

6. Written on the West: How the Land Gained Site

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Making an Aerial Run/Ruin

"I'll tell you what this is. This is an art project, not a peace project. This is a landscape painting in which we use the landscape itself. The desert is central to this piece. It's the surround. It's the framing device. It's the four part horizon.

"It's so old and strong. I think it makes us feel, makes us as a culture, any technological culture, we feel we mustn't be overwhelmed by it. Awe and terror, you know. Unconductive"—and she waved a hand and laughed—"to industry and progress and so forth. So we use this place to test our weapons. It's only logical of course. And it enables us to show our mastery. The desert bears the visible signs of all the detonations we set off. All the craters and warning signs and no-go areas and burial markers, the sites where debris is buried."

—Klara Sax, a character in Don DeLillo's *Underworld*

If I were to begin a novel, listing a series of related events, images, and vistas, I would structure the plot around spaces of unarticulated aridity, defined by and dependent on the hidden life of objects and their ruins, myriad surface etchings across the material and conceptual space of desert(s). My tracings would begin with a series of sites: marked plateaus, incised embankments, ancient geoglyphs, hard and soft vistas, exploded pockets and remote jeep trails. (A Las Vegas–Elvis Chapel–shotgun wedding of Reyner Banham's *American Deserts* and the entropic sculptured circuitry of Robert Smithson as imploded by a Michael Heizer depth charge and tacitly witnessed by the receding figure of Walter De Maria in a hot air balloon.)¹

The romance of absence, and the solitary contemplative figure, defy narrative linearity and tabulation. Site specificity wallows in absence and inference, qualities

intrinsically reworked through the use of desert as site. Site specificity is a way of working at ground zero. As a desert practice, it presupposes an attachment to the possibility of removal and infinity. The desert floor as foundation speaks to origins and geological timelessness, simultaneously destroying and enforcing a sense of human scale. These sites elicit the desire to mark, to excavate, to connect, to chart, to contemplate, to bomb, to assume solitariness, to nest, to become cowboy, to homestead, to pioneer, to hide, to conquer, to occupy, and to leave behind. They raise up a hollow but placating sense of timelessness, a test of tailgate survival and arid sensibilities. These marks of human transgression engender suspicion, speculation that these site-specific desert "artworks" play into some American frontier romance or teeter on geologic essences. This sense of timelessness, both monumentally and discretely rendered, is incontrovertibly linked to a Euro-Western notion of the standardized "natural," the origins of which can be traced to the found poetics of genteel landscaping and mimicked in the Enlightenment illusion of a controllable nature and in the Romantics' desire for a wilderness submersion as transcendent apotheosis.

Site-specific works on the desert topos translate certain indices partially extrapolated and partially divorced from these origin myths and filtered through minimalism's reductive liberatory promise. The works share a sense of perfunctory and/or immovable mark making, with aspirations of duration and nonerasure: entropic scratchings that suggest decay but also surreptitiously promise edifices of permanence. The Romantics were prompted to define beauty emotionally, in relation to a far-off wild vista, which could not be contained in the sublime fabricated neoclassical ruin or framed in a tinted view prescribed by the proscenium arch or the carved golden frame.

Mausoleum and Genealogy

My novel would begin by describing a visit to the Nazca line drawings in Peru. Perfect lines can be seen from mountain peak to plain. Spirals, trapezoids, monkeys, and concentric rings were drawn by removing dark surface rock on the surface crust. The protagonist of my novel would marvel at the amount of time the three hundred square miles of lines have lasted, how they look almost recently swept, how the mineral composition of the soil preserves these marks, and how a visitor's hiking boots may make an imprint as long lasting as human boots on the moon.² Nancy Holt says of her purchased Utah desert floor that "being part of that kind of landscape, and walking on earth that has surely never been walked on before, evokes a sense of being on this planet, rotating in space in universal time."³

The Nazca line drawings, including what Robert Morris terms "spiritual irrigation" channels and a hummingbird with a two-hundred-foot wingspan, were carefully etched into a Peruvian desert plain sometime between 100 B.C. and 700 A.D. These geoglyphs were rendered by the removal of a surface coat of stony earth, uncovering a lighter layer below.

