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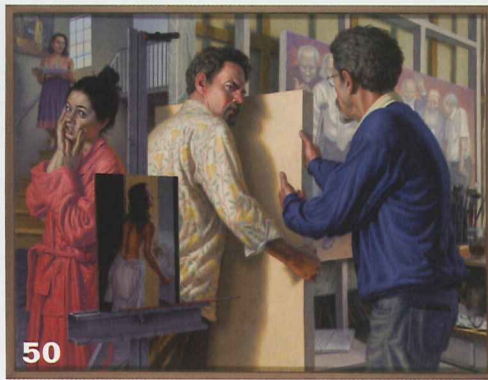




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DEPARTMENTS

- 14 REVIEWS
RECENT SHOWS
- 26 NEWS
RECENT EVENTS
- 30 REPORTS
LA OLYMPIC MURALS
- 50 APPRECIATION
F. SCOTT HESS
- 56 PROFILES
RICHARD REZAC
BRIAN WILLS
- 60 PULSE
UPCOMING EVENTS

FEATURES

- 32 DIALOGUE
"MADE IN LA" CURATORS
CONNIE BUTLER & MICHAEL NED HOLTE
- 36 MARK RYDEN
"THE GAY 90S WEST"
- 42 CRITICS PICKS
DENVER
- 44 SPOTLIGHT
DENVER
- * NEW MEXICO SUPPLEMENT
SITE SANTA FE REIMAGINED
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Lines Across the Land

SITE Santa Fe launches its three-part, "transregional" Americas-focused exhibition series in dramatic fashion, with examinations of the earth.

By Matthew Irwin



"THE SONIFEROUS ÆTHER OF THE LAND
BEYOND THE LAND BEYOND," 2013
Charles Stankieveh
FILM INSTALLATION, 10:18 MINUTES
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Life cannot exist without water. Complex, expensive systems of haulage, drainage and storage have been devised to confront the immediacy of this fact in the desert states—so too have bureaucratic networks of competing interests. Artist Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle responds to these conditions through one of the oldest and simplest forms of water reclamation: he digs a well. He carves it on land owned by the Santa Clara Pueblo, a Native American reservation north of Santa Fe, then donates it to the tribe. In truth, the act took some negotiation with tribal government, but, importantly, only tribal members will have access. The water belongs to them.



SITE SANTA FE DIRECTOR
Irene Hofmann

Well 35° 58' 16" N 106° 5' 21" W (2014) is one of more than 70 pieces gathered, witnessed, commissioned and revived for "Unsettled Landscapes," the first installment of SITE Santa Fe's three-biennial cycle, "SITElines: New Perspectives on Art of the Americas," open July 20, 2014 to January 11, 2015, with receptions beginning July 17. Subsequent exhibitions will take place in 2016 and 2018. "Unsettled Landscapes" assembles three generations of artists from 15 countries, including Agnes Denes, Juan Downey, the collective Futurefarmers, Jason Middlebrook and Santa Fe's own Jamison Chas Banks, along with a host of artists unfamiliar to contemporary art-lovers in the US. As the title of the inaugural exhibition might suggest, SITE's curatorial team has built the series from the ground up, focusing this go-round on the themes of Landscape, Territory and Trade from the northern tip of Canada to southernmost edge of South America. We're talking about a collection of artworks that attempt to intervene and disrupt—you might say, "unsettle"—romantic notions about land, its use and its inhabitant that have often paradoxically contributed to its resource extraction, industrial tourism and the displacement of indigenous populations.

Landscape through art has been a depiction that has been wrought with false claims about what the West looks like, what Native people look like, views that helped develop the West, views that perpetuate stereotypes," says SITE's director and chief curator Irene Hofmann. "A title like 'Unsettled Landscapes' has so many meanings. A view of the landscape that is troubled in some way, that is destabilized. The other is literal, land unsettled."



