



PARTICIPATING ARTISTS ANNOUNCED FOR DESERT X 2021

DESERT X 2021 WILL CONSIDER THE DESERT AS BOTH A PLACE AND IDEA. PROJECTS WILL EXPLORE ISSUES ESSENTIAL TO OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE AND THE HISTORIES, REALITIES, AND POSSIBILITIES OF THE COACHELLA VALLEY AND ITS MANY COMMUNITIES THROUGH THEMES OF LAND RIGHTS AND OWNERSHIP, THE DESERT AS BORDER, MIGRATION, WATER EXPLOITATION, SOCIAL JUSTICE, RACIAL NARRATIVES OF THE WEST, THE GENDERED LANDSCAPE AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.



(Palm Springs, CA, February 16, 2021) – Desert X announced today the participating artists in its third edition of the site-specific, international art exhibition opening March 12–May 16, 2021 at sites across the Coachella Valley. Thirteen artists from eight countries will be presented in the exhibition curated by **Artistic Director Neville Wakefield** and **Co-Curator César García-Alvarez**. Desert X 2021 will be among the first art experiences in the region since widespread lockdowns, offering a safe, outdoor experience that is free and open to all.

Participating artists:

- Zahrah Alghamdi** (born 1977, Al Bahah, Saudi Arabia, based in Jeddah)
- Ghada Amer** (born 1963, Cairo, Egypt, based in New York)
- Felipe Baeza** (born 1987, Guanajuato, Mexico, based in New York)
- Judy Chicago** (born 1939, Chicago, US, based in Belen, New Mexico)
- Serge Attukwei Clottey** (born 1985, Accra, Ghana, based in Accra)
- Nicholas Galanin** (born 1979, Sitka, Alaska, US, based in Sitka)
- Alicja Kwade** (born 1979, Katowice, Poland, based in Berlin)
- Oscar Murillo** (born 1986, Valle del Cauca, Colombia, based in various locations)
- Christopher Myers** (born 1974, New York, US, based in New York)
- Eduardo Sarabia** (born 1976, Los Angeles, US, based in Guadalajara, Mexico)
- Xaviera Simmons** (born 1974, New York, US based in New York)
- Kim Stringfellow** (born 1963, San Mateo, CA, US, based in Joshua Tree)
- Vivian Suter** (born 1949, Buenos Aires, Argentina, based in Panajachel, Guatemala).

Newly-commissioned projects build on themes explored in previous iterations, looking deeper at ideas essential to the sustenance of our future and identity and the histories, realities and possibilities of the Coachella Valley and its many communities. Imagining the landscape as both an amalgamation of natural forms and a terrain forged by people, the 2021 edition refuses the notion of the desert as homogenous entity. The projects explore many of the issues we face in these difficult times: the history of land rights, ownership and stewardship, the desert as border marked by narratives of migration, social justice and racial demarcations of the West, the gendered landscape and the role of women and children and the creation of new dialogues between regional and global desert experience.

“As much as the desert is a state of place, it is also a state of mind. Its borders are not singular but multiple, and it is defined as much by social geography as physical boundary,” said Artistic Director Neville Wakefield. “Desert X 2021 seeks to explore this idea of the desert as a place where the marginalized and migratory - whose voices and histories may have struggled to manifest within the dominant discourses of growth and development - can also be heard.”

“For Desert X 2021, we took our cues from the way deserts are formed, from the natural processes that weather their surfaces and expand their geographies, said Co-curator César García-Alvarez. “Acting upon this place, the projects seek to identify and uplift lesser known and complex stories of immeasurable impact through conversations between the lived experience of people here with those who came before them and the realities that we live in now. We refute the dichotomy of local versus global, and instead champion the nuances that connect both.”

In *What Lies Behind the Walls*, **Zahrah Alghamdi** creates a monumental sculptural wall, which, like a geological extrusion, reveals the different stratas of time as they have been captured both in millenia of geological transformation and the last few centuries of rapid development so connecting the desert landscape of the Coachella to the transformations of other deserts across the globe.

Women’s Qualities by **Ghada Amer** is a social project that polled diverse communities within the Coachella Valley, whose representations take the form of word gardens that are dependent on nature, care and other activities traditionally associated with femininity.

Felipe Baeza’s mural *Finding Home in My Own Flesh* grapples with the erasure of queer communities of color from multiple histories and places integral to the Coachella Valley. From the lack of spaces that nurture racialized queer bodies, to the absence of queer voices in the recorded stories of the local labor movement, to the many who have died from HIV/AIDS, this work acknowledges both the invisibility and the potential to re-insert these voices back into the stories they have been removed from.

Living Smoke; A Tribute to the Living Desert, in partnership with the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation, a specially-commissioned Desert X Smoke Sculpture by **Judy Chicago**, scheduled for April 9, continues the artist’s practice since the 1960s of making work in counterpoint to the male-dominated narratives of Land Art, including ‘Atmospheres’ or smoke pieces aimed at momentarily transforming and feminizing the landscape without leaving a mark or trace.

In *The Wishing Well*, **Serge Attukwei Clottey** speaks to the challenges various communities face when accessing potable water. Structures made from Kufuor gallons, used in rural regions of Ghana to move water from sources to homes, echo a standing well—a place to journey to in search of what should be a more accessible, natural resource.