Many deserts beyond, the British army digs an elaborate, zigzag sandbagged trench to foil direct gunfire in the Suez Canal in 1916. In 1942, the retreating German army plows up its airfield in Ghindel, Libya, creating an intricate series of earth spirals, which render the airfield useless.⁴ The atomic bomb haunts Isamu Noguchi in 1947 as he fabricates a scale model for the proposed desert piece *Sculpture to Be Seen from Mars*, a plaintive, geometrically abstracted face looking upward, the nose section larger than an Egyptian pyramid. Noguchi's unrealized project is so massive that its only proper viewing distance would be from outer space. Michael Heizer blasts *Double Negative* out of rock face in the Nevada desert in 1969. It is visible via high-altitude aerial photography.

In 1968, Walter De Maria inscribes a cross five hundred by one thousand feet on the El Mirage Dry Lake in Nevada. In the early 1990s Viet Ngo plans Lemna-plant-fueled water reclamation projects in the deserts of Egypt and Nevada, projects that produce art *and* water.⁵ This genealogy of constructions, whether motivated strategically, arrogantly, or spiritually, illustrates that the desert has repetitively and obsessively been reinscribed. Picture Lillian Gish, insane and beautiful, scrubbing her dinner plates clean with sand in Victor Sjöström's 1928 film *The Wind*, a frenzied view of death from lack of water. The desert becomes articulated, gains "site," (in) site: it is home to both monumentality and planned dissolution to marking, becoming, and erasing.

My novel's main character, a grizzled desert rat of indeterminate age, with vague lapsed geologic credentials, has two images hanging above her sink in her hand-built solar adobe. They include David Roberts's 1836 lithograph of the yet to be fully excavated Temple of Ramses II, circa 1250 B.C., statuary adrift in interior dunes; and a half-melted slide sheet containing John Divola's series of desert landscapes called *Isolated House*. She came into possession of the latter solely because Divola had trespassed on her land while trying to photograph her lime green sheep shack. From time to time, when the swamp cooler fails, she holds her 35mm *Isolated House* up to hot light and watches while the transparency folds into and superimposes itself over the dusty scrub of her backyard. She installs these housescapes daily, an entertaining kaleidoscope of home site and captured landscape.

Absence Drawings

All it really is—is absence.

—Michael Heizer

Dennis Oppenheim and Walter De Maria work in deserts making annotations of measurements, producing symbolic signals in which, in any case, the modification of the natural environment is mitigated by temporal and meteorological components: the territory is only temporarily changed and the environment can recover its own naturalness even only by the action of the wind.

—Gianni Pettena, "From the Revisited Desert to the Invisible City"

The flatness that so invites drawing on the desert floor counteracts the more pressing need to erect shelter; the dusty etching plate supersedes finding shade. The impetus to inscribe impels Dennis Oppenheim's *Reading Position for Second Degree Burn* (1970), in which he (sun)burns into the surface of his chest the outline of a book titled *Tactics: Cavalry and Artillery*. Oppenheim's project, unlike those of Heizer and De Maria, insists on the inscription of personal data on landscape as an expansion of minimalism's evocation of a desire for "primary forms." His chest is primary. Oppenheim speaks of this piece as learning what it feels like to become red. He marks the surface of his body with sun and a text; he becomes a desert floor waiting to be marked. Literally inscribed, Oppenheim receives a sun imprint, employing the surface of his body as land art's site. He can draw himself or burn himself. In *Whirlpool Eye of the Storm* (1973), he directs a skywriting plane to trace a white smoke whirlpool in the sky over El Mirage Dry Lake, constructing the state of water over absence of water, promise over lack. It dissipates in approximately one-half hour.

In Black Rock Desert, Nevada, Michael Heizer digs a series of rectangles, which he then lines with wood. *Dissipate (Nine Nevada Depressions 8)* (1968) is based on the arbitrary dropping of a series of matchsticks—Duchampian stoppages made incendiary.⁶ The rectangles will be photographed over the years to document their dissolution. Walter De Maria, with the help of Heizer, draws two parallel lines, four inches wide and one mile long, twelve feet apart in the Mojave. After he has finished *Mile Long Drawing* (1968), he lies face down on the left-hand line, a scale marker, aligned not with Nazca but with the far mountain range. Horizontality is truncated by the human form, which impedes the two lines' employment as landscape indicators. This photograph is a document of a humanizing gesture that will later be superseded by these artists' forays into monumentality.

