

# DESERT X

For Immediate Release

**Desert X 2021 announces more than 650,000 visits to its third edition, marking the first, safe, outdoor art exhibition in the region since lockdowns.**

**More than 1 million unique visitors to its [website](#).**

**Works by Ghada Amer, Nicholas Galanin and Christopher Myers will remain on view beyond the closing of the exhibition.**

**New Desert X 2021 documentary film to premiere this fall.**



L to R: Desert X 2021 installation views of Zahrah Alghamdi, *What Lies Behind The Walls*; Xaviera Simmons, *Because You Know Ultimately We Will Band A Militia*; Nicholas Galanin, *Never Forget*; Alicja Kwade, *ParaPivot (sempiternal clouds)*. Photography by Lance Gerber, courtesy the artists and Desert X.

(Palm Springs, Calif., Monday, May 17, 2021) – Desert X announced today a record of more than 650,000 visits to its third edition, which closed yesterday. The popular and critically acclaimed nine-week exhibition, for which visitor safety was a priority, featured outdoor installations by international artists at locations across the Coachella Valley. Since its opening on March 12, the organization has counted more than one million unique visitors to its [website](#),

which has hosted a robust series of free, online public and educational programs that will remain open and accessible to all. The popular Desert X app, used to navigate the journey from artwork to artwork was downloaded by more than 50,000 people, while followers on Desert X social media platforms have increased by 30 percent since the exhibition opened in March. Despite challenges to production and travel as a result of COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns, attendance this year exceeds the 2019 exhibition by more than 200,000 visits.

Several of the artworks will remain on view after the exhibition has closed, including **Ghada Amer's** *Women's Qualities* sited at Sunnylands Center & Gardens until June 6, **Nicholas Galanin's** *Never Forget* until August 15 and **Christopher Myers, The Art of Taming Horses** through July 6.

Desert X 2021 was curated by Artistic Director **Neville Wakefield** and Co-curator **César García-Alvarez**. The exhibition, which was free and open to all, included newly-commissioned works by 12 artists from eight countries, that collectively posed urgent questions about our pasts while imagining the possibilities of a shared future. The site-specific installations explored the desert as both a place and idea, acknowledging the realities of people who reside here and the political, social, and cultural contexts that shape their stories.

“Our goal in moving ahead with Desert X 2021 was to offer to our audience the joy and nourishment that art provides--especially after a long year of isolation--in a safe and healthy way. I believe we proved that there was a huge hunger for engaging with thought-provoking art and in having valuable cross-cultural conversations sparked by the exhibition,” said Desert X Founder and President **Susan Davis**. “This was made possible by the enthusiastic support of our board, donors, partners and sponsors, and the extraordinary dedication of the Desert X team led by Executive Director **Jenny Gil** and the passionate artistic guidance of Neville Wakefield and César García-Alvarez.

This weekend Desert X hosted a community celebration to thank the hundreds of students, families, teachers, and schools that collaborated with **Oscar Murillo** on an iteration of his ongoing project, *Frequencies*. Students in three Coachella Valley school districts participated in this project, adapted for a home learning experience. Students intervened and marked canvases throughout the duration of the exhibition, forging an index of the ideas and thoughts of young people. The canvases will now be digitized and added to the *Frequencies* archive.

“Having children from across the Coachella Valley participate in Desert X this year has been especially gratifying. Seeing the work of children created during a time of lockdowns, isolation, and homeschooling is inspirational. We are thrilled we were able to offer an opportunity for the kids to make art and freely express their visions and voices on a global platform at a most extraordinary time,” said Executive Director Jenny Gil.

Further expanding its commitment to accessible educational programming, Desert X launched a filmmaking program for high school students in Desert Hot Springs, created and distributed 20,000 bilingual family guides, as well as offered a series of virtual public programs reaching audiences around the world. Additionally, the organization offered free, weekly, on-site talks at each artist site as well as informative docent-led tours.

For the community and public programs, artists including **Serge Attukwei Clottey** came from Ghana to hold a mask-making workshop for the young people in the immediate community where his work, *The Wishing Well*, is installed, **Kim Stringfellow** gave several talks at *Jackrabbit Homestead* in Palm Desert, Ghada Amer gave a talk about her installation *Women's Qualities* and artists spoke together online about their process and practice including **Zahrah Alghamdi** with **Xaviera Simmons**.

As the world navigated the effects of pandemic restrictions, safety and access to the exhibition were a priority for this Desert X edition. In addition to the mandatory visitor health and safety protocols, and the several online offerings, the enthusiastic support of more than 140 volunteers working at the artist sites and at the Desert X hub allowed visitors to learn about the works.

A Desert X 2021 documentary film has been in production throughout the run of the exhibition. It follows the process and practice of the participating artists and the themes and ideas explored in the exhibition. Filmed in several locations around the globe, including in Accra, Guadalajara, Jeddah, Labadi (Ghana), La Paila (Colombia), London, Los Angeles, New York, Panajachel (Guatemala), Palm Springs and Sitka (Alaska), the film will premiere this fall and on [desertx.org](https://desertx.org). The Executive Producer is Richard Mille.

Details of Desert X 2023 in the Coachella Valley will be announced shortly.

Desert X 2021 is funded by its board of directors and an extraordinary group of individuals, foundations, and sponsors.

Desert X 2021 is presented by Richard Mille.

With support from Gucci.

Media Partners: *artnet*, *Cultured Magazine*, *frieze Magazine*, *Here TV*, LocaliQ, part of *The Desert Sun*, NBC Palm Springs, *Open Spaces Magazine* and *Palm Springs Life Magazine*.

### **About Desert X**

Desert X is produced by The Desert Biennial, a 501(c)3 charitable organization, conceived to produce recurring international contemporary art exhibitions that activate desert locations through site-specific installations by acclaimed international artists. Its guiding principles include presenting public exhibitions of art that respond meaningfully to the conditions of desert locations, the environment and indigenous communities; promoting cultural exchange and education programs that foster dialogue and understanding among cultures and communities about shared artistic, historical, and societal issues; and providing an accessible platform for artists from around the world to address ecological, cultural, spiritual and other existential themes.

### **Acknowledgement of Native Land**

We acknowledge the Cahuilla People as the original stewards of the land on which Desert X takes place. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work with the indigenous people in this place. We pay our respect to the Cahuilla People, past, present and emerging, who have been here since time immemorial.

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