

HDTs

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

High Desert Test Sites is pleased to announce *HDTS 2022: The Searchers*, our twelfth free-roving art event in the high desert region of Southern California. Guest curated by **Iwona Blazwick OBE**, this event marks twenty years since the first HDTS event was organized in 2002 by founders Andrea Zittel, Lisa Anne Auerbach, Shaun Caley Regen, Andy Stillpass and John Connelly.

HDTS 2022 emerges from a heavy felt shift in both culture-at-large and our local desert communities. Its title *The Searchers* shines light on the “regenerative ruin,” a concept that follows 21st century human intervention in our desert region. As a historically nomadic environment, the desert has played host to waves of different existences—transitory settlements, sanctuaries, and living experiments. This particular desert, at the bottom of the dense Mojave, occupies a fringe space between the western apexes of Los Angeles and Las Vegas where these experiments flourish. Its uniqueness lies in the many ungoverned moments, layered visions, and transposed uses of space that comprise a landscape full of attempted solutions to the basic question of "How to live?"

From April 16-May 29, 2022, participating HDTS artists will place works between Pioneertown, Joshua Tree, and Wonder Valley, offering a narrative on the geometry of ruin, the entropic play of nature, and the ghosts of cultures both ancient and modern, human and non-human.

Alice Channer continues her project of 21st Century Process Art by making visible the natural and industrial production of the seemingly pristine desert landscape. *Rockpool*, an 8-inch-tall, 60-foot-long salt-filled sculpture intricately curved from steel takes its horizontal form from satellite images of the 2010 British Petroleum Deepwater Horizon oil spill. This abstracted shape is re-entangled, given gravity and brought back to the ground. Here, it is stretched across the expansive California desert where sparkling salt crusts left by an ancient extinct ocean are extracted en masse, primarily for the fracking industry.

Multi-media artist **Gerald Clarke**, whose work draws on an indigenous cosmology of language and craft, invokes the ghosts of the many species of fish that once swam through the canyons.

Installation and sonic artist **Kate Lee Short** centers her work on the sound of resonance. In a concrete room on the desert floor she captures the symphonies created by the desert's most prodigious carver – the wind.

The Mojave Desert is the location for the largest Marine Corp base in America, where soldiers rehearse for a Middle Eastern theater of war. Filmmaker **Erkan Özgen** has enlisted a group of veterans to transform their weapons into musical instruments.

Photographer and sculptor **Jack Pierson** rescues the signs - neon, wooden, tin - that beckon to visitors from abandoned motels or derelict saloon bars. For this he sites a linguistic monument of a different kind, a giant wooden gesture for Wonder Valley, a place for those who drop off the edge of civilization.

A multi-media artist who creates ritualistic structures that excavate suppressed histories, **Dineo Seshee Bopape** evokes an ancient structure with bricks baked from desert mud and symbolic plants and objects found amongst its rocks and dunes.

Dana Sherwood, renowned for her banquets for nocturnal creatures, sets up a desert feast as backdrop for a ceremonial dance that fuses the human with the equine.

Part of Southern California's architectural legacy lies in buildings whose form literally illustrates their function – lunch stands in the shape of hot-dogs, coffee shops constructed as doughnuts, keyboard shaped piano bars. Sculptor **Paloma Varga Weisz** revives this tradition with a gigantic female figure. Sitting atop its structure, this monumental yet melancholy nude has been pierced by a tree. She emblemizes nature and its slow mutilation by humans.

It was in the 1940s that the Californian government sought to attract settlers to the desert by offering 5-acre parcels of land to those who would build a home there. Homesteaders arrived in the hundreds, but few could survive the desert's extremes. Among her series of "shy sculptures" cast from shacks and sheds in remote locations, **Rachel Whiteread** has created concrete casts of two abandoned cabins. She transforms them into quiet monuments to the aspirations and tenacity of their former inhabitants.

HDTs 2022 will also include ephemeral programs at our community partner sites including the Sky Village Swap Meet in Yucca Valley and The Palms in Wonder Valley. A Joshua Tree tradition, a special Sunday Morning pancake breakfast will be held at Copper Mountain Mesa Community where all funds raised will go to supporting our ongoing community programming at the center.

Special Thanks

Our HDTS 2022 donor circle and international funding institutions include: Native Arts and Culture, Nordrhein-Westfalen Kunststiftung NRW, SAHA Association, The Wilhelm Family Foundation, Arts Connection, Inland Empire Community Foundation, Arts for IE, David Davis and Brad Wilson, Beth Dewoody, Henning and Brigitte Freybe, Susan Goodman and Rob Lubeznik, Bill and Vicki Hood, David Knaus, Bettina Korek and ForYourArt, Marilyn Pearl Loesberg, Donna MacMillan, Keith Markovitz, Dave McAdam, Barbara and Howard Morse, Donna and Jim Pohlad, Ron Radziner and Robin Cottle, Shaun Regen, Ed Ruscha, Susan and Kent Seelig, Roswitha Smale, James Spindler, Linda Usher and Malcolm Lambe Family Fund, Diane and David Waldman.

About HDTS

In 2002 Andrea Zittel, along with John Connelly, Andy Stillpass, Lisa Anne Auerbach and Shaun Caley Regen invited a small group of artists to envision the sprawling Joshua Tree desert as a space for artworks to exist outside of the gallery. At the time, costs were negotiable, prospects were wide open, and experiences off the beaten path were still relatively mysterious. The weekend event was purposefully ephemeral and impermanent. Richly constructed with temporal installations sited across the vast desert expanse, it was also heavily grounded in locale, filling the space between artworks with community and context. This whole approach to “site-specific” is what defines High Desert Test Sites.

Since that first renegade event, Zittel has launched eleven of these roving events, including over 400 artists and spanning hundreds of miles in between. Participating artists, many of them at early stages of their careers, have gone on to lead internationally renowned careers: Carmen Argote, Korakrit Arunanondchai, Justin Beal, John Bock, Jedediah Caesar, Kate Costello, Jeremy Deller, Jim Drain, Shannon Ebner, Forcefield, Hannah Greely, Katie Grinnan, Wade Guyton, Dawn Kasper, Liz Larner, Marnie Weber, Allan McCollum, Alison O’Daniel, Yoshua Okon, Elizabeth Peyton, Noah Purifoy, Lisi Raskin, Ry Rocklen, David Shrigley, A.L. Steiner, Mungo Thomson, Piotr Uklanski. With each artist, each location, and each event, Zittel pushes HDTS to act on its mission: to challenge art to take on new areas of relevancy. By working with an endless number of different factors—artists, guest curators, audience members, and various contributors needed to present such an endeavor—she opens HDTS up to as many interpretations and possibilities as she can while still exerting her special brand of mediated experiment merging art with life. HDTS has always, self-admittedly, been her “labor of love”, the project she keeps going

year after year, whether there is enough money, staff, or energy, it exists enigmatically but always.

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