At this moment, however, one imagines a pickup truck, a water cooler, an overheated black Labrador, a few shovels (borrowed from our novel's protagonist), and a fervent horizontal posse, as Heizer, De Maria, and Oppenheim perform site ablutions beyond the east of the art world, "out West." Our role as witness/viewer depends on a projection into this famous photograph of *Mile Long Drawing* of a lizard's-eye view of the desert floor, our tail lined up to a distant vista. The image is of a face pushed into the dusty gravel. This aligned face positions us on the horizontal, a chastened life form hugging surface prime. Unlike Heizer's later, monumental *Complex One* (1972–74), this horizontal axis will become the primary structure for *Five Conic Displacements* (1969) in Coyote Dry Lake, where he digs shallow round pits in the surface of the Mojave Desert. As artworks, they now exist solely as photographic images, taken before their dissolution, shallow but perfect evacuations filled with water. The act of photographing activates the displacements. The photographed water delineates mass and body within shallow circular excavations, etching a topographic boundary while the mirrored surface suggests the illusion of infinity.

Heizer's fascination with the removal and displacement of mass, which would lead to more epic earth shifts, is sketched out on Dry Coyote Lake in his series *Primitive*

Dye Paintings 1 (1969). Pigment replaces water. The surface is drawn with color, contoured around the circle, the zigzag, and the ellipse, marks not indicative of organic progression but sloppy and handmade, deliberate and stained in powdered color, often in deep black and ochre, as if referencing the remains of a scorching. Overlays of white in startling relief suggest the potential residue of powdered bone.

These specific works long for a vista that recaptures the geophysical epic while focusing on the intimately microscopic. In the three focal planes of desert site—sky, distant land mass, and desert floor—each of these works exploits a given parameter of site. The desert landscape, though not a white cube, becomes an extrapolation of that minimalist trope of reductive purism bounded by the promise of geological layering and imperceivable depths. The site(ness) of the work can only be a skin of surface tension eliciting promises of what is below, as geologic strata expand the white cube. Oppenheim stands slightly aside from the primaries in his insistence on the suggestion of a personal narrative scale, either through weather occurrences or in bodily identity. Heizer and De Maria, ever the systems men of Duchampian proportion, choose expanse as drawing pad. With explosives, Heizer reveals a perspectival mass and excavates a sculptural archaeology, while De Maria opts for precise incision and imposes geometric order over indefinable distances. These artists devised extension tools that allowed them to become land scribes. Their writing on the land was intended to be seen from space *and* to be seen over the bridge of a nose, dusty nostril scraping the desert floor.

Not Home: Building Cartographic Skins

[S]ince immense is not an object, a phenomenology of immense would refer us directly to our imagining consciousness. In analyzing images of immensity, we should realize within ourselves the pure being of pure imagination. It then becomes clear that works of art are the by-products of this existentialism of the imagining being. In this direction of daydreams of immensity, the real product is consciousness of enlargement. We feel that we have been promoted to the dignity of the admiring being.

—Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

Not an escape, rather a moment of meditation on one's own origin, a job of reconstruction, by means of simple symbolic actions, of one's own language, a re-elaboration of one's own conceptual schemes and of the ways of materializing one's own desires. In this way, it was discovered that the desert was the "place" of the nomad, a place of "complete emptiness" for he who comes from the city but, at the same time, a place of "complete fullness" for he who lives it or has lived it. But the desert, archetypal condition, "natural" situation for the nomad, is no longer natural for those who travel through it after him; and it becomes quite simply his "architecture," that which the nomad has left behind, nature made "historical," and therefore a type of architecture: a place visited, known, thought about and used as one's own environment.

—Gianni Piretti, "From the Revisited Desert to the Invisible City"

To gain control of the immense, to elicit a sense of proportion, inscribed and defined within site, becomes a feature of the objects collected in this essay. As desert viewers and inhabitants we attempt interpolation—a fence, a sign, a monument, a tar-paper shack, a ring of stones that break up the site and collapse an infinitesimal corner of immensity. This gesture echoes late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century aesthetic philosophy's casting of the sublime, as a mode of "being in awe" created by an experience of vastness, sometimes also defined as being *with fear*. This awe explains our need to construct a container that would regulate a point of view and facilitate the temporary removal of our bodies from landscape, mitigating this fear of being caught uncovered.

