



# GENERAL INFORMATION AND PRESS KIT



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(702) 870-9946 or [suzanne.hackett@goldwellmuseum.org](mailto:suzanne.hackett@goldwellmuseum.org)  
3008 Mason Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89102  
[www.goldwellmuseum.org](http://www.goldwellmuseum.org)

## ABOUT GOLDWELL OPEN AIR MUSEUM

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The Goldwell Open Air Museum is a 7.8 acre outdoor sculpture site near the ghost town of Rhyolite, Nevada, approximately 115 miles north of Las Vegas. It began in 1984 with the creation and installation of a major sculpture, *The Last Supper*, by Belgian artist Albert Szukalski, which is a ghostly interpretation of Christ and his disciples sited against the backdrop of the expansive Amargosa Valley.

To make the life-size ghost figures, Szukalski wrapped live models in fabric soaked in wet plaster and posed them as in the painting “*The Last Supper*” by Michelangelo. When the plaster set, the model was slipped out, leaving the rigid shroud that surrounded him. With more refining, Szukalski then coated the figures with fiberglass making them impervious to weather.

In subsequent years, six additional pieces were added to the site by three other Belgian artists who, like Szukalski, were major figures in European art with extensive exhibition records, but who chose to create in relative obscurity in the Nevada desert near Death Valley in the early 1990s. All of the artworks have a contextual relationship to this specific environment. They are meant to be viewed within this particular landscape.

*The Last Supper*, Albert Szukalski, 1984

*Ghost Rider*, Albert Szukalski, 1984

*Desert Flower*, Albert Szukalski, 1984

*Lady Desert*, Dr. Hugo (Heyerman), 1992

*Icara*, Dre Peeters, 1992

*Chained to the Earth*, David Spicer, 1992

*Tribute to Shorty Harris*, Fred Bervoets, 1994

The Goldwell Open Air Museum is a 501(c)3 non profit organization created after Albert Szukalski’s death in 2000 to provide for the preservation, interpretation, and promotion of the museum site and to further its cultural activities. Our long-term goal is to become a nationally and internationally recognized arts/cultural entity with ties and viability that will become, in time, cultural and economic assets to Nye County and the State of Nevada. We provide ongoing maintenance and conservation for the existing sculptures and develop educational and cultural programs to enhance the visitor’s experience of the site. We explore this environment as artists ourselves and encourage others to do so as well.

For Albert, “America” and “The West” represented a place of ultimate freedom where he had permission to pursue his artistic vision unfettered by historical precedent or convention. Goldwell remains this kind of place for those who continue to choose to create out here.

We welcome you to experience it for yourself.



*Portions of Goldwell Open Air Museum's program  
are made possible in part by grants from*



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## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 9, 2004

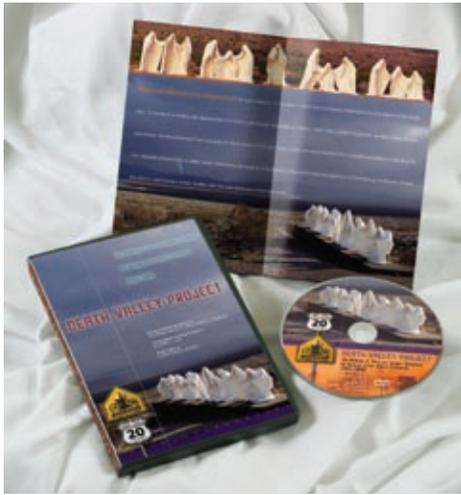
### **GOLDWELL MUSEUM CELEBRATES 20 YEARS IN OCTOBER *Big Whoop-Dee-Doo Planned for October 15-17, 2004***

Rhyolite, NV-- October 2004 will be the 20th anniversary of Belgian artist's Albert Szukalski's "The Last Supper" at the Goldwell Open Air Museum near the ghost town of Rhyolite, Nevada. Few people are aware of what transpired at Goldwell or its significance within the context of other land-based artwork produced in the Nevada. A 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration event on Oct. 15-17, 2004 will offer a variety of new ways for people to think about and experience the sculptures.