Never Forget by **Nicholas Galanin** addresses the issue of monuments and what they memorialize, functioning as both a raising of consciousness and a call to action, that by linking to the landback movement, interrogates the ideas of land on which the land art movement has been historically based.

Alicja Kwade's sculptural work *ParaPivot (sempiternal clouds)* is at once an atomic model and a geological proposition. The seemingly icy, stone fragments, in contrast to the desert, reference current global issues, ideas of space— both micro and macro, relativity and time between terrestrial land and outer space.

In a new chapter of his ongoing project *Frequencies*, specially modified for the home learning experience brought upon by the pandemic, **Oscar Murillo** collaborates with hundreds of young people from schools across the Coachella Valley to broaden an archive, via student-intervened canvases, that indexes the experiences of young people through mark-making.

Christopher Myers' The Art of Taming Horses explores the relationship between myth and history to shed light on lesser known stories of the region. Through a new series of equestrian sculptures adorned with narrative banners Myers tells of African-Americans who traveled South to escape bondage and of Mexican-Americans who journeyed north for a better life. Through a fictional story of a pair of cowboy friends, one African-American and one Mexican, Myers shed light on the kinds of lives these communities could have had here one day.

In *The Passenger*, a large-scale maze structure made from woven palm tree fiber walls, **Eduardo Sarabia** examines the desert as a border through the trope of the journey—a motif that connects peoples across geographies and cultures.

Xaviera Simmons employs billboards in *Because You Know Ultimately We Will Band A Militia* to craft language and image that confronts white stereotypes and complicity within narratives that shape our societal structures.

In a diorama representing the life of one of the early homesteaders, **Kim Stringfellow Jackrabbit Homestead** chronicles one of the less remembered histories of desert land that belongs to the Jackrabbit homesteader, which began in 1938 with Southern California's Small Tract Act.

Inspired by pictures of the region that have helped construct its visual imaginary, **Vivian Suter's Tamanrasset** is an installation of paintings and light inside an iconic modernist building. The work translates the desert terrain, as image, into abstracted forms and colors—drawing attention to the desert as a condition with emotional and psychological dimensions.

“More so than ever, Desert X 2021 is an exhibition for our times”, said **Desert X Founder and President Susan Davis**. “The curators have brought together an extraordinary group of international artists who have made compelling works that celebrate the Coachella Valley and its histories while provoking us to explore our commonalities and celebrate our differences.”

At a time when it is challenging to exhibit and experience art in the same way as it was before the global pandemic took hold and in an effort to make the exhibition and the ideas and conversations provoked by it available to the widest possible audience, the exhibition will be accompanied by a robust series of public and education programs. Among the participants will be artists, curators, members of the community and special guests. A dedicated Desert X 2021

film, produced by Desert X and presenting sponsor Richard Mille, will premiere globally across multiple platforms to provide free access to the exhibition to audiences around the world. Program details and schedule will be released soon.

Desert X is funded by its board of directors and an international group of individual donors, foundations and sponsors. **Richard Mille**, a global luxury brand with a long history of involvement with the arts, is the presenting sponsor of the 2021 exhibition reinforcing the brand's conviction that a close bond naturally exists between watchmaking and art.

Additionally, **Gucci** will be providing generous support to Desert X this year and introducing a Pit Stop at the exhibition. The Pit Stop will celebrate the recent collaboration between Gucci and The North Face and the spirit of exploration and adventure both brands embody. The Pit Stop will feature a unique geodesic dome welcoming visitors to Desert X. The North Face x Gucci dome installation uses different materials to recall the temporary and transient nature of landscapes, travel, and exploration.

A **Desert X Visitor Guide** will contain up-to-date information on how to experience the exhibition and its public and education programs safely in compliance with CDC, State and County regulations.

The **Desert X 2021 map** of artist installations can be found online at desertx.org from March 12 and via the **Desert X 2021 app**.

Desert X Hub at the Ace Hotel & Swim Club

701 E Palm Canyon Dr, Palm Springs

Stop by to pick up your Desert X 2021 guide, map of artist installations and visitor information.

Visit desertx.org for opening hours.

Pop-In Store - Super Number One x DX 21

463 North Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs

Stop by for Desert X swag, made with Windmill City Printing and other local companies.

Visit super-number-one.com for hours.

Opening hours subject to CDC, State and County regulations.

Desert X 2021 is presented by Richard Mille.

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EDITORS' NOTES

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 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 unrivalled and accessible to all.

Image credit: View of Coachella Valley, California, photo by Lance Gerber, courtesy Desert X.

Exhibition Dates: March 12–May 16, 2021.
Opening hours and locations: Visit desertx.org for details.
Free Admission

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Desert X 2021 Opening Preview
Members of the media are invited to attend the Opening Preview by Zoom on March 11, 2021 at 9AM Pacific Time. Registration is required to desertx@lynwinter.com. Details will be sent to registrants with email confirmation.

In Person Press Preview Tours
In person, curator-led, artist site tours may be scheduled following the Opening Preview. Tours will be conducted following CDC, State and County guidelines, Please contact callie@lynwinter.com to schedule.

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