Notions of cartographic and celestial precision impart systems to the unsystematic. Nancy Holt's engineers chart when the summer and winter solstices will align with *Sun Tunnels* (1973–76), determining the siting of these tunnels. The viewer, or burrower, is housed in a massive industrial pipe structure that lies on the surface of the Utah desert. The pipes are aligned in a four-part cross that implies a pancultural tradition of celestial orientation, ancient astronomy, and shamanistic intervention. A single viewer retires to *Sun Tunnels* in a meditative retreat, continuing a contemplative tradition thereby intrinsically linked to site; this retreat is divorced from material purpose and/or shelter. Ironically, the viewer is also contained in an industrial-strength concrete water pipe, her or his retreat now mediated by decommissioned technology.

The individual images of John Divola's *Isolated House* series (1995–97) utilize for their titles codes that indicate their cartographic designations, seemingly cool identificatory marks that locate a series of solo desert houses. These houses are distinct from Holt's industrial encasements in their fragility. They are situated squarely in southwestern desert landscapes defined by the color atmospherics and the refraction of light and grounded by overt horizons. To our presence as viewers, the chosen dwellings give scale, pathos, and "meaning" in a narrative construct as we momentarily inhabit the frame implied by Divola's vantage point. Our position in relation to the house in the frame is dependent on dual impulses: a desire to be alone and a desire never to be alone again—a set of desires that is made apparent in the space of deserts.

The *Isolated House* dwellings both interfere with and depend on the plain of landscape as a designated and agreed-upon locus of "natural" beauty. These houses are not nomadic, but rooted, lightly adhering to the skin of the desert floor. The photographs delight in the fragility, pathos, and audacity of installing an outer skin to seal out the void. These houses mark the passage from nomad to dweller. They imply intimacy unhinged, a structure adrift and in dissent from its supporting field. These are not low-impact, underground solar dwellings, but rather vertically and defiantly overt—part and parcel of the grafting of the man-made unto the surface of the "natural." They signify the reverse of Heizer's incising or Oppenheim's branding. Divola's houses signal an alienation from the natural environment that is ultimately usurped by the promise of entropy, as tropical pink crackles into creosote brown. Walter De Maria's desert mile will maintain shape in his lifetime. But Divola's *Isolated Houses* have a

