

DESERT X

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS ANNOUNCED FOR DESERT X 2025

THE EXHIBITION REFLECTS 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



(Palm Springs, CA, January 30, 2025) – Desert X announced today the participating artists in its fifth edition of the site-specific, international art exhibition opening March 8 – May 11, 2025 at sites across the Coachella Valley. Eleven artists from Asia, Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East 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.

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

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 Artistic Director [Neville Wakefield](#) and Co-curator [Kaitlin Garcia-Maestas](#), Desert X 2025 reflects on the desert's deep time evolutions, revealing a profound reverence for the enduring spirit of this harsh yet resilient region that challenges us to glean wisdom from its vast knowledge.

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 artists participating in the 2025 edition of Desert X provide us with alternative ways of looking at a world increasingly encircled by the effects of our human presence. For a number of the artists this has taken the form of an exploration of time in spaces where ancestral wisdom intertwines and at times 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.

“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.

The Living Pyramid by pioneering artist and philosopher **Agnes Denes** is a monumental sculpture and environmental intervention, now 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 transform from its installation in November 2024 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.

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.

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***, 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** 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 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. Combining community-crafted elements with furnishings made from salvaged materials, 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.



Images credits from top: Desert X 2025 installation view of Agnes Denes *The Living Pyramid* at Sunnylands Center & Gardens, photo by Lance Gerber, courtesy Desert X; View of Coachella Valley, California, photo by Lance Gerber, courtesy Desert X.

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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.

Exhibition Dates: March 8–May 11, 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**

The **Desert X 2025 map** of artist installations will be available for visitors to download online from March 8, 2025 at desertx.org and via the **Desert X app**.

Desert X 2025 Opening Preview Day

Members of the media are invited to attend the Opening Preview on Friday, March 7, 2025 from 9:00AM Pacific Time at Ace Hotel & Swim Club Palm Springs, 701 E Palm Canyon Dr, Palm Springs, CA 92264.

First look visits to the artists' installations at sites across the Coachella Valley will follow from 11:30AM -5:00PM

Registration is required to desertx@lynwinter.com

For media accreditation and further inquiries, please contact:

Lyn Winter, Inc.
Lyn Winter, lyn@lynwinter.com
Jennifer Gross, jenn@lynwinter.com
Isabelle Alfonso, isabelle@lynwinter.com

or

+1 (213) 446-0788

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