



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Wednesday, October 28, 2020

**THIRD EDITION OF DESERT X WILL OPEN ON FEBRUARY 6–APRIL 11, 2021.**

**EXHIBITION TO TAKE PLACE AT OUTDOOR SITES ACROSS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA’S COACHELLA VALLEY.**

**BOARD ELECTS NEW MEMBERS  
ALYSE ARCHER-COITÉ, ROSWITHA SMALE AND KELLY WEARSTLER.**

**LUXURY WATCHMAKER RICHARD MILLE CONFIRMED AS PRESENTING SPONSOR.**

**EXHIBITION WILL BE FREE AND OPEN TO ALL.**



Palm Springs, CA—Desert X announced today that its third edition of the recurring site-specific art exhibition will open on schedule from February 6–April 11, 2021 at sites spanning 40 miles across California’s Coachella Valley. Among the first art experiences in the region since widespread lockdowns and shuttering of arts and cultural institutions due to the global pandemic, the outdoor exhibition will prioritize a safe and free visitor experience, and returns with an expanded board of directors and new support from corporate and individual donors.

Curated by returning **Artistic Director Neville Wakefield** with **Co-curator César García-Alvarez**, the 2021 edition of Desert X will present newly-commissioned projects that build on the themes explored in previous iterations while looking deeper at the histories,

realities, and possibilities of the Coachella Valley and its many communities. Created by an exciting roster of international artists, the projects imagine the desert as both a place and an idea and attempt to create meaningful dialogues between regional and global desert experiences.

The exhibition will provide artists with a rare opportunity to present their work to a wide audience at a time when it is challenging to exhibit art in the same way as before the global pandemic took hold.

Bolstering the organization's leadership, newly-elected board directors include San Francisco-based **Alyse Archer-Coité**, who is leading research and special projects for Apple's industrial design team and is founder of a nonprofit to increase voter turnout in underrepresented communities; Palm Springs-based philanthropist, conservationist and art patron **Roswitha Smale**; and internationally-recognized, award-winning designer and author **Kelly Wearstler**. They join a board of pioneering creative and cultural professionals from a cross-section of disciplines and backgrounds, who together are working internationally and within the local community in contemporary art, design, architecture, publishing, technology, conservation and philanthropy.

The organization announced Swiss watchmaker **Richard Mille**, a global luxury brand with a long history of involvement with the arts, as presenting sponsor of the 2021 exhibition reinforcing the brand's conviction that a close bond naturally exists between watchmaking and art.

"At a time when we all long for nourishment from art, Desert X is grateful for the expertise, guidance and contributions of our new board members - three accomplished women committed to the arts and its unifying role - Alyse Archer-Coité, Roswitha Smale and Kelly Wearstler, and for the generous support from our presenting sponsor Richard Mille. We look forward to embarking together on a new journey of exploration, providing a much-needed opportunity for visitors and their families to enjoy and engage safely with art by some of today's most important artists as they address the urgent issues of these extraordinary times," said **Desert X Founder and President Susan L. Davis**.

"Desert X's literal removal of any walls that may have restricted today's contemporary artists aligns with Richard Mille's commitment to take the art and craft of fine watchmaking into a new realm," said **John Simonian, CEO, Richard Mille Americas**. "Where our timepieces are tiny universes compared to the site-specific art installations coming to the Coachella Valley, we are all striving in our respective formats to challenge conventions, celebrate cultures, and foster dialogue about larger concepts, including the nature of time itself. We anticipate the people who attend Desert X, over the course of two months and the expanse of many miles, will step outside the familiar and interact in a meaningful way with this remarkable time and place."

Among the partners announced for the third edition are those who have supported the recurring exhibition since its founding, including cultural partners **Ace Hotel & Swim Club Palm Springs** and **Sunnylands Center & Gardens**, and returning media partners *artnet*, *The Desert Sun*, *Here TV*, and *Palm Springs Life Magazine*. New corporate partners are **Blick Art Materials**, **Blue Room Investing**, **Cerámica Suro**, **Maestro Dobel** and **Tamarisk Country Club**, with the list still in formation.

Since its first edition in 2017, Desert X has established itself as an unrivaled art experience. To date, artists from twelve countries, as well as the Coachella Valley, have made compelling work in response to the conditions of the desert, continuing a legacy that began with the Land Art movement of the 1970s, when artists sought to create work outside of the confines of institutional walls, thus creating a new paradigm for the presentation and experience of art.