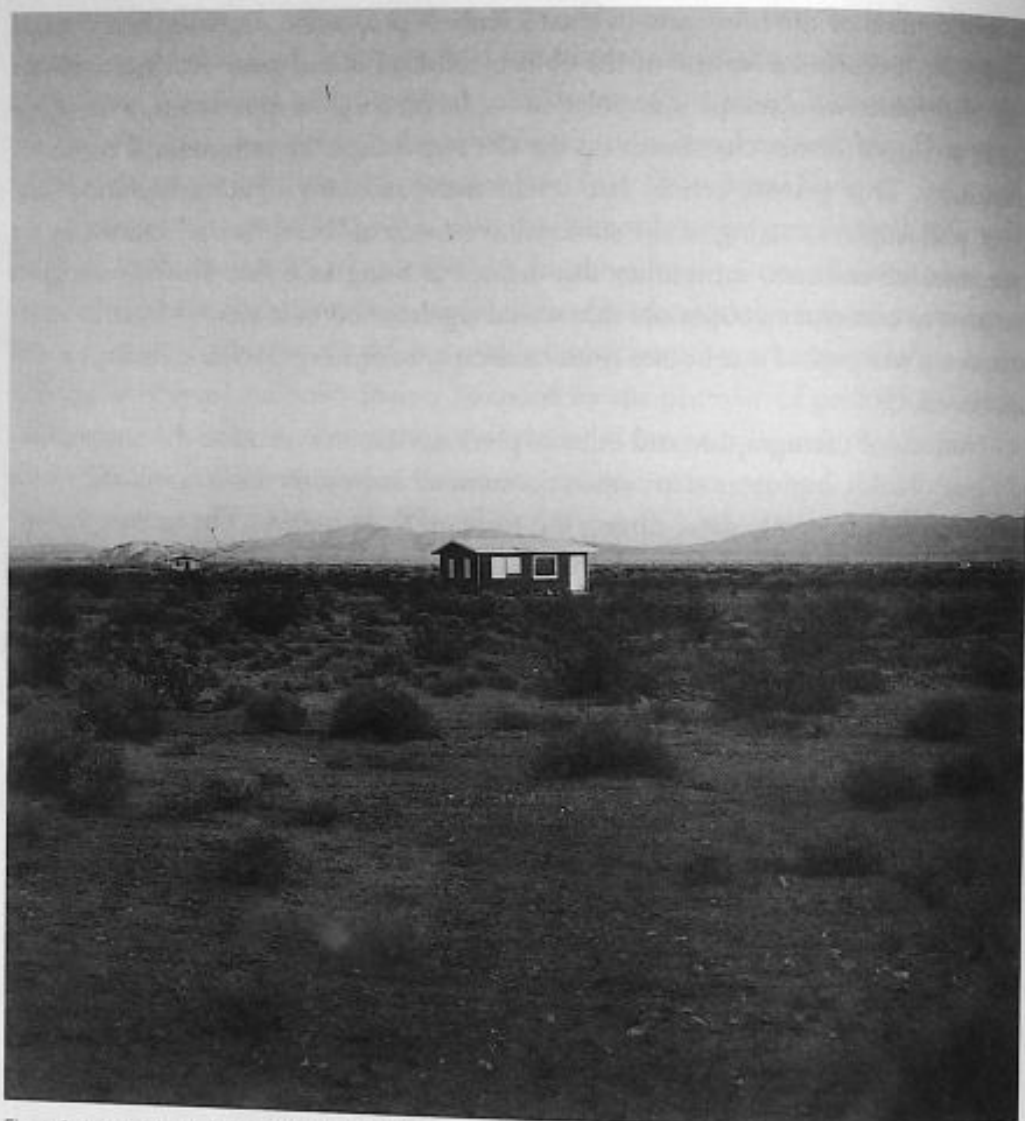


Figure 1. John Divola, *N 34°07.301' W 115°51.412' Looking North*, from *Isolated House* series, 1995–97. Copyright John Divola; photograph courtesy of the artist.

fragility and a vulnerability that erase a promise of the ageless, suggesting that full occupation of this territory could never be possible. Can a tourist ever occupy what a nomad leaves behind?

Holt sets up a hard-shell industrial observatory while Divola maintains the improbability of sheltering, perhaps the entire impossibility and seduction of the photographic process itself as a form of “knowing,” as an extension of philosophical inquiry. These works posit a reason to seek containment as a form of definition. Each house is maintained at a precise compositional distance. An oddly respectful distance—conscious of land rights, armed occupants, angered dogs, the simple implication that individual space grows within immensity and our romantic desire—still privileges the monastic individual. Longitude and latitude and which direction the camera is facing are Divola’s notational titles. In these precise descriptors one might project clinical de-



Figure 2. John Divola, *N 34°07.324' W 115°49.825' Looking West*, from *Isolated House* series, 1995–97. Copyright John Divola; photograph courtesy of the artist.

tachment when, in fact, they serve to delineate the situation of body and container. If immensity is an inherent part of desert craving, the converse—agoraphobic retreat—is what Divola chooses to represent.

The *Isolated House* project raises a number of questions: what drawing the shades means when no one is outside, how the process of editing enforced the project's isolation, and the position of photography in relation to the sublime landscape. The frame often includes equal parts sky and desert floor, a familiar and a consistent horizon. The houses, brief interventions into the earth/sky matrix, are marked by their precise cartographic location on the surface of the planet. We install the *Isolated House*, facing north, southeast, or northwest, on the wall of our house—the image of another's dwelling gracing our own creating a ludicrous but perfect closure: a silvered ruin waiting to happen.

