

DESERT X

DESERT X 2025 OPENS TODAY

NEWLY-COMMISSIONED WORKS BY ARTISTS FROM ASIA, EUROPE, THE AMERICAS, AND THE MIDDLE EAST REFLECT ON THE DESERT'S DEEP TIME EVOLUTIONS REFRAMING IDEAS OF WILDERNESS AND EXPLORING THEMES OF INDIGENOUS FUTURISM, DESIGN ACTIVISM, COLONIAL POWER ASYMMETRIES, THE IMPRESS OF HUMANITY ON THE LAND, AND THE ROLE OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES IN OUR CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

NOW ON VIEW, FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



[PRESS KIT AND INSTALLATION IMAGES](#)

Palm Springs, Calif., March 8, 2025 – Desert X, the recurring site-specific, international art exhibition, opens its fifth edition today at sites across the Coachella Valley, California. The exhibition is free and open to all and will remain on view through May 11, 2025.

Curated by Artistic Director **Neville Wakefield** and Co-Curator **Kaitlin Garcia Maestas**, the exhibition will activate the desert landscape through eleven installations by artists from Asia, Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East, who provide us with alternative ways of looking at a world increasingly encircled by the transformational effects of nature and humanity. Adopting

both material, architectural forms and the elusive and the immaterial to delve into ideas of temporality and nonlinear narratives of desert time, the works invite us to glean wisdom from the desert's vast knowledge. Participating artists form a space where ancestral wisdom intertwines and collides with contemporary visions for our collective future. Architecture, the most visible evidence of our transformative presence, is the adopted form of many of the projects – both pavilion-like and prosaic – while immateriality and elusive forms of wind and light signal the transformative effects, not just of humans, but of nature upon the landscape.

Artists include:

Sanford Biggers, b. Los Angeles, CA, USA, 1970, based in New York, NY, USA

Jose Dávila, b. Guadalajara, Mexico, 1974, based in Guadalajara, Mexico

Agnes Denes, b. Budapest, Hungary, 1931, based in New York, NY, USA

Cannupa Hanska Luger, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara and Lakota, b. Standing Rock Reservation, North Dakota, USA, 1979, based in Glorieta, New Mexico, USA

Raphael Hefti, b. Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 1978, based in Zurich, Switzerland

Kimsooja, b. Daegu, Korea, 1957, based in Seoul, South Korea and Paris, France

Kapwani Kiwanga, b. Hamilton, Canada, 1978, based in Paris, France

Sarah Meyohas, b. New York, NY, USA, 1991, based in New York, NY, USA

Ronald Rael, b. Conejos Country, CO, USA, 1971, based in Berkeley, CA, USA

Alison Saar, b. in Los Angeles, CA, USA, 1956, based in Los Angeles, CA, USA

Muhannad Shono, b. in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1977, based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

“Curated by the place it temporarily inhabits, Desert X reveals the landscape of the Coachella Valley as a canvas of real and imagined histories, narrating tales of displacement, sovereignty, and adaptation superimposed over visible testaments of time,” said Garcia-Maestas.

“The land of Desert X is no longer the mythical and endless expanses of the American West but has come to include the effects of our ever-growing human presence,” said Wakefield. “Artists continue to be inspired by the idea of unadulterated nature, but in its search they have also come to recognize that this is an idea and that the realities of the world we live in now are both more complex and contested. Time, light and space permeate every aspect of this work but so too does an urgency to find new sustainable approaches to living in an increasingly imperiled world.”

“Guided by the belief that art has the power to transform, heal, and inform, a remarkable constellation of works by artists from around the world invites new understanding, hope, and alternate perspectives on vital issues that affect our communities and the environment,” said Desert X Executive Director **Jenny Gil**.



ARTISTS' WORKS

Unsui (Mirror) by **Sanford Biggers** features two towering sequin sculptures set against the expansive desert sky. Clouds, a recurring motif in Biggers's work, symbolize freedom, boundlessness, and interconnection. Drawing on the artist's study of Buddhism, these clouds — or *unsui* ("clouds and water" in Japanese) — embody unencumbered movement. Shimmering in the desert light, they evoke a feeling of timelessness and transcendence. Their presence in the arid desert, where clear skies often prevail, serves as a powerful promise of much needed water and a message of hope.

