

XMAN

XMan, originally from Texas, has been a member of the DPW since the age of 21. An enthusiastic world traveler, he also participates in several European regional burns, with Midburn being his favorite. Known by his childhood nickname, 'X,' he has embraced the unique and challenging experiences at burns, which have fostered strong friendships and personal growth.

This interview was conducted by “Flo”, Flore Muguet, a French anthropologist, in 2017. Most of Flo’s questions have been omitted to improve reading flow.



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XMAN My name is Christian. Or, X. X was a childhood nickname, so for me it was part of my life before Burning Man. My name was Christian. My grandfather started calling me Christmas. It slowly became Xmas, and then just X. But I’ve been that name since I was five. I was born in Aurora, Missouri, but I’m from Austin, Texas. I’m 25 years old. I’m a full-time student, and I also work as a painter and I work for a moving company.

FLO Did you come to Burning Man as a burner, or as DPW?

XMAN I’ve only ever been DPW. My first year I worked for commissary. My first year I was a scanner, the next few years I was in the setup for the tent... and this year I was just a volunteer on Spires. It’s a really fun crew. It’s a heavy labor crew. There’s no shade all day, and we put up the spires that the Lamplighters hang the lamp posts on throughout the city. It’s a lot of sledgehammer work and screwdriver work, but it’s just good fun, and people I work with are all amazing. I mean, this particular crew are all amazing musicians. World-class musicians. So, I feel like every day I’m getting exposed to people who are exemplary in their fields. Whether it’s music, or carpentry work... and that’s why I’ve always been enthralled with Burning Man. You can be exposed to such amazing characters. Everyone here is a spectacular, unique person. There’s not that in the real world. But, here there’s such a high concentration. My crew on spires was all about that. Everybody on there was so cool, so unique. I had so many crazy experiences.

When I came out here, I was pretty much 21. I very much had trouble dealing with the conflict and the tongue judo that you experience out here, where people are snappy at

you, and you gotta be snappy back. Burning Man taught me how to have a thick skin—or DPW specifically. Don’t worry what people think. Just be yourself.

FLO Nice. Do you feel like you evolved?

XMAN Rapidly. I mean, when I was 21 I was this baby faced little kid from Texas who hadn’t really experienced the world in any regard. This place just constantly crossed my boundaries, and so I knew what they were. You really don’t know what your boundaries are until you go way past them.

FLO So you experienced your boundaries out here. From 21 to 25, you kind of grew up here doing DPW around these people. Did you make good friends that you still have at this time?

XMAN I have amazing friends. The best friends I have in my life are all out here. Doing some of the international burns, I made some amazing friendships there. That’s what I really love about this place. A lot of us have weird family lives, and we come out here as the black sheep of our families. But out here you can totally be accepted for who you are. Almost no matter how weird you are. I might have joined the military when I was 22 if I hadn’t done all this. I’m really happy I did it. It changed my outlook on everything.

FLO Would you like to talk about your experience abroad? Such as Nowhere and Midburn?

XMAN Those are the two I did this year. I kind of... I went to Midburn first. It was also my first time traveling internationally. I went to Israel first, to which a lot of my friends—especially my traveler ones—were like “You’re going to Israel as your first travel experience? That’s just a



Photo credit: unknown, 2016.



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little intense?” I really liked Israel. I had a great time. Midburn was nuts. Let me tell you... because those Israeli kids are all ex-military, they work so fucking hard. They never ask for breaks.

FLO How many weeks did you stay, total?

XMAN I was there about 10-12 days before the event, stayed through the event, and then did 4 days of strike.

FLO So, it’s not that long, actually...

XMAN No, their burn was only 11,000 people in 2017, when I did it. It was a lot of fun. I would go to the build for a burn. I would show up in the country, do the build, and then I would travel the country for a week after that. Oh, man that’s the way to travel. You make so many friends, and you just couch-surf!

The last three or four months I was travelling, I spent most of my time in Spain, Barcelona. I am in love with that city. Nowhere was amazing. It was a lot less structured. At Nowhere it’s definitely a European burn. I wouldn’t call it a Spanish burn because there’s not a ton of Spanish people there. But, it was much less structured. It was much less of a pressing time frame. At any time you can have a siesta from 1-5 every day.

I loved Nowhere. Nowhere is an amazing burn. I loved the party at Nowhere as much as the build. The unique thing about Nowhere is that you get people from everywhere. 50 languages at least at Nowhere. Especially for me as a young American who hasn’t travelled much, it was just amazing to talk to a Finnish guy, then a Swedish guy, then someone from Ecuador, and blah blah blah. Especially all the mainland Europe countries are really represented there.