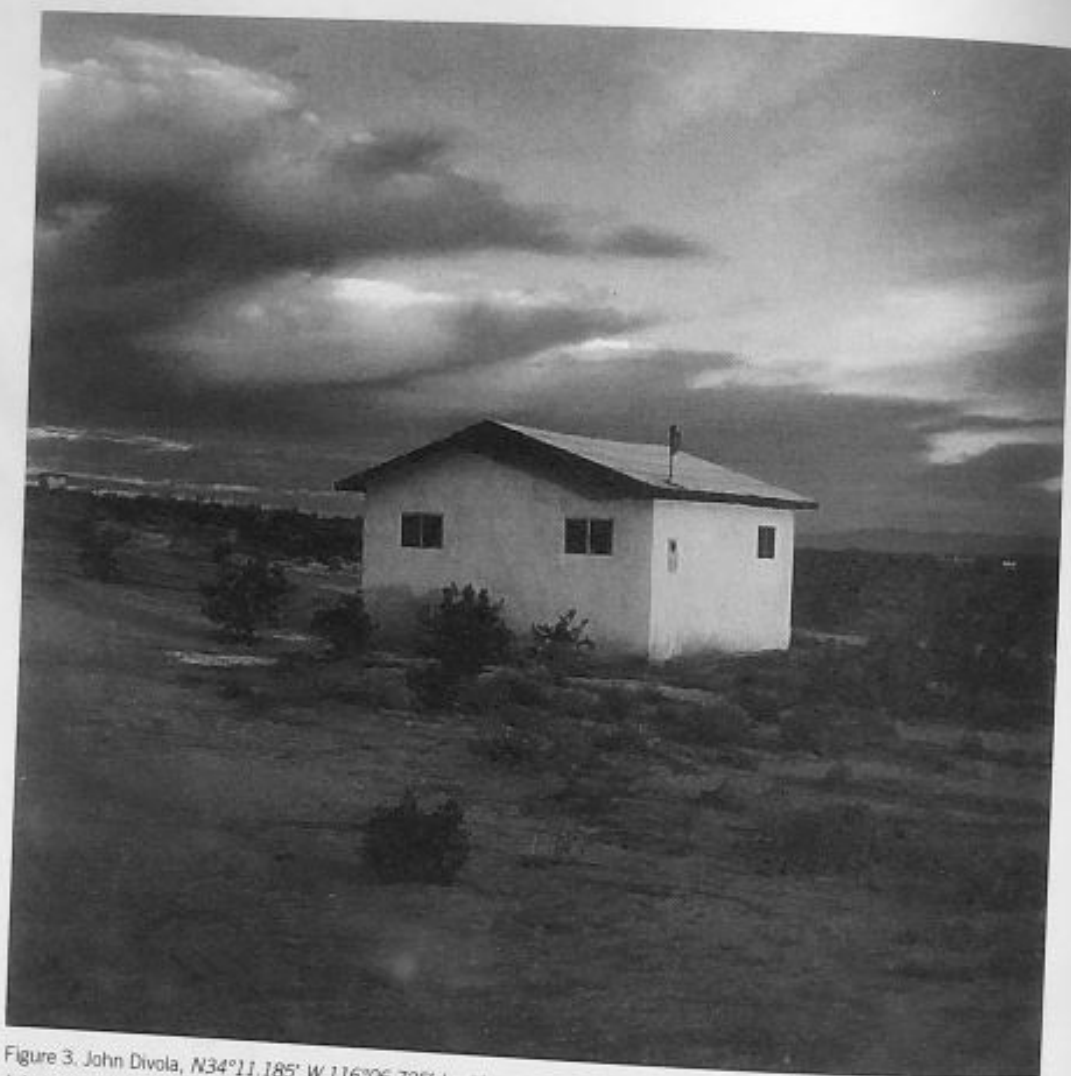


Figure 3. John Divola, $N34^{\circ}11.185'$ $W116^{\circ}06.725'$ Looking Northwest, from *Isolated House* series, 1995–97. Copyright John Divola; photograph courtesy of the artist.

Blasting Caps, Flares, and Scar Tissue

After all you can make a sculpture by bombing it from the air. It's a form of carving. But to just bomb it is not the intention.

—Isamu Noguchi describing *This Tortured Earth* (1943)⁷

For Statics

Everything moves continuously. Immobility does not exist. Don't be subject to the influence of out-of-date concepts of time. Forget hours, seconds and minutes. Accept instability. **LIVE IN TIME.** **BE STATIC—WITH MOVEMENT.** For a static of the present moment, resist the anxious fear to fix instantaneously, to kill that which is living. Stop insisting on "values" which cannot but break down. Be free, live. Stop painting time. Stop evoking movements and gesture. You are movement and gesture. Stop building cathedrals and pyramids which are doomed to fall into ruin. Live in the present; live once more in Time and by Time—for a wonderful and absolute reality.

