



POWER TOOLS, PYROTECHNICS, AND PUMPKINS

Site takes pumpkin carving to extremes

As the bewitching hour nears, ghouls, ghosts and goblins of all sizes scurry about preparing for the macabre celebration. There are capes to sew, webs to drape, skeletons to hang, and, of course, fiendish faces to carve into the flesh of innocent gourds.

Halloween brings out the worst in us in the best possible way. It's a chance to have a little fun with our darker side, while extorting sweet treats from our neighbors. Of all the gruesome holiday traditions — costumes, trick or treating, gross party treats — jack-o-lanterns are one of my favorites.

At www.extremepumpkins.com, they take the art of pumpkin carving seriously, in a decidedly unserious fashion. Using power tools, and even pyrotechnics, they create pumpkins that celebrate the part of Halloween that allows us to behave for one night a year like we don't live in a civilized society.

A warning to parents

Although there is nothing on this site that is obscene or unsuitable for the little ones, the site's creator, Tom Nardone, makes his living running websites for adult products. There are text links (no pictures) to these sites placed discretely on many of the pages, usually near the bottom.

On the home page, under the slogan "Pumpkin carving has been reborn. This time it is a little bit deformed," there's a slide show with suffocating, flaming and puking pumpkins. There are also pumpkin pictures with links to various parts of the site, and there's a column on

Frightful sites

www.pumpkin-carving.com: A nice site with Halloween history and pumpkin picking, preserving, photographing and carving tips.

www.pumpkin carving.org: This site has some inspiring photos of elaborately carved pumpkins. The links to pumpkin carving patterns that I tried didn't work.

www.halloween-online.com: Here you'll find ideas for all things halloween — costumes, decorations, recipes, games, party ideas, safety tips, special effects and props, pumpkin carving tips, music, movies, crafts and digital gadgets for cell phones — for all ages.

www.pumpkinmasters.com: With more nice pictures and carving tips, this site also sells everything you need for pumpkin carving — patterns, tools, lights, etc.

www.dltk-holidays.com/halloween/mpatterns.htm: This is one of many sites that I found with a Google search for "pumpkin carving patterns" that has free patterns you can print or download.

the left side with a comprehensive set of links to all areas of the site.

Mr. Nardone writes the copy for the site in an informal, humorous manner that would keep an editor busy, but still manages to communicate effectively and give the site its personality. Pictures of him and his friends picking wagon loads of pumpkins, cleaning them with power washers and carving them with Sawzalls and routers add to the site's charm.

All aspects of pumpkin carving are covered on the site. There are sections on design strategy, carving tips, which tools work best for differ-

ent techniques, using fire with pumpkins, free patterns for download, preservation techniques and how to prepare the seeds for a treat.

The site runs a yearly carving contest with prizes ranging from "crappy to really crappy." There are photo galleries of the winning entries going back to 2004, some of which are quite disturbing (in a nice sort of way).

Pumpkin videos

There's a section with a half dozen pumpkin-related videos made by Mr. Nardone and his friends, including a stop-motion animation of a pumpkin snake and a guy dancing with a flaming pumpkin on his head. "The World's Fastest Pumpkin Carver" is a funny short where Mr. Nardone slams a custom-made tool into a pumpkin and removes it to reveal an instant jack-o-lantern face on the gourd. There's also a cute one featuring Mr. Nardone and a friend carving an enormous pumpkin to the delight of the neighborhood kids.

Mr. Nardone has also published several books on extreme pumpkins and extreme Halloween parties. You can purchase the books from the site and from major book retailers as well.

This is a site that treads the fine line between Halloween fun and bad taste, landing mostly on the fun side. The navigation is easy to follow and works well. It needs some work on its design to make the type and layouts more visually appealing. The pumpkin designs aren't even the most extreme I've seen, but the site has enough tricks to make it a treat.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a graphic artist for The Times-Tribune. Contact him at koneill@timeshamrock.com with links to your favorite websites.



KEVIN O'NEILL
InSites