FLO Did you feel accepted and welcome?

XMAN Very much so. I know a lot of that is because I have a strong background in DPW and other burns. As far as a worker burner goes, I have a pretty great resume. I’ve been doing this scene for long enough that I’m really good at it. So I know I didn’t have a lot of trouble.

You learn a lot of trade skills at DPW, but you also learn how to work with other people; the chicks we have at DPW are so tough and so cool. You really value everyone for who they are and what they know. No matter what gender or anything else. Whoever is best at the job is the one who’s in charge. I really think that’s something we lead in.



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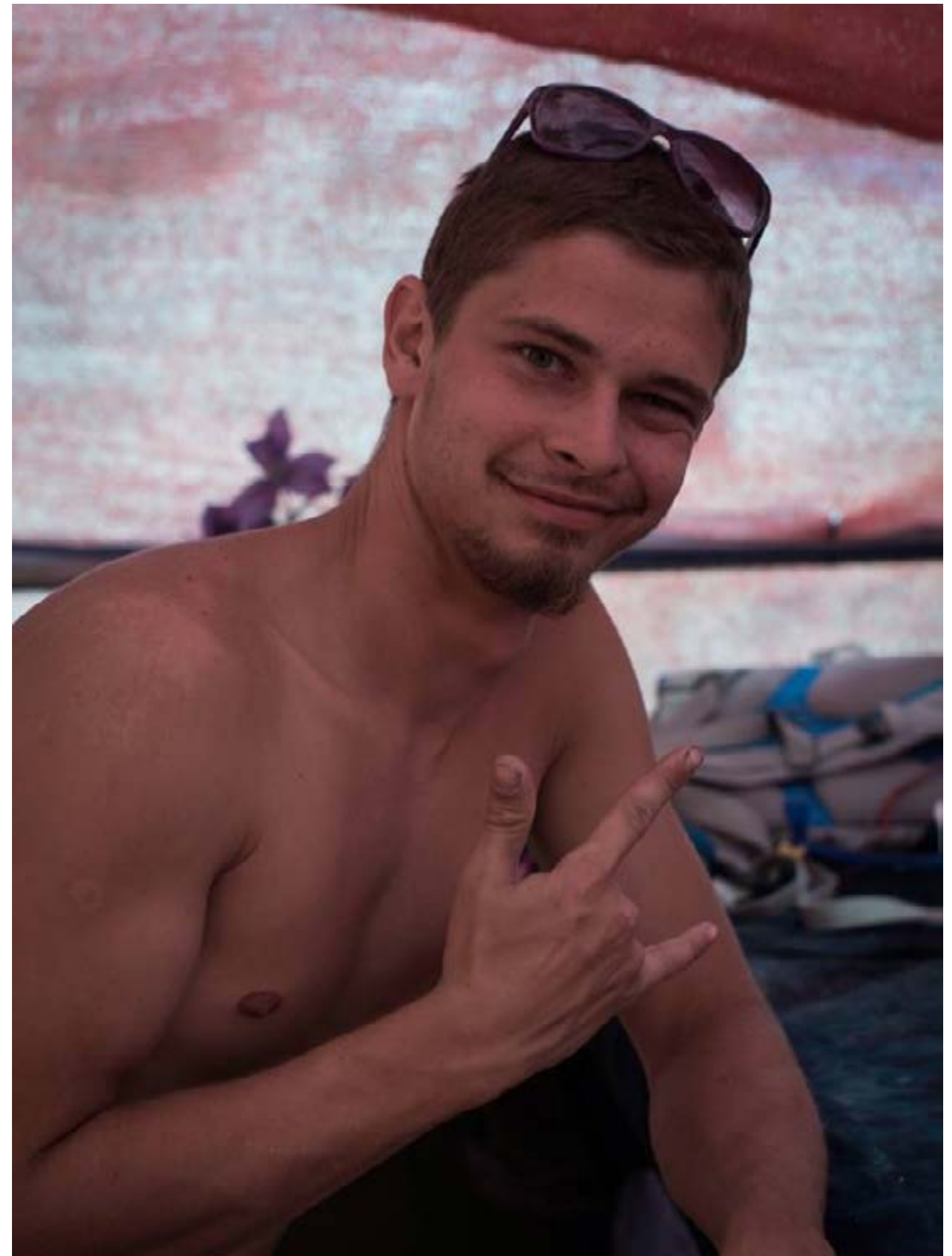


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