Friday night, a free screening of the film, "DEATH VALLEY PROJECT: The Making of the Last Supper Sculpture" will be offered at the Sourdough Saloon in Beatty, Nevada. The 50-minute film, made its world premiere August 1 at the Wine Country Film festival (<http://www.winecountryfilmfest.com>) in Napa Valley, follows the artist through the creation of two of the ghostly figures and the complete sculpture's unveiling in the ghost town in 1984. It was crafted from six hours of high-quality, unedited footage shot at the time of the sculpture's creation that had languished in a personal collection for nearly 20 years. The film answers the questions of millions of visitors who have viewed the sculpture on how it came into being and what motivated Szukalski to place it there.



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NOW AVAILABLE ON DVD

**Death Valley Project DVD now available for \$21.95**

The long-awaited (20 years) release of “Death Valley Project: The Making of The Last Supper sculpture” is on the horizon. The production of this DVD features the only extant footage of the original creation of the Last Supper sculpture, a piece which was to become the founding artwork of the Goldwell Open Air Museum. The DVD not only reveals how the sculpture was made, but also the reasons why the artist chose to create it in relative obscurity in the ghost town of Rhyolite, Nevada.

Shot in 1984 on video, the DVD chronicles the working process of artist Albert Szukalski and features several revealing interviews with him, some of the models that he used, and others involved in the original project.

The DVD contains a full-length (54 minutes) film with original music by Christopher Reiner and stunning images of the vast Amargosa Valley and Rhyolite, Nevada by cinematographer G. John Slagle. The DVD was edited by Las Vegas DVD Transfer Company with art direction by Lost Vegas Design. Bonus features include additional interviews, a music video, and hyperlinked resources. The DVD was created with support from the Nevada Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency and will be made widely available in early Fall 2004.

**BONUS FEATURES INCLUDE:**

**“THE SOURCE”**

Additional interview with  
**Albert Szukalski**  
by Debra McKillop

**Original Music Video**

**“IL EST FINI”**  
by Christopher Reiner

**Works Of Art**

in the Goldwell Open Air Museum collection

**Artists**

of the Goldwell Open Air Museum

order online: [www.goldwellmuseum.org](http://www.goldwellmuseum.org)



