

# Desert Horse Art

by Diana Bishop



*Mardi Storm riding "Hippocampus." Photographed by Pete Slingland  
(www.peteslingland.com.)*



*"Seahorse." Photographed by Peter Maxfield  
(www.pmaxfield.com.)*

**Burning Man, the annual fire ceremony that began on a San Francisco beach in 1986 before moving to Black Rock desert in northern Nevada, is an artistic Mecca, a playa for painting, and, for artist Mardi Storm, a support for her sculptures. Ride! Magazine got the chance to find out more about Mardi and her fantastical equine art.**

#### **ABOUT HER EARLIEST INTEREST IN ART**

I have been making art since my first box of crayons. Felt tips were my favorites—for the brilliant colors.

I was drawing pictures of horses and rabbits for the other kids in my class when I was five years old. I was lucky and my mother enrolled me in a summer art program when I was around seven year old, where I tried my hand at clay.

I became obsessed with making every spe-

cies of dinosaur I could think of (I couldn't get my horses to stand).

#### **ABOUT HER INTEREST IN HORSES**

I've been completely fascinated with horses for as long as I can remember, obsessed with them as a child. I would draw picture after picture of horses and of mythological horses like the unicorn and Pegasus.

I love to ride horses. It has been a life-long dream to have my own horse. Someday when I have some property I plan to. My grandma was caretaker at a ranch which had a few horses roaming wild for years; I wanted to ride so bad they'd round them up, and I would saddle up the big horse Joe who had one blind eye.

My little sister would take the smaller horse Lucky. We had some scary run-ins when he'd get spooked and both horses would start off on a

dead run, but I was good at holding on!

#### **ABOUT WHAT DRAWS HER TO BURNING MAN**

The first year I went I was completely amazed at the world I'd stepped into. [It's] a beautiful creative community where strangers are friendly to one another, and everyone is offering each other whatever gift they have—art, song, music, comedy, food, whatever their thing is.

My first time I went as part of Pepe Ozan's Opera, a huge performance involving hundreds of people centered around magnificent towers he built reaching into the sky, created out of steel and covered with mud, similar to the way Twilight was made, and burned down at the crescendo of the performance.

#### **ABOUT THE ART AT BURNING MAN**

Art at Burning Man breaks all the conven-

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tional rules of art—from execution to materials used. It is radical.

I was so inspired [my first year that] I decided I was going to bring a sculpture of my own the following year. I enrolled in a be-

ginning sculpture class at SFSU, and one of the first sculptures I made was a horse head, a dream image which also correlates to the fairytale of the Goose Girl and her talking horse. That summer I made Emergence, which is the Pegasus flying

up out of the ground. I had no idea it would be such a popular sculpture! I didn't find out for a couple years in fact that it was so well loved, except for its appearance in a "San Francisco Chronicle" story on Burning Man, until I began to meet more

and more people who knew and loved my work.

#### **ABOUT BEING AN ARTIST IN TODAY'S CULTURE**

In the San Francisco Bay Area, it can be challenging to be a full time artist and make ends meet.

The cost of living and rents tend to be very high. I am fortunate that I have other skills to offer, and for which I am also passionate. I make ends meet with my healing work mostly—and in the past, I have taken part time jobs temporarily to help fund the sculptures I made.

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### **Art at Burning Man breaks all the conventional rules of art—from execution to materials used.**

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In truth I've had up to six different jobs at one time—from Web design work to office work for a couple different small businesses, including a Jewelry designer and other healers. My many years spent in the corporate field has granted me a lot of skills for which I am thankful.

Now that I have relocated to the East Bay I am settling in and building my massage and breathwork practice here, which in conjunction with my art, I plan to have completely support me. **R!**

*Mardi's sculptures are available for viewing and sale. For further information visit [www.mardistorm.com](http://www.mardistorm.com).*



*"Twilight Anima Rising." Photographed by Rob Bishop.  
View this sculpture at Manzanita Restaurant, 4001 Linden Street, in Emeryville/Oakland.*