



*DESERT X*

**A SITE-SPECIFIC, INTERNATIONAL CONTEMPORARY ART EXHIBITION  
ANNOUNCED FOR THE CALIFORNIA DESERT**

**NEVILLE WAKEFIELD APPOINTED ARTISTIC DIRECTOR INAUGURAL  
EXHIBITION TO TAKE PLACE FEBRUARY–APRIL 2017**



January 4, 2016, Palm Springs, Calif--*Desert X*, a three-month site-specific international contemporary art exhibition to open in February 2017, has named internationally renowned curator, writer and commentator Neville Wakefield as its inaugural artistic director. The announcement came from the new organization's board of directors.

According to the board of directors, Wakefield was chosen for his commitment to producing and commissioning new works of art in alternative spaces, his experience as curator of the site-specific exhibition *Elevation 1049* in Gstaad, and his varied resumé, which includes roles as senior curatorial advisor for MoMA PS1 and curator of *Frieze Projects*.

*Desert X* will offer selected artists non-traditional as well as institutional venues with which to engage, including spaces at Palm Springs Art Museum and Sunnylands Center & Gardens, where commissioned art works will amplify and cast a gimlet eye on the geographies, ethnic/social and historical/geologic layers that exist in the southern California desert, while also looking to major movements in contemporary art world-wide. With art biennials in Istanbul, Sharjah, Cartagena and Gstaad as reference points, *Desert X*, a recurring exhibition, will inspire, energize, and reignite curiosity in the multi-layered southern California desert, allowing the region itself to function as protagonist, while providing a new context and perspective through which international trends in contemporary art can be experienced.

Artistic Director Neville Wakefield says, “The desert has long exercised its fascination over the minds of artists, architects, musicians, writers and other explorers of landscape and soul. From the theological cast of the Biblical desert wilderness to the secular observations of Joan Didion’s *Holy Water*, it is a place of scarcity, of stark contrasts, crude survival, mystery and transformation. But it is this very inhospitality towards life that has in part made it receptive to new forms. *Desert X* will harness and combine the matchless spectacle of the geologic epic, the radical abstraction of the surroundings and the singular incursions of man into the seemingly barren landscape.”

Often called “the playground of presidents,” and known for the Hollywood stars who keep vacation homes in the area, the Coachella Valley—from Palm Springs to the Salton Sea—encompasses a varied and diverse population that includes indigenous peoples from the region, a large Mexican and Central American community, snowbirds, veterans, and a large LGBTQ population, among others. “The landscape of harsh desert, high mountains, lush golf courses and a vanishing sea, holds a rich history and maintains mythical proportions in the narrative of the American West—one that includes ancient Indian tribes, prospectors, pioneers, and cowboys,” explains Susan Davis, *Desert X* founder and board president. “We see *Desert X* as unique in shining a spotlight on the rich preexisting architectural, natural and cultural legacies of the area, while offering the public a way to explore, activate and interrogate current, timely and historic issues through contemporary, creative practices.”

The organization’s board of directors includes creative and cultural professionals from a cross-section of disciplines and backgrounds who are working internationally and within the local community in contemporary art, music, film, and philanthropy. Many serve on the boards of major arts institutions, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Park Avenue Armory Conservancy, the New Museum, the Hammer Museum, Film Independent, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Serpentine Galleries, Creative Time, Nasher Sculpture Center, and the Richard Diebenkorn Foundation.

*Desert X* is currently funded by its board of directors, philanthropists well known to the desert community including Donna J. MacMillan and Harold Matzner, and has received generous support from organizations and commercial entities doing business in the region including program partners Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, Palm

Springs Art Museum, Art Los Angeles Contemporary and Sunnylands Center & Gardens, and hotel partner Triada Palm Springs Hotel, an Autograph Collection Hotel.

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

A conversation with *Desert X* Artistic Director Neville Wakefield will address his vision and plans for the inaugural exhibition, and will take place in Santa Monica, Calif. on Friday, January 29, 2016, as part of the onsite program of Art Los Angeles Contemporary 2016.

Additional events scheduled for Palm Springs, Los Angeles, and New York will take place throughout 2016. For more information, please contact [jessica@lynwinter.com](mailto:jessica@lynwinter.com)

#### ABOUT *DESERT X*

*Desert X* was founded in 2015 as a not-for-profit charitable organization under the name Desert Biennial to develop, organize and produce a major, international, contemporary art exhibition featuring site-specific installations in selected venues throughout the Coachella Valley and surrounding area. The themes and locations of the exhibition will engage surrounding communities, other Valley organizations, visitors, and students through works that respond to environmental, social and cultural conditions specific to the Valley, while also focusing attention on the creative energy of the participating artists and their work. For more information, visit [www.desertx.org](http://www.desertx.org)

#### Image Credit:

Ed Ruscha, *Desert Gravure*, 2006, Photogravure, edition: 30, 14-3/4 x 19"  
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