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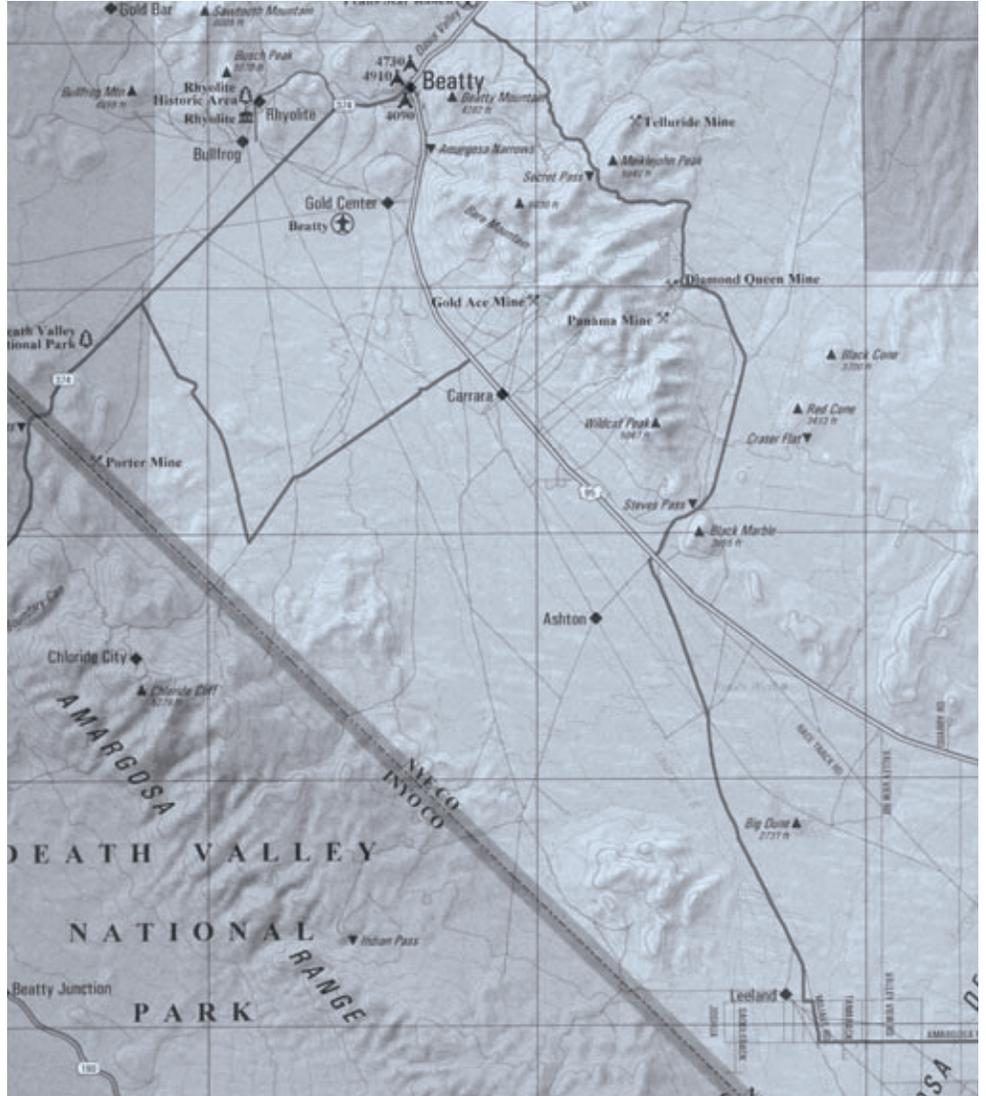
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## DIRECTIONS TO GOLDWELL OPEN AIR MUSEUM



Goldwell Open Air Museum is approximately 5 miles west of the town of Beatty, Nevada and 115 miles north of Las Vegas. It's free to the public and is open year-round, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Being located along a heavily traveled route between Death Valley, Las Vegas, and Reno, and adjacent to Rhyolite, one of the most heavily visited ghost towns and attractions in Nevada, the Museum has been seen by millions of visitors from around the world.



[goldwellmuseum.org](http://goldwellmuseum.org)

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# THE ARTISTS OF GOLDWELL OPEN AIR MUSEUM

## CHARLES ALBERT SZUKALSKI

BORN APRIL 4, 1945, FURTH IM WALD, POLAND

DIED JANUARY 25, 2000, ANTWERP, BELGIUM

THE LAST SUPPER 1984

GHOST RIDER 1984

DESERT FLOWER 1989



Known for many years in Europe as the sculptor of “ghosts” and a “situation maker,” Albert Szukalski came to the Nevada desert in 1984 to create what is perhaps the most unique piece of his career. Originally designed to endure a mere two years, “The Last Supper” sculpture has not only stood the test of time, but has lived on to become the “genesis” piece of the Goldwell Open Air Museum.

Albert was attracted to the Mojave Desert for many reasons, not the least of which was the Mojave’s resemblance to the deserts of the Middle East. To construct a modern day representation of Christ’s Last Supper, especially so close to Death Valley (where he originally wanted it sited), is eerily appropriate. Working essentially from Leonardo Da Vinci’s fresco of the Last Supper within the desert environment, Szukalski succeeded in blending the two disparate elements into a unified whole. Maintaining the staging of the figures in Leonardo’s work and placing it in the American Southwest allowed the artist to meld Western Artistic tradition with the vast landscape of the New World. Albert Szukalski followed up “The Last Supper” with two other pieces at the site, “Ghost Rider” in 1984 and “Desert Flower” in 1989.