"BÊTE NOIR," 2014, **Kent Monkman**

INSTALLATION VIEW, MIXED MEDIA, DIMENSIONS VARIABLE
 PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SARGENT'S DAUGHTERS GALLERY, NEW YORK

"STILL FROM NO MAN'S LAND," 2014, **Gianfranco Foschino**

VIDEO PROJECTION WITH SOUND, 60:25 MINUTES
 PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND MICHAEL STRUM GALLERY, STUTTART, GERMANY

"Unsettled Landscapes" sets the tone for SITE's new endeavor that began, in 2011, with a desire to reconstruct and possibly even destroy the concept of the contemporary art biennial. When Hofmann joined SITE in 2010, the institution had held eight biennials, at least 100 additional exhibitions and countless events that engage with the local community. She had held curatorial posts at the Contemporary Museum in Baltimore, Cranbrook Art Museum, and the Walker Art Center, among other places, developing her vision for contemporary art that creates a critical framework for itself as well as the world in which it exists. At SITE, she and her curatorial team acknowledged that biennials had stagnated with their proliferation, creating a series of massive duplicable and duplicated events that marshaled around a handful of star curators and celebrity artists. Believing that SITE, which was founded in 1995 expressly to host the first international biennial in the US, had reached a critical moment, they canceled the 2013 event to reevaluate.

Casting a net that eventually reeled in a team of seven core advisors from all over the American continents, SITE curatorial staff immediately identified a need for connectivity between the international context of the exhibitions and the regional culture of their locations as well as a need for continuity from one exhibition to the next. They found answers in the physical location of SITE itself. Santa Fe, and more broadly New Mexico, expresses its history not only in the architecture, ruins, landscapes and laws (especially related to natural resources), but also in its populations, which include Pueblo Indians, Hispanics, Mexicans, Anglos and artists.

"SITElines developed out of a nearly four-year period of research, institutional self-reflection, and an interrogation of the global biennial status quo," Hofmann explains. "Through this inquiry, which engaged curatorial colleagues from around the

Hofmann often describes “the City Different” as sort of fulcrum on the Pan American Highway—whether or not the road exists as an actual, continuous thoroughfare—linking cultures from the furthest points north and south in the Western Hemisphere. New Mexico also provides an opportunity to cultivate artistic communities that long went uncelebrated by the international contemporary art world.

world, SITE has transformed its biennial model to respond to challenges of the past and define a new focus and structure for our work in the future.”

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Presenting American art in this new broad context has been an easy sell for Hofmann at a time when other contemporary art institutions (the Hammer, the Getty) are making a similar gesture toward the relevance of the regional. Contemporary Latin America art, in particular, has been thriving, in city centers such as Bogota, Buenos Aires and Mexico City, while Southwestern and Californian institutions are beginning to acknowledge its relevance to American culture. “We’re shifting focus at a time when many cities throughout the Americas have emerging contemporary art scenes, outside of the regional,” Hofmann says. “There’s an art fair in Lima. There’s an art fair in Buenos Aires. The lines of people waiting to see art in these countries and cities would stagger you. If we only had that hunger for art here,” she adds as an aside, then continues. “The collectors of that work are no longer just regional. The curators are no longer working just in their own cities and countries.”

Nor is SITE working with just one or two curators. The challenge has been maintaining a presence in all these “emerging art centers,” so

in addition to a seven-person advisory committee for SITElines as a whole, each iteration will have its own curators, as well as a team of “satellite curatorial advisors.” “Unsettled Landscapes” is curated by Candice Hopkins, who splits her time between Ottawa and Albuquerque, and Lucía Sanromán (Boston and Mexico City). They were advised by curators in Port of Spain, Costa Rica, Mexico City, Buenos Aires and Toronto, all of them understanding that they are not only making selections for this exhibition, but also laying the groundwork for future exhibitions.

“This exhibition is just the start of a conversation—one that offers the possibility to extend the timeframe of a biennial exhibition,” Hopkins writes by email. “Part of the interest in this is to rethink how artists can engage with a place—something that doesn’t necessarily happen in just a month, but a relationship that is formed over years.”