Jose Dávila's massive, monolithic marble blocks in ***The act of being together*** appear splintered across both time and space. Drawing on Robert Smithson's concept of site/nonsite dialectics, Dávila brings the stone blocks from a quarry a few hundred miles across the U.S.-Mexico border to the Coachella Valley, connecting the two locations by highlighting the void of their origin and the striking presence they create in a foreign landscape. To reach their new home, the blocks had to cross the physical border while also traversing a metaphorical border between the seen and the unseen. Moved by the invisible forces of unknown histories, they evoke the archeological relics of ancient civilizations and the potential future of life beyond our own.

The Living Pyramid by pioneering artist and philosopher **Agnes Denes** is a monumental sculpture and environmental intervention on view at Sunnylands Center & Gardens. This first desert iteration of Denes's pyramid structure is planted with vegetation that is native to the region. Its structure and appearance have transformed since its installation in November 2024 and will continue to evolve through the run of the exhibition according to the slow growth cycles of the desert environment. But it is the life-cycle of the plants - their growth, transformation and eventual death – that animates the pyramid, one of the most iconic forms of human civilization, and in so doing reminds us that within care and nurture can be found the spirit of our endurance.

Traversing various locations in the Coachella Valley over the course of Desert X, **Cannupa Hanska Luger's** nomadic caravan, ***G.H.O.S.T. Ride (Generative Habitation Operating System Technology)***, uses speculative fiction to envision sustainable, land-based futures. This project expands on Luger's Future Ancestral Technologies (FAT) series and imagines

Indigenous communities utilizing innovative technologies to live in attunement with land and water, challenging colonial paradigms of extraction and exploitation. Incorporating industrial detritus, ceramics and other artist-made objects along with new video and sound work, this time-jumping caravan is equipped with water and light gathering technologies dreamed from Luger's speculative fiction ethos.

Five things you can't wear on TV by **Raphael Hefti** expresses the borrowed poetry of a climactic phenomenon. A black woven polymer fiber, originally designed for light, durable fire hoses, coated on one side with a reflective finish connects two distant points forming a single line or artificial horizon. The enormous force held in the taut material causes it to oscillate in the wind, vibrating like a gently strummed guitar string and creating a visual harmonic that resonates with the surrounding landscape. By splitting the air in front of us, Hefti's work brings the effects of great distance to proximity and draws our attention to the ongoing performance of light and space.

To Breathe – Coachella Valley by **Kimsooja** (opening March 15-June 1, 2025) invites an interaction with the essential elements of the desert: the texture of sand underfoot, the air we breathe, and the light around us. Drawing inspiration from *bottaris*, the fabric-encased bundles of belongings prominent in her work and in Korean culture, she describes this installation as a "bottari of light." By wrapping the glass surface in a unique optical film, the physical architecture is transformed into a dynamic spectrum of light and color. The work reflects its counterpart work in the desert of AlUla, Saudi Arabia while also acknowledging the historical origins of the Light and Space movement on the West Coast of the U.S.

In the desert, where concepts of shelter, freedom, expansiveness, and enclosure have shaped midcentury dreams. **Kapwani Kiwanga's *Plotting Rest***, a pavilion-like structure (opening March 15-June 1, 2025) reflects on the iconic midcentury design found in Palm Springs, signaling protection while offering none. Its roof, a lattice made of interlocking triangles, hovers overhead, allowing the elements to pass through and casting ever-changing shadows on the ground. Inspired by the quilting motif known as "flying geese," this pattern resonates with the contested narratives of the Underground Railroad, serving as an encrypted guidance system for those fleeing slavery toward the perceived freedom of the North. Kiwanga's sculpture fosters contemplation and hope while reminding us that history is marked by successive migrations.

Sarah Meyohas's poetic and immersive installation ***Truth Arrives in Slanted Beams*** showcases "caustics," light patterns formed by the refraction or reflection of light through curved surfaces, recalling ancient timekeeping technology like sundials and paying homage to 20th-century land art. While this optical effect often occurs naturally, such as at the bottom of a swimming pool, Meyohas transforms it, using innovative light-shaping technology enabling visitors to project sunlight onto a ribbon-like structure cascading across the desert floor. As visitors manipulate the panels to shape their own cinematic journey, they encounter unexpected visual illusions — waves, moiré patterns, or perhaps a mirage — stirring a longing for the desert's ever-present water.