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## DR. HUGO HEYRMAN

BORN 1942, ANTWERP, BELGIUM  
LADY DESERT: THE VENUS OF NEVADA 1992

“Art helps the re-experiencing of forgotten things,” says Belgian artist Dr. Hugo, creator of “Lady Desert.” Using cinderblocks to represent in real 3-D sculpture the pixels he uses in his virtual 2-D computer work, Dr. Hugo has created a sculpture which at once refers back to classical Greek sculpture while maintaining a firm presence in the highly technological/pixelated world of the 21st century.

“Lady Desert: The Venus of Nevada” becomes then an example of a modern sculpture that helps us re-experience and re-interpret a subject firmly rooted in the Western Fine Art tradition. The human figure, especially the female, is as fresh today in Dr. Hugo’s sculpture, with its computer generated beginning, as it was millennia ago in Greece.

## DRE PEETERS

BORN 1948  
ICARA 1992

The Greek story of Icarus is the jumping off point for Dre Peeter’s wood sculpture “Icara,” Icarus as female. The hot and sunny environment of the American Southwest is a natural location for a sculpture that takes as its beginning the story of the headstrong youth who flew too close to the sun with wax wings, which subsequently melted, plunging him back to earth. The Greek myth fits well into the dry desert reality; the female form of “Icara,” arms/wings spread wide, eternally poised at the zenith of her flight, caught between the earth below and the desert sky above.

## DAVID SPICER

USA  
CHAINED TO THE EARTH 1992

The only American artist represented at the museum is David Spicer, contractor and owner of a Beatty, Nevada ornamental stone company. His work can be seen around Beatty, as well as at the museum. As one would expect, Spicer’s “Chained to the Earth” is made of stone that represents, in his words, “the inseparability of man and woman, and the need for humankind to come back to earth,” (excerpted from “The Sculpture Lady,” Las Vegas New Times, May 26, 1994, pages 6-11, story by Andrew Kiraly). His monumental piece does indeed exhibit an affinity with the landscape itself, symbolizing perhaps our elemental beginnings as human beings on this earth.

## FRED BERVOETS

BORN 1942, BURCHT, BELGIUM  
TRIBUTE TO SHORTY HARRIS 1994

Among the artists that have contributed work to the museum, probably the one who felt most out of place in the desert was Belgian artist Fred Bervoets, appointed a Knight of the Order of Leopold II by the King in 1988. His “portrait” sculpture of Shorty Harris (an early miner in Death Valley and its environs) and a penguin has elicited countless questions. The miner makes sense, but why the Antarctic bird? Word has it that Bervoets wanted to include in his sculpture an indication of how “alien” he felt in the Nevada desert. The penguin was the most out of place entity the artist could think of to represent his own feelings of displacement under the Mojave sun, a self-portrait then as a penguin in the desert.

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SUZANNE HACKETT AND CHARLES MORGAN

16 Page Booklet Featuring An Essay by  
WILLIAM L. FOX

Original Music by  
CHRISTOPHER REINER

**ENGLISH • APPROX. 50 MINUTES • COLOR**

**Original Video Production and Direction**  
G. JOHN SLAGLE

**Graphic Design & Coordination**  
JIM STANFORD & MILO DUFFIN

**Photography**  
CHARLES MORGAN (UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

**Final Editing and DVD Authoring**  
JUDY SWANN, LAS VEGAS DVD TRANSFER

**“Art in a place where it seemingly  
shouldn’t be....”**

And here is the story, and sole documentation, of Albert Szukalski’s sculpture, “The Last Supper,” near the ghost town of Rhyolite.

This video not only captures the process by which the unique sculpture was made, but also captures revealing interviews with the artist and the local townspeople who served as models for the sculpture. Learn how the remarkable sculpture was made, and why the Belgian artist chose to create it in relative obscurity at the edge of Death Valley in the Mojave Desert.

This DVD will enrich and inform your experience of the site. It sparks new interest and appreciation for the unique land-based artworks that find a home in Nevada, encouraging their protection and inspiring their exploration. In addition, it is the only documentation of the creation of Albert Szukalski’s Last Supper.



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