She references a SITE-commissioned piece by artist, educator and performer Pablo Helguera (a Mexican now living in New York) that is part of a longer project. *Nuevo Romancero, Nuevomexicano* (2014) is a performance and mixed-media installation based on Helguera’s research on Spanish “domination” of New Mexico. He organizes and interprets characters like “hero/traitor” Manuel Armijo and events like the discovery of the Clovis arrowhead as representations of present-day New Mexico through the Spanish musical tradition of romance.

“FORDLANDIA,” 2014

Melanie Smith

HD VIDEO STILL

PHOTO: THE ARTIST AND LEONIDE PRINCIPE

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, GALERIE PETER KILCHMANN, AND GALERIA NARA ROESLER



This turn to place also lends meaning to *Well*, a piece that is not only relevant to New Mexico now, but also to a New Mexico of the future. Possibly ending or evolving if the well ever runs dry, *Well* is an artifact waiting to be discovered by a future civilization. Manglano-Ovalle, who also contributed to SITE's 2012 exhibition "More Real? Art in the Age of Truthiness," collaborated with scientists, diggers and Puebloans to address one of the region's greatest concerns—water scarcity. Because only Santa Clara Puebloans may visit the site, the work simultaneously addresses land rights related to water but also disrupts the complicated relationship with tourism—while art pilgrims may not be welcome to the pueblo, sight-seers and poker players are certainly invited. The piece will be represented at SITE Santa Fe by a photo, a non-function hand-pump like the one attached to the well and bottles of water pulled directly from it.

Contrast the cultural inaccessibility of certain pueblo sites with the geographical remoteness of places like Alert, at the tip of Nunavut, Canada, the northernmost settlement on the planet. Because of its proximity to Russia, one-time location of a weather station became a key spy station during the Cold War. Charles Stankiech's film "Soniferous Æther of The Land Beyond The Land Beyond," captures the otherwise uninhabitable nature of the location—the 24-hour darkness, the cold—that has yet again become of interest due to global warming, which has opened shipping routes year round.

For Sanromán, SITElines addresses the structure of globalization that developed parallel to the concept of the international biennial. Collectors and art-world aficionados wanted to visit exotic places, which posed a challenge for SITE, in little old Santa Fe. However, Sanromán sees Santa Fe as part of a "transregional" network connected quite literally through the land. "Contemporary art always means to think about a global notion of culture," Sanromán says, adding that interpretations or representations of land have often fueled the exploitation of people and resources in the Americas. "[This exhibition] is a way for us to alter the history of very contested territories," Sanromán says.

One of those physical territories includes the Southwestern United States and California, much of which once belonged to Mexico. Duo Marcos Ramirez ERRE (a SITE alum from 1997) and David Taylor trace the 1821 border by van, erecting obelisks identical to markers found on the current US-Mexico border.

Native American exploitation through cultural exchange appears often in "Unsettled Landscapes." Picasso becomes the subject of Kent Monkman's diorama, *Bête Noir* (2014), which reclaims some of that "primitive" material by depicting the bull from *Guernica* shot full of arrows. Gianfranco Foschino's video *No Man's Land* (2014) tours a set of depopulated islands off the coast from Patagonia, both

"WHEATFIELD - A CONFRONTATION: BATTERY PARK LANDFILL, DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN - THE HARVEST," 1982

Agnes Denes

TWO ACRES OF WHEAT PLANTED AND HARVESTED BY THE ARTIST ON A LANDFILL IN MANHATTAN'S FINANCIAL DISTRICT, A BLOCK FROM WALL STREET AND THE WORLD TRADE CENTER, SUMMER 1982
COMMISSIONED BY PUBLIC ART FUND, NEW YORK CITY

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PHOTO: JOHN McGRIL

COURTESY LESLIE TONKONOW ARTWORKS + PROJECTS, NEW YORK



"Many of the works in the exhibition
out the Americas," Hopkins writes.
exchanged, is something shared through
The land and how it is framed, used,





INSTALLATION VIEW, "VIDEO TRANS AMERICAS," 1973, Juan Downey
COLLECTION OF ROCIO AND BORIS HIRMAS, MEXICO CITY

mimicking non-Native explorers who "discovered" the islands and remembering the Selk'ham people who were exterminated during a gold rush there.