**Congressman Raul Ruiz, M.D.**, commented, “I fully support Desert X’s invitation for everyone to engage with art and culture here in our Valley. The outdoor and safe exhibitions will lift your spirit, drive tourism, provide fun educational experiences for your children, offer real opportunities for local economic recovery, and most importantly, nourish your soul and find meaning during this pandemic. It is a good, healthy, family memory-making experience. I encourage you to join me and my family in support of and visit Desert X’s art and initiatives.”

“Desert X 2021 is uniquely positioned to provide a model to experience art safely,” said **Desert X Executive Director Jenny Gil**. “The journey through the California desert is an integral part of the exhibition. Open-air sites will allow for an adaptable, safe and socially-distanced experience.” Prior to the opening, the organization will release a Desert X visitor guide in compliance with state, county and CDC regulations that will contain up-to-date guidelines and requirements to safely experience the exhibition and the public programs. An enhanced digital experience is planned so that visitors from around the world can explore the exhibition from home.

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

Presented by Richard Mille.

**For a full list of donors, sponsors and partners, more information about Desert X 2021 and how to support the exhibition please visit [desertx.org](https://desertx.org).**

## **EDITORS’ NOTES**

### **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.

**Alyse Archer-Coité**

Alyse Archer-Coité has focused her career in contemporary design, architecture and publishing, starting at Sotheby's, moving to Philips de Pury and simultaneously launching MAKER, an arts magazine. She went on to create print publications for Neuhouse and Yabu Pushelberg and was managing editor for Freunde von Freunden in Berlin. She created the global cultural program for the Amalgamated Drawing Office (A/D/O), a BMW MINI Global initiative. Then In 2018, Alyse was recruited by Apple to develop global public educational programs and is currently leading research and special projects for its industrial design team. Alyse recently founded Power to the Ballot, a nonprofit to increase voter turnout in underrepresented communities. She is a member of the Female Design Council and a contributor to Revue Magazine based in Paris.

### **Roswitha Smale**

Roswitha Smale, president of the Christopher Smale Foundation, is a multi-lingual world traveler and philanthropist who lives both in Southern California and Southern France. She holds a Master's degree in anthropology and a Ph.D. in communications. During her career, Roswitha taught at the University of Colorado and the University of Denver and served also as a communications consultant. While living in Denver, Roswitha chaired several major boards in the Healthcare field and upon moving to the desert, she initiated and funded programs for Alzheimer patients and caregivers. She is a founder of the Palm Springs Art Museum's Architecture and Design Center, sits on the museum's board and is involved with the Cheetah Conservation Fund Board in Namibia.

### **Kelly Wearstler**

Kelly Wearstler, founder and principal of Kelly Wearstler Design Studio, is known for creating multi-faceted, experiential residential, hospitality, commercial and retail environments as well as expansive collections of lifestyle product designs and brand collaborations. She is internationally recognized with distinctive design awards and numerous publications. She is known as one of the key forces behind the rise in the early 2000s of the designer hotel and is currently designing residential hotel projects in several US cities where she implements a distinctive vision of authentic cultural immersion and site-specific design. Kelly received her academic training in interior, architectural and graphic design and is the author of five design books.

### **Richard Mille**

Richard Mille was established in 2001, founded on a desire to break the existing codes of high-end watchmaking. By showcasing superlative craftsmanship and uncompromising standards while adopting a modernity of line that was practically minimalist, Richard Mille was able to overcome prevailing assumptions and forge a new aesthetic. Begetting new models unburdened by certain aspects of watchmaking, his infectious passion echoed with a clientele of demanding wearers, like the high-level sportsmen and women who strapped on its creations. An independent mindset, coupled with the cutting-edge technicity of Swiss production, catapulted the brand to the forefront of the exclusive and tight-knit universe of haute horlogerie.

Richard Mille's commitment to the arts includes being a partner of Palais de Tokyo, France and collaborations with choreographer Benjamin Millepied, musician Pharrell Williams, composer Thomas Roussel, and street artist Kongo. A company belonging to the Richard Mille Group, the Parisian publishing house Éditions Cercle d'Art, has long published monographs of contemporary artists, including Picasso, who strongly supported the institution in its early years.

Image credit: Coachella Desert view, photo by Lance Gerber, courtesy Desert X.

**Communications & Media Relations**

**Lyn Winter, Inc.**

**(213) 446-0788**

Lyn Winter, [lyn@lynwinter.com](mailto:lyn@lynwinter.com) and Livia Mandoul, [livia@lynwinter.com](mailto:livia@lynwinter.com)

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