



NATURE ARTIST TO PUT ON SHOW
 Rock, sand creations on display at Stinson Beach
LIFESTYLES D1



SAUSALITO RUNNER HAS BIG DEBUT
 Finishes 12th among women in chilly Boston Marathon
SPORTS C1

Recycled paper

Marin Independent Journal

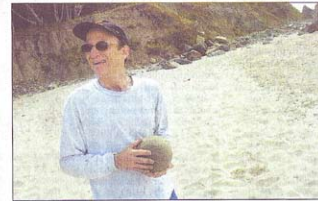
50 CENTS

APRIL 17, 2007

TUESDAY

WWW.MARINIJ.COM

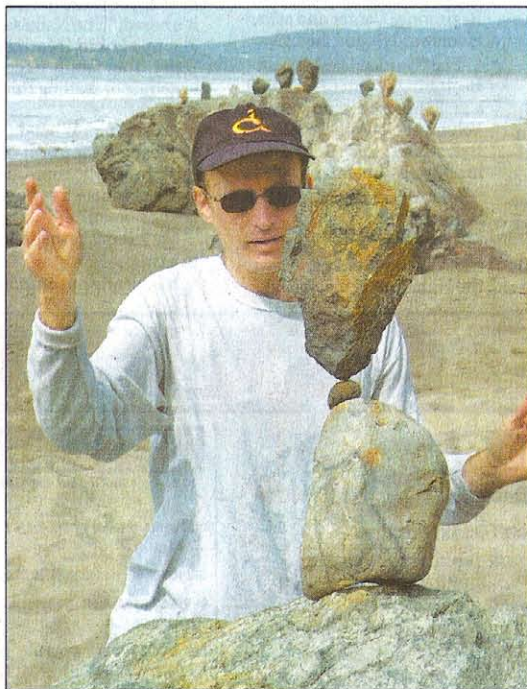
Nature's ARTIST



IJ photos/Alan Dep

HOW ODD: A beach-goer at Stinson walks past rocks balanced by Berkeley artist and teacher Zach Pine. Pine (top photo) often creates balls made of sand.

Berkeley man's rock and sand creations at Stinson inspire, delight



STEADY NOW: Zach Pine creates a sculpture of perfectly balanced rocks at Stinson Beach.

By Rick Polito
 IJ reporter

ZACH PINE STANDS on Stinson Beach and shapes the improbable. In one hand, he cups a sphere of sand, growing grain by grain, layer by layer, a surprising model of perfect roundness. Three feet a way, a pair of less-experienced hands follows his direction.

"You're going to get the feel for it," the Berkeley "nature artist" assures Napa resident Pete Stampone. Stampone had come upon Pine and his unlikely sand spheres while walking the beach with two friends and is nearly incredulous as his own gritty globe grows in his hands. The two men keep the spheres moving, up and down, five minutes of constant motion.

And then they are done, two perfectly round orbs, created from the sand at their feet. Pine shows Stampone how to finish the creation, smoothing off the rougher patches.

"You can go by vision or you can go by feel," Pine says.

Pine goes by both. Calling himself a "nature artist," Pine creates art out of the materials as close and abundant as the high tide line or the rocks at the edge of a meadow. He shapes his art in nature, and leaves it there, documenting his work in photographs but removing no part of it from the studio.

It is a very open studio. People like

IF YOU GO

What: Zach Pine will help the artistically curious celebrate and interpret nature through art instruction and collaboration.

Where: the extreme southern end of Stinson Beach

When: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday

Information: E-mail zpine@aol.com. RSVP is suggested but not required.

Stampone wander in constantly and curiously, says Pine, who calls some part of his work "performance art." On Saturday, everybody is invited to the performance. For the third year, Pine will celebrate Earth Day by inviting the public to step into the artistic process on Stinson Beach and study with the master — not Pine, but nature itself.

Pine will be there as another apprentice, a very helpful apprentice.

Stampone took his lesson with a smile. "It's a lifetime of study for me," Pine says. "But it's five minutes of conversation to get it to him."

The lifetime of study may not be an overstatement. Pine was attracted to art in nature long before he called himself an artist. He grew up in the Bay Area and his mother brought him to local beaches where he "made construc-

See Artist, page D4



IJ photo/Alan Dep

LETTING GO: Pete Stampone (left) and artist Zach Pine toss sand balls they made into the ocean at Stinson Beach.

ARTIST: The materials reveal their form to him

From page D1

tions like any kid." "I just never stopped," he explains.

In school, he was attracted to ceramics not only by what he could create but how the clay helped him understand the forms he'd seen in nature. "I was attracted to its natural qualities even then," he says.

Pine runs an art program for people with disabilities in the East Bay. He sometimes uses nature as their teacher. He considers nature the real master artist and himself but an apprentice, maybe not even that.

"Apprentice implies that eventually you take over the boss' job," Pine says. "I'm a permanent apprentice."

This apprentice does much of his work in sand. Other pieces are wrought in balanced stones. On a jagged edge of rock on Stinson Beach, he plays with the edge of a continent. Pine balances a row of rocks so precariously that passers-by feel compelled to examine them closely, one brushing her finger across it, a teen declaring "awesome."

In other works, Pine has used fallen branches and flower petals, bark and grass, teasing composition from a scattered palette.

"I thought that if I got people really engaged with nature for several hours, they would learn something about their relationship with nature that would stick with them."

— Zach Pine

Pine calls it art because it plays with form with discovery. A builder of sand castles is imposing form on the material. For Pine, the material reveals its form to him.

On Saturday, he hopes the materials reveal something to the "artists" who show up on Stinson Beach. Working in nature, Pine says, can be meditative, bringing the artist into a close conscious moment with the natural world. And since "Everyone Is An Artist" is part of the theme of Satur-

day's event, those moments will be shared.

At least that's how the art speaks to Pine.

"I thought that if I got people really engaged with nature for several hours, they would learn something about their relationship with nature that would stick with them," he says.

Standing on the shore with a sphere of sand in his hands, it is not clear whether Stampone has contemplated his connection to nature. But he holds a piece of it in his hand.

The waves are rushing and retreating. The two men step forward into that rhythm. Arms raised, they cast their creation into the surf.

The spheres arc against the horizon for an instant and then dissolve into the waves, the material returning to the palette. The men brush the sand from their hands.

Stampone has his creative moment on film, a shot snapped by one of his companions.

Pine turns back to his work.

"My artistic roots are on this beach," he says, later.

"Or beaches like this."

Rick Polito can be reached at polito@marinij.com.