Melanie Smith presents an experimental documentary, *Fordlândia* (2014), on a factory town established in the Amazon in the 1920s by the Ford Motor Company to harvest and process rubber. The initiative failed, and today, nature is reclaiming the land. Jamison Chase Banks develops an oblique connection among the Louisiana Purchase, Napoleon, and the exile of the Cherokee from the Southeast to Oklahoma during the Trail of Tears, as well as his own Cherokee/Cayuga-Seneca heritage, in the installation *Retour des Cendres Vol. 1 (Return of the Ashes Vol. 1)* (2014). The piece presents artifacts from a baseball game played between "Exiles" and "Purchasers." Commissioned by SITE, the work will culminate in a film.

The considerable and escalating presence of tourism gets the full treatment from artists such as Blue Curry. *S.S.s* (2014), another SITE-commissioned work, includes a live video feed of a harbor in Nassau, Bahamas, a nautical flagpole outside SITE, and stacks of customized beach towels on a shelf inside. As cruise ships pull into the harbor—obscuring the landscape of the small beach community on the video feed—SITE staff will raise beach towels representing each ship up the flagpoles. In real time, SITE visitors will experience the occupation of Nassau by tourism and trade.

"The land and how it is framed, used, exchanged, is something shared throughout the Americas," Hopkins writes. "Many of the works in the exhibition will focus on the 'unsettled'—be this the nuclear landscape, the scarred legacies of colonialism, environmental devastation, or failed utopias—as well as ideas of personal discovery, beauty, and how we might embody a place."

Works of historical importance by artists such as Juan Downey and Agnes Denes anchor the exhibition, Hopkins says, contextualizing the more recent work. Downey's video-feedback work, *Video Trans Americas* (1973-1976), reviews the artist's successive journeys from New York to Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile, documenting the landscape and the people, and then showing these videos to them. He saw the process as one of political and social transformation. Denes' famous Land Art work, *Wheatfield—A Confrontation* (1982), makes an appearance, both in the definitive images of the two-acre wheat field with a backdrop of the World Trade Center—connecting capitalism and world hunger—and in a collection of never-before-seen photographs that SITE has digitized.

The weight of capitalism on the environment is also suggested by Andrea Bowers' works *The United States v. Tim DeChristopher* (2010) and *Memorial to Arcadia Woodlands Clear-Cut* (2013). The former is a video that follows activist Tim DeChristopher as he disrupts a land auction in Utah by bidding on, and winning, a number of parcels that would otherwise be exploited for their natural resources, without having any means or intention to pay for them. Bowers also films the parcels, walking the ground to document the land. (DeChristopher later served 21 months in prison, from 2011-2013, for his subversive act.)

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Hopkins and Sanromán further outline their approach to "Unsettled Landscapes" in an essay appearing in the exhibition catalogue. Hofmann, and SITE's curator of special projects, Janet Dees, also co-wrote a piece detailing the thought behind SITElines. The essay purges the institution's official designation "SITE Santa Fe International Biennial" in favor of "SITElines" and emphasizes that the exhibition series will last at least six years. Regardless, this new iteration of this pioneering biennial exhibition takes both the show, and the institution, into uncharted terrain.

"We didn't want this idea of a biennial focused on the Americas to seem like a one-off," Hofmann explains. The project's duration, she adds, "allows us to come through on the promise of connectivity. It allows us the time to really build our network, build our credibility—and then, after six years, I really do hope that it's clear that this is what we do."