—Jean Tinguely, 1959

True to his manifesto—which explains a fundamental belief in both modernism's cleansing potential and dadaist irreverence⁸—Jean Tinguely constructed the penultimate time-canceling machine, putting an end to a consideration and enshrinement (in spectacle) of the art object. His was a project of anti-timelessness, destroying all pretenders and pretense via mechano-lust, while operating in a continuum of exploding objects, insanely high tricycles, and painting machines. In 1962 Tinguely performed *Study for the End of the World no. 2* twenty-five miles south of Las Vegas in a carefully chosen portion of the desert near a nuclear test site. His project was undertaken specifically at the behest of an executive at NBC, who thought it would make a nice segment for the program *David Brinkley's Journal*. The executive knew a good potential TV spectacle when he saw one. This event was undertaken specifically and solely for the TV camera. Mushroom clouds gave way to exploding refrigerators stuffed with feathers under the orchestration of an amiable Swiss man who labeled art "a distortion of an unendurable reality."⁹

This modernist doomsday absurdity, a motif common to Tinguely's self-destructing machine sculptures, was deliciously enforced by a coded landscape: nuclear test site, salt flat, and dead lake. All the while television waited for the money shot of total extinction. Tinguely constructed sections of the end of the world in the parking lot of the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas and trucked them out to the site, where he attached sticks of dynamite, blasting caps, and electric wire. There was talk of the "composition's" horizontal emphasis, which would thereby reinforce the inescapable monumentality that the desert topography imparts to any object (from stinkbug to pyramid). But basically observers were just waiting for it to blow. The wires and dynamite charges were connected to a crude plywood control board with black knobs, scrawled sequences, and circuit breakers. It was destruction lodged somewhere between the effects of nuclear annihilation and Rube Goldberg. Tinguely is suggesting that, by using such violent means to assist the machine in killing itself, one could momentarily triumph over the violence and brutality of the world itself through "play." He often employed the word *play* to replace the word *art*. Like Noguchi, modeling *Sculpture to Be Seen from Mars* in the nuclear shadow, Tinguely is determined to invoke the power of the unspeakable without technological arrogance but with a trickster's love.

In the late afternoon, Tinguely parks himself behind the control board and starts the machine up, and each part begins performing its mechano-collapse. *Study for the End of the World no. 2* is running off the same generator that is powering NBC. When it is discovered that the generator can only handle either the end of the world or the cameras, but not both, the electricians and other workers rally against powering the cameras to ensure that the choreographed destruction continues unimpeded. NBC gets zero footage as Tinguely rushes into the fray to nudge along a reluctant dynamite charge. He completes his shepherding task as each component extinguishes itself in pointillistic explosions, bursts of flame, and grinding metal sparks. In interviews after the event, he is asked about the technical snafus and the sacrificial death of NBC's

cameras. Tinguely answers with evident pleasure: "It's not to be expected that the end of the world will be exactly as it's been imagined."

Seven years later in 1969, Michael Heizer would remove 240,000 tons of earth to make *Double Negative*. In his words, it was a site "constructed of its own substance, leaving a full visual statement and an explanation of how it was made. . . . there is the implication of an object or form that is not there. . . . metaphysically a double negative is impossible."¹⁰ Heizer separates himself from Tinguely's trickster nihilist by making this gesture toward the irreversibly inconceivable. The remaining two-part incision focuses the viewer in a minimalist perspectival gap, a funneled channel game in which the viewer is dwarfed by the exploded landscape. *Double Negative's* two huge slashes are readily evident from miles above. Is Heizer a "static" in the land of tricksters?

For the 1923 filming of *The Ten Commandments* Cecil B. DeMille and sixteen hundred workers built 110-foot-tall hieroglyph-covered walls, twenty-one sphinxes, and four statues of Ramses II weighing five tons each in the dunes outside Guadalupe, California. To thwart marauding rival movie studios, after completing the shooting DeMille ordered that the entire set be toppled and buried. John Parker and Peter Brosnan painstakingly excavated the remnants of the set in hopes of making a documentary before the seventy-fifth anniversary of the film in 1998. Rational men seek mark making, while other rational men deal in an archaeology of gesture. Women, it seems, live in parched water pipes—waiting.

My novel's nameless protagonist is reading today's *Los Angeles Times* searching for a good ending. Under the headline "Exploding Deserts," it's reported that, in 1942, General Patton spent a good deal of time flying over the deserts of California, Nevada, and Arizona searching for the perfect munitions testing ground.¹¹ After all, he mused, few people *lived* there. He saw the desert as "vacant," and he filled that vacancy with a Desert Training Center spanning 16,200 square miles. Currently there are innumerable tons of unexploded ordnance between Needles and Barstow, waiting to incise topographically and to maim corporally.

Tinguely and Heizer worked below and above this same surface. They made works in a period in which they could still name absence and expect the landscape site to deliver something other than tract house vistas. Tinguely leaves us with photographic ennui and toasted souvenirs, Heizer with an extracted reverse monument. Divola selects and catalogs discrete edifices of occupation, Oppenheim marks the systems that illuminate the desert landscape, while Ngo attempts to repopulate the topography of drought. Holt aerates and aligns, cosmetically altering the concrete bunker, to produce a campsite for the end of the world.

