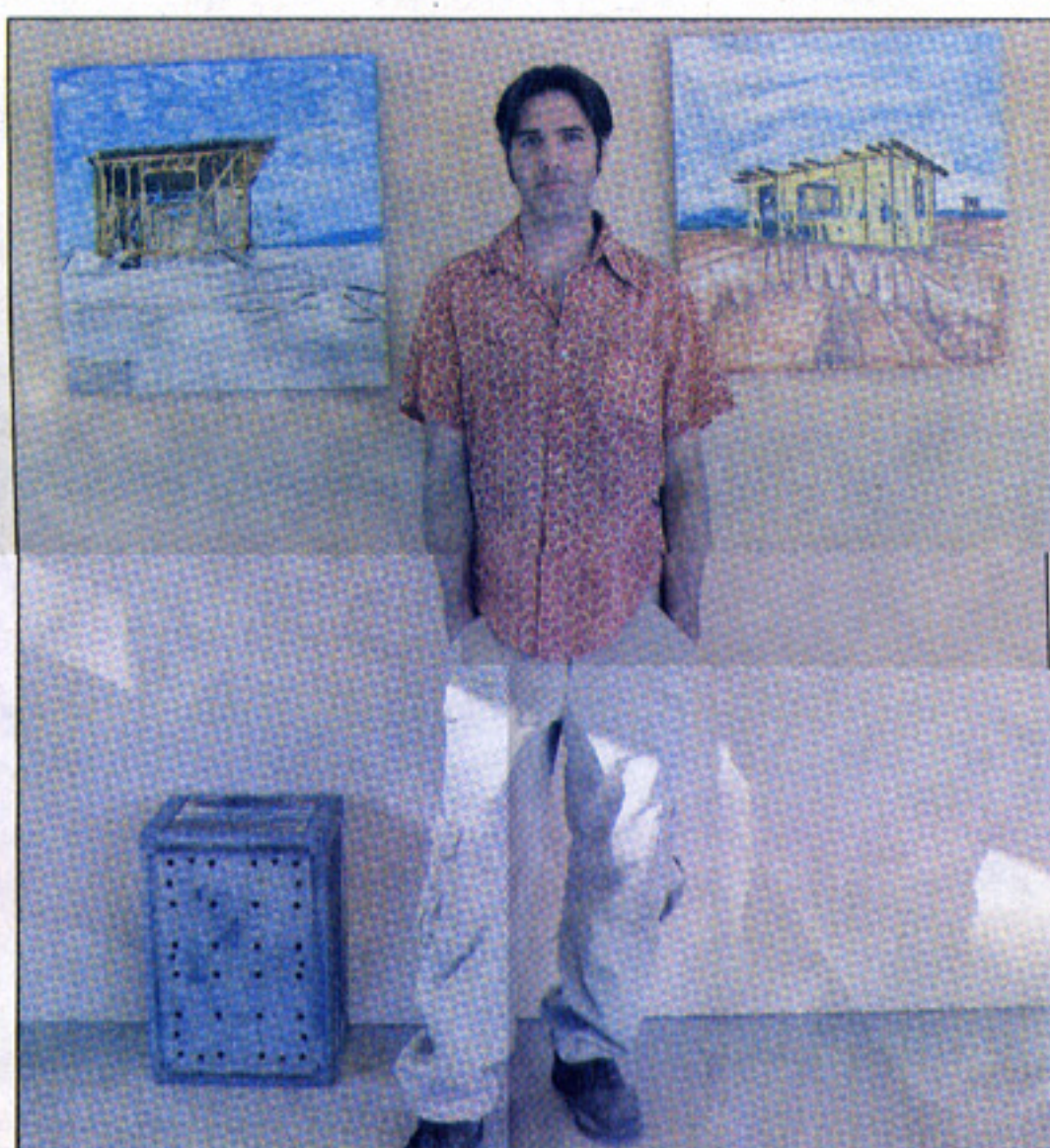
"A scraggly house next to a dirt track" is how performance artist Cathy Allen described the typical homestead cabin. This Wonder Valley shack on lonesome Amboy Road personifies "the tug of a personal lament" that Allen identified as one of the attractions of these abandoned structures.

You had to have been there. Author/artist Cathy Allen gave a stirring performance piece called "Ode to a Shack," the story of the homestead cabin she and her husband tried to domesticate. She presented a tenderly humorous slide show of the structure's "past resurrected," rendered in original rhyme and accompanied by percussion played on relics found on the property.



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Scott Monteith isn't just an organizer of the Homestead Cabin Festival and an exhibiting artist in it; he lives at the Fi-Lox-See Gallery in Wonder Valley where the festival is exhibiting. Monteith grew up in Burfordville, Mo., a small old town with a grist mill and covered bridge. Those structures were subject to the elements, and Monteith recalls the yearly floods gradually washing away the bridges. The desert elements of sun and wind sculpt the homestead cabins in a like manner until they, too, are swept away.



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It was love at first sight for Perry Hoffman. "This is a magic house — I need a piece of it!" Photographer Hoffman came to Wonder Valley by way of San Francisco and Los Angeles and brought his eye for unusual beauty with him. This magic house has been totally refurbished and is now "an inspiring work of art" where one is "completely alone in the middle of nowhere and yet at the center of something amazing — the universe."

Festival celebrates the wonder of cabins

By Rebecca Unger
Hi-Desert Star

Homestead cabins and the people who love them had a day of good art, good people and good fun at the Fi-Lox-See Gallery in Wonder Valley. Artists Scott Monteith and Andy Woods created a friendly "good vibe" setting for the Homestead Cabin Festival at their digs on Filoxsee. There were two galleries on the site, one located in the front house and another in a large converted service building. In their home proper were special presentations and a long craft-working table for kids and other artists.

Music by Wonder Valley Extraordinaire! blended the revelers and sunset colors into night.

The presenters were San Diego author-artist-educator Kim Stringfellow, whose book, "Jackrabbit Homestead," will be out next year; Wonder Valley multimedia artist Ellie Greenwood, who offered a unique view of the cabins' mythology; and Copper Mountain College art professor Cathy Allen.

The Small-Tract Homestead Act of 1938 made five-acre parcels in the Hi-Desert available for city folks' weekend getaways. After World War II, the "jackrabbit" models could be built almost overnight to help property owners meet the homestead claim requirements. After the novelty wore off and the harsh realities of minimal desert living set in, the abandoned cabins began to erode and become part of the natural landscape. The Wonder Valley Arts group calls this juxtaposition a "dynamic tidal zone of wilderness and human endeavor."

The next Wonder Valley Homestead Cabin Festival will be from 2 to 7 p.m. Feb. 23 at The Palms Restaurant, 83131 Amboy Road. For information, call Chris Carraher at 361-0505 or log onto www.wondervallearts.com.



RICK UNGER PHOTO

Evangelyn Cox was the youngest artist at the festival, and she made a good model of a shack at the craft table. "Evie" is the great-granddaughter of Louise Borquez, who wrote the Wonder Valley column in The Desert Trail for 18 years.

Landscape artist Robert Arnett grew up in the San Gabriel Valley. He remembers farms, horse properties and the wide-open spaces.



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