The dynamic landscape of ***Adobe Oasis*** by **Ronald Rael** champions the revival and reimagining of traditional yet neglected earthen building techniques by integrating contemporary technologies and presenting them as sustainable and innovative housing solutions for the future amid the climate crisis. Brought to life through a unique 3D printing process, utilizing robotic programming to create structures entirely from mud, Rael's corrugated earthen ribbons mimic the texture of palm trees, inspired by the legacy of Coachella Valley's palm oases, which have thrived on desert waters for millennia. Passageways frame views of the land and sky, fostering solitude and connection — reflecting the cyclical flow of geologic time.

In ***Soul Service Station***, **Alison Saar**, continues her alchemical exploration of salvage, both as a material and metaphorical act. *Soul Service Station* reimagines a sculptural intervention Saar created in 1986 in Roswell, New Mexico. Drawing inspiration from gas stations that have populated the American West, including the Coachella Valley, Saar's station offers more than practical services; it provides fuel for the soul. Community-crafted elements combined with furnishings made from salvaged materials, form a sanctuary that merges collective dreams with Saar's vision of a spiritual oasis. Further enriching the experience, a repurposed gas pump plays poems by Los Angeles-based poet Harryette Mullen. The work serves as a sanctuary for travelers, a place to pause, heal, and carry forward the aspirations, histories, and voices.

Muhannad Shono's *What Remains* reflects on the fluidity of identity and land, presenting a land without fixed identity, continuously shaped by nature's forces — pliable and transient, yet heavy with meaning. While wind typically poses a challenge for artworks, Shono cleverly makes it a collaborator infusing long strips of fabric with the native sand, allowing them to move freely and amplifying the ever-changing state of the dunes. As the wind direction shifts, the natural process of aeolian transportation is interrupted, causing the fabric to tangle and form chaotic bundles suggesting a restlessly changing relic or memory. Suspended between the pull of gravity and the relentless force of the wind, the work evokes a home that cannot be contained, a narrative that cannot settle, and a place that refuses to stay still.

Full descriptions and installation images of the artists' projects are now available [HERE](#). Additional images of the works will be added during the run of the exhibition.

EXPERIENCE THE EXHIBITION

Exhibition Dates

March 8–May 11, 2025

Please note the works *Kimsooja To Breathe – Coachella Valley* and *Kapwani Kiwanga Plotting Rest* will be unveiled on March 15 and remain on view through June 1, 2025.

Opening Hours and Locations

Exhibition opening hours are generally from sunrise to sunset, however, hours and access to installations may vary. Visitors are encouraged to check details for each artist's work at desertx.org. **Free Admission**

Desert X Hub at Thompson Palm Springs

414 N. Palm Canyon Dr.

Fri. 2:00 – 5:00 PM, Sat. & Sun. 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Stop by to pick up your Desert X 2025 guide, map of artist installations and visitor information.

The **Desert X 2025 map** of artist installations can be found online at desertx.org and via the **Desert X 2025 app**.

Leave No Trace

Desert X encourages visitors to follow official *Leave No Trace* guidelines. Plan ahead and prepare, walk on designated paths, dispose of waste properly, leave what you find, respect wildlife, don't smoke, and be considerate of other visitors.

Guided and Docent-led tours

Desert X docents are at most sites every Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon.

Desert X Merchandise

Windmill City Super # 1. 463 North Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs

Stop by to browse and buy Desert X merchandise made with Windmill City Printing and other local companies. Visit super-number-one.com for hours.

For further information and to plan your visit, go to desertx.org

Image block one credits left to right, top to bottom: Desert X 2025 installation views of Ronald Rael, *Adobe Oasis*; Agnes Denes, *The Living Pyramid* at Sunnylands Center & Gardens; Alison Saar, *Soul Service Station*; Cannupa Hanska Luger, *G.H.O.S.T. Ride (Generative Habitation Operating System Technology)*; Sanford Biggers, *Unsu (Mirror)*; Jose Dávila, *The act of being together*, all photos by Lance Gerber.

Image block two credits left to right, top to bottom: Desert X 2025 installation views of Muhannad Shono, *What Remains*; Sarah Meyohas, *Truth Arrives in Slanted Beams*; Raphael Hefti, *Five things you can't wear on TV*, all photos by Lance Gerber.

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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.

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 the 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. Founded on the principles of the Land Art movement of the late '60s and early '70s, when artists sought to create work outside of the confines of institutional walls, Desert X has, since its inception in 2017, explored new configurations of site-responsive work by artists from around the world creating a new paradigm for the presentation and experience of art that is both unrivaled and accessible to all.

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