These nonstatic desert rats are operating in a perpetuity of burrowing, mounding, strafing, and digging that questions the very definition of mark (art) making and the "timeless." These works force the viewer to grapple with declining sublimity, codes of landscape, erasures of use value, and land development within site specificity. Henri Lefebvre, defining "space" in contemporaneous usage, states that "history is experienced as nostalgia, and nature as regret—as a horizon fast disappearing behind

us."¹² The proverbial "we" is still tethered to conservation and excavation: hence the desert becomes inexhaustible or exhausted, a resource upon which we practice identity inscriptions—hoping to make sense of scale—seeing ourselves at the edge of the curve of the earth, or in the aluminum glint off Patton's wingtips.

Notes

1. Reyner Banham, *American Deserts* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 1982), 224. This remains the classic text on the desert landscapes of the American Southwest. It is an extraordinary account of the visibility of a space lovingly encountered and "learned" over a lifetime; it situates the possibilities of looking alongside the impossibility of textually analyzing seeing.
2. The Nazca line drawings were introduced to the American art world by Robert Morris in "Aligned with Nazca," first published in *Artforum* 14, no. 2 (October 1975). The impact that this article had cannot be overemphasized. As artists moved beyond minimalism's fascination with "nonsites" into an exploration of issues of site specificity divorced from sanctioned art spaces, Morris connected earthworks to a much larger archaeological history. By dealing with the tenets of archaeological timescapes, Morris effectively blew the lid off an expanded studio practice and problematized the scope of the entire earthworks project. He articulates this throughout *Continuous Project Altered Daily* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), which collects his essays laying the foundation for any subsequent work on space, site and the expanded sculptural field.
3. Nancy Holt, quoted in Francisco Asensio Cerver, *Landscape Art* (Barcelona: World of Environmental Design Press, 1995), 68.
4. These images are collected in David Bourdon, *Designing the Earth: The Human Impulse to Shape Nature* (New York: Abrams Press, 1995).
5. Viet Ngo's land art consists of a series of water reclamation systems based on the installation and maintenance of the Lemna, a patented plant that removes pollutants from water supplies and that can also be used as an alternative food source. Ngo's project epitomizes much of international contemporary land art's ecological commitment and helps define artwork that is identified with ecological action and the politics of Green and Gaia movements throughout the world. Baile Oakes, *Sculpting with the Environment: A Natural Dialogue* (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1995), covers a wide range of work, including Ngo's (178–80), that is ecologically based, coming out of the intersection of systems theory and land art existing after earthworks as a movement. See also James Swan and Roberta Swan, *Dialogues with the Living Earth: New Ideas on the Spirit of Place from Designers, Architects, and Innovators* (Wheaton, Ill.: Quest Press, 1996), and Suzi Gablik, *Conversations before the End of Time* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), as well as the journal *Whole Earth Review*.
6. The work's compositional structure was based on a chance operation: "The matchsticks were employed as a dispersing device. They were dropped from two feet above a sheet of paper and taped down. The photograph of this dispersal became the drawing for *Dissipate*. (Matches are always applied to disintegrative tasks; the original drop-drawing could catch fire at any time)"; Michael Heizer, "The Art of Michael Heizer," *Artforum*, December 1969, as quoted in Gilles A. Tiberghien, *Land Art* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995), 23. This action is related to Marcel Duchamp's *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913–14), which was a series of "rulers" whose shape was determined by dropping pieces of string. The "stoppages" were then used as arbitrary units of measurement and shape for Duchamp's painting *Network of Stoppages* (1914).

7. Noguchi's unrealized project was inspired by photographs he had seen of WW II battle zones.
8. See Heidi E. Violand-Hobi, *Jean Tinguely* (Munich: Prestel Press, 1995).
9. Violand-Hobi, *Jean Tinguely*, 111.
10. Tiberghien, *Land Art*, 70. For the definitive contemporaneous contextualization of *Double Negative* and its minimalist family, see Rosalind Krauss, "The Double Negative: A New Syntax for Sculpture," in *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (New York: Viking Press, 1977).
11. Diana Marcum, "Desert's Deadly Secrets," *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1998, A1, A21.